

Best of Breed ERP: A Dashboard for Strategic Decision Makers

Imaad Rizni
Informatics Institute of Technology
Colombo, Sri Lanka
imaadh@hotmail.com

Guhanathan Poravi
Informatics Institute of Technology
Colombo, Sri Lanka
guhanthan.p@iit.ac.lk

Abstract — The success of an Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system is measured by the Return On Investment (ROI) it brings about to a business. Data is the core of an ERP system regardless of whether the ERP system is a full suite, or an incorporation of multiple best of breed vendors. Strategic decision makers usually make use of KPIs and other performance indicators which improve their insight into the operations of a business at a higher level. Best of Breed (BOB) solutions usually made up of custom tailor-made modules, lack a central point for monitoring of data in an aggregated manner. This paper reviews and discusses how BOB solution users could gain convenience and ultimately a better ROI through a central point of data. A proposed design in the form of a centralized portal that would provide vital information using a dashboard is discussed. The paper also discusses the expectations of an ERP system vs. the reality of what is expected when BOB solutions are involved.

Keywords - ERP, CEO, ERP dashboards, dashboard, best of breed, CXO, ERP systems, CXO dashboards, KPI

I. INTRODUCTION

The success of an ERP system is measured by its ROI. ERP systems have reached many milestones since its first outbreak and have had significant impacts on businesses as defined by Gartner [1]. The definition of an ERP system is often referred to the synergy of multiple modules that solve a business process. As businesses implemented ERP systems problems arose in various forms. A major conflict that is noted, is the selection of an ERP system vendor with a full suite or using multiple vendors each branded as the best of their expertise (known as a BOB solution – best of breed).

According to the research conducted by Marwa et.al [2], there are several alternatives to shifting towards BOB solutions to obtain maximum return while large numbers were already headed towards full suite ERP systems. The clash between a full suite ERP system and BOB solutions is still a topic of debate because variables such as structure and configuration of business operations will vary based on the implementations of these systems. The users of ERP systems usually vary from the highest level of management to the least automation of a business process involved.

Businesses that use BOB solutions usually have the modules tailor made for the best management of their data and ensuring the real-time interoperation of each BOB vendor. Light et.al [3] have identified that while BOB

solutions are carefully planned and well researched into, there are negative impacts on the requirements of IT skills from a business's perspective. A multitude of platforms and integrations come with a high cost of managing changes between modules. It's clear that a change on a single integration will indefinitely break the flow of an ERP system's real time data updating and retrieval.

A modern ERP system is now expected to provide intelligence to support in decision making and analysis of important data. ERP suites now come built with their own dashboards to aid in visualization of data that is of importance. It was identified by Wijaya [4] that there was a necessity and usefulness of a dashboard system to some extent for decision making. Key factors on the importance of data and scorecards were mentioned. Wijaya also highlights on the fact that the main success factor used to measure an ERP system, is through the ROI which is gained through the assistance of higher levels of management who can make use of data that ERP systems provide.

Based on the information above, a gap is identified where BOB solutions seems to lack a central form of data visualization. A question arises: 'What is the intelligence a business/individual who uses BOB solutions can gain from the use of a central portal for ERP data?' In this paper we then go on to discuss how a central mapping of data, for BOB solutions, could provide a beneficial ROI. A proposed design infrastructure is discussed which involves the development of a centralized portal across BOB solutions. This centralized portal will serve as a single-sign-on (SSO) as well as a command and control dashboard of KP.

II. BEST OF BREED – USERS – OVERVIEW

The synergy of BOB solutions allows them to interoperate with flexibility with available resources and provide a seamless experience to users' due to its tailor-made nature. With the recent paradigm shift towards cloud, it has become effortless to run diverse solutions that will operate with another. Since the core of an ERP system is data, it is essential that it is used effectively as identified by Maas et.al [5] who have done a detailed study into the impact of how simply the 'usage' and 'control' defines success in terms of ERP. According to their study, they hypothesize that the 'greater the infusion' provided by the ERP system users', the more positive the overall outcome is going to be.