

Enterprise Only BI is a Flawed Strategy in 2016

By Matt Allington

I am inspired to write this article from my my life long experiences working with companies that 1) **embrace Self Service BI as a synergistic addition to Enterprise BI** as well as 2) **those that don't embrace Self Service BI** as anything other than a nuisance. Of course there is another group that is full of people that "don't even know what they are missing", but I will leave that group is for another day. When I say "those that don't embrace Self Service BI", I am not talking about the enlightened "Business People" of course. I have never found 1 enlightened business person that failed to see the value in augmenting Enterprise BI with Self Service BI. I have found plenty of Business people that don't know anything about Self Service BI however. When I say "those that don't embrace Self Service BI", I am of course talking about a sub set of IT folk that for what ever reason will simply not open their eyes and ears (and minds) to understand or embrace the opportunity that presents.

First Some Definitions

Enterprise BI: Traditional BI solutions for typically large organisations built on expensive hardware and software with **specialist IT skilled individuals to build and operate the solution.** The build projects tend to be long and expensive, and in some cases they deliver great outcomes for the business. In other cases the projects fail to deliver on the promise. Regardless of the measure of success, Enterprise BI has a long history and has in the past (and will continue in the future to) add a lot of value to many large enterprises.

No BI: Some organisations don't have BI for what ever reason. The normal reason is the cost and/or risk of project failure can't justify the journey. These organisations typically rely on either transactional system reporting (usually limited), and/or Excel, or they survive (or don't survive) with nothing but gut feeling and instinct.

Self Service BI: When modern BI tools can be put directly into the hands of the end user. The users can gather and connect to their own data if they want, and/or simply connect to existing Enterprise data sources to build new reports and analyses in new ways. Self Service BI tools can be an affordable BI solution for organisations that can't afford Enterprise BI, or they can be a supplement to Enterprise BI.

The Enterprise BI Success-Failure Continuum

I am not advocating that most businesses should replace Enterprise BI with Self Service BI. However in some (many?) cases Enterprise BI has not met (and can not meet) all the needs of the business. Regardless of how successful Enterprise BI is in an organisation, there is still normally a place for Self Service BI. However the role of Self Service BI does depend on the success of the existing Enterprise BI solutions.

Success or failure of Enterprise BI can be shown as a continuum.



The 5 sample points I call out (from best to worst) are:

1. It adds lots of value to lots of people.
2. It's OK, lots of "export to Excel"
3. Some use, but not worth the cost
4. It is a failure and it is written off
5. It is a failure but you keep it.

Note what I list as the worst possible outcome. The solution is no good, and no one does anything about it. This is much worse than writing it off as a failure as you can't move on if you don't accept you have a problem.

Self Service to Augment Whatever

Self Service BI should be, in most cases, an augmentation to whatever situation you already have (in my opinion). In other cases it can be an alternative to Enterprise BI. I can think of a number of scenarios.

- You are going to purchase Enterprise BI but it is 12 months away – get started with Self Service BI.
- You don't know what you want/need from Enterprise BI – start prototyping with Self Service BI.
- You have successful Enterprise BI, but you can't afford to solve every bespoke requirement (due to timeliness and/or cost) with Enterprise BI – Self Service BI to the rescue.
- You have Enterprise BI, but not all required data is loaded – Self Service BI can combine what you have loaded with what is not.
- You have Enterprise BI and it is great. Some people will find it faster and more convenient to directly connect to the data warehouse with Self Service BI tools.
- You have a mediocre Enterprise BI solution that can't be written off. Augment it now with Self Service BI.
- You have a terrible Enterprise BI solution. Keep the data warehouse and write off the rest (or don't). Build new reporting and analyses with Self Service BI tools and use these as your new consumption approach.
- You are never going to purchase Enterprise BI – Use Self Service BI as both an Enterprise BI alternative and a Self Service tool.

Notice the absence of the following 2 items in my list above

- "You've got Enterprise BI – you don't need Self Service BI"?!)
- Self Service BI is now here – everyone get rid of your Enterprise BI solution.

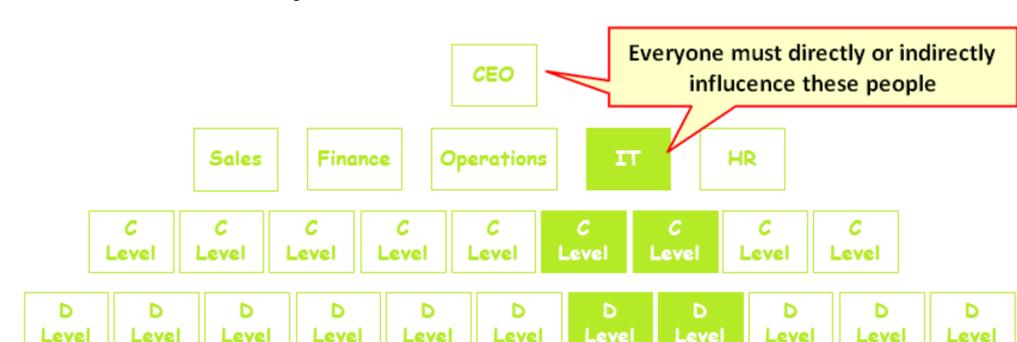
So why then do some businesses (IT actually) insist on resisting progress with Self Service BI? Well I think it can be for many varied reasons, including:

- **fear** of loss of control
- **fear** that there may need to be an expensive write off of an "asset" that is not being used – if people start using something else.
- **fear** and/or ignorance of the unknown
- **fear** of multiple versions on the truth

I am sure there are many more. Notice the common word there – **fear!**

So What to Do

I don't think there is one single answer, but there is a single common thread to every scenario. **A very smart guy once told me that "you get the IT department you deserve".** What he meant by that is that the **Business leaders have influence over what the IT department does for them.** There are normally (always?) a lot more business leaders in an executive team than there are IT leaders. If the executive team accepts a sub standard result from IT, then it gets what it deserves. It follows therefore that the secret to getting a great IT department (that supports Self Service BI and everything else) is that the executive must influence IT to deliver what it needs. But it is **unlikely that these B level managers will be the ones that discover Self Service BI**, and hence it is **up to the C and D level business managers to lobby and influence** the executive business leaders for change.



So why don't the B, C and D level managers influence the change? I think there are 3 main reasons:

1. They are not aware of the opportunity
2. **Fear** created by IT that the sky will fall in
3. They are not willing to tell another member of the executive how to do their job for **fear** it will backfire on them.

Where is the Motivation?

All of the reasons above for not influencing change can be overcome once there is motivation.

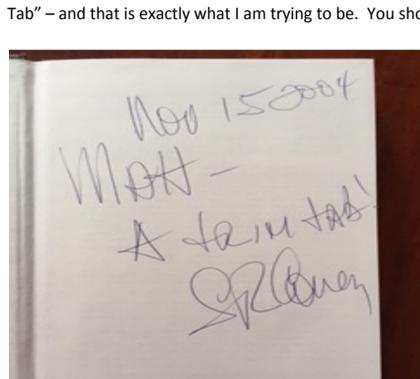
Let me talk about motivation for a moment. The fact is, us humans (and probably all living things actually) only do things we are motivated to do – really.

- We go to work to earn money so we can live the life we want. If we had a billion dollars, many of us wouldn't go to work (certainly not our current job anyway).
- We line up in a long queue to get a great coffee. If the coffee wasn't great, we wouldn't line up.
- We work late into the night for fear we will lose our job if we don't get a task done on time.
- We work late into the night because we want to get a promotion.
- We work late into the night because we are inspired by our manager and we want to help them.

There are many reasons of motivation. **What will create motivation for an executive in a company to embrace Self Service BI is absolute clarity of the benefits.**

Become a Trim Tab

Stephen Covey in his book "[The Eighth Habit](#)" talks about the concept of a Trim Tab. A Trim Tab is the little rudder that sits at the front of the big rudder on large ships. These ships are so large, that they need very large rudders. But the rudders are so large, that even the rudders can't turn by themselves. A Trim Tab is the small rudder that turns the large rudder that turns the ship. I remember the Trim Tab concept vividly as I was fortunate enough to meet Stephen Covey (one of my idols). As Stephen was signing my book, he said "Matt, become a Trim Tab" – and that is exactly what I am trying to be. You should too.



You all, the loyal readers of PowerPivotPro.com need to become a Trim Tab – an evangelist, trail blazer and influencer of the larger rudders that steer the ship. If you can directly influence the Executive, then go ahead and do that. **If you can't directly influence the Executive, then you need to influence someone that can.** The best way to influence C and D level managers is to **show them what you can do with the Self Service BI tools.** Forget about the reasons why you are not allowed to do this or that and instead **get on with using the Self Service BI tools you already have access to, to create value for your organisation.** Sooner or later someone is going to realise you are on to something. **The sooner everyone (even 1 person with influence) realises you are on to something, the sooner you will get the IT department you need.**

Of course some of you can't start using these tools because IT has locked down your computers so hard, that you can't even install the Power Query plugin yourself (or Power Pivot if you are still on 2010). But if that is the case, then getting this changed is a much easier battle to win – to get approval to install a standard Microsoft Plugin for Excel. So fight and win that battle and then get on with showing the value to the C and D level managers, and have them influence the Executive. Remember, **most of the executives in most companies (if not all) are not in IT, and they will be motivated for change as long as they see the benefit.**

Read More at: <http://www.powerpivotpro.com/2016/08/enterprise-bi-flawed-strategy-2016/>

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