

# Do More with Your BI Budget:

5 Ways to  
Save 40+%  
in 2012



*Now that summer's over many business and technology leaders will turn their attention to defining their 2012 budgets. In our experience, executives responsible for BI budgets can apply five core concepts or big ideas to generate higher returns from lower budgets. It is common for these value gains to reach 40% overall. Better yet, the steps are actionable and viable – that is, they don't require massive investments or disruptive implementations. In fact, they're all about getting more from what you already have.*

*The bottom line is that BI teams don't really have much choice except to do more with less, as demand for BI apps is rising quickly and significantly, while the supply of BI development resources remains flat, at best.*

## 1 Build it right the first time.

In our experience, needless rework consumes between 30-50% of all BI budgets. This is a problem hiding in plain sight. Everyone knows that they must eliminate rework, but precious few BI projects manage the trick. Why is that? Primarily because it's a communication issue that can only be solved by rethinking development approaches and the "report manufacturing" thinking that still reigns in many BI organizations.

So how to bridge this gap to eliminate rework? An iterative development approach that creates more frequent interactions between developers and users and streamlines prototyping so that users can experiment with actual working versions of apps early (and with real data) is the best way to avoid "back to the drawing board" situations that bedevil far too many BI projects today.

## 2 Make business users the owners of BI apps.

This step is closely related the previous one. Today, most of the burden of BI delivery falls on the shoulders of BI teams. They are responsible for building the models, migrating the data into the models, building the calculations and defining the business terms. This is less than ideal, because developers are not really experts on the business. That's why columns in reports often end up with highly technical names that confuse users.

To deliver BI apps that business users will love, the business users should be closely involved in development. They know better than anyone else the types of questions they need to answer and the most valuable market insights. Thus, they should be the ones who define the terms and validate the calculations. To get there, however, users must be able interact with prototypes soon after sharing requirements, see real data within current BI platforms and provide feedback in real time.

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### 3 Start with core requirements and re-use components.

We know – talking about improving requirements is the BI equivalent of “eat your vegetables.” Still, it’s impossible to overestimate the importance of this step; nail the requirements upfront and you’re much more likely to nail the final BI app. It really is that simple.

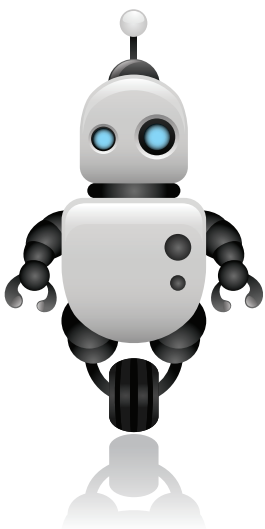
There is an easy way for most BI teams to take a quantum leap forward here. Within long requirements lists, there are a handful of core requirements that will drive many related BI apps. Upfront analysis and advance planning – likely a collaboration between users and developers – can identify the critical core elements (like customer definitions) that users will need again and again. Perfect these capabilities, and you have a component you can reuse for future apps, eliminating rework in the process.

To make it happen, developers will need a delivery toolset that allows for the easy capture of raw requirements and translations into hierarchical information “packages” that can be efficiently manipulated and refined to meet user needs. In other words – no more using Word or Excel or Visio for requirements documents.

### 4 Automate everything.

Automation is the best way to move past the common “do more with less” conundrum. In a 2009 paper, The IT Automation Imperative, Forrester put it succinctly: it’s “high time to elevate the debate and sell the CIOs and business on IT automation.” More recently, in Agile BI Out of the Box, Forrester encouraged BI teams to look at tools that actually “autogenerate each component in the BI stack” as a means to “significantly reduce level of effort to build an end-to-end BI application.”

BI teams should automate all administrative tasks (like documentation) to free up skilled resources to focus on value-adding tasks (like strategic collaborations with business users). You can also automate prototyping and some requirements-gathering steps. (Say it with me – no more Word or Excel!)



### 5 Use what you have and don't move sideways.

Nearly all BI teams and leaders we talk to have the features and firepower they need from their BI platforms. And their underlying data repositories are also fine, even if they are not consolidated on a single, unified platform. The small gains in database performance speeds, which vendors pitch, are not really difference-makers from a BI perspective. Is producing sales reports 2.5 seconds faster really worth the 6 months and several million dollars it might require to move a to a new BI platform? A better approach is to empower BI developers and users to interact more easily with the data you already have, model it more effectively and create BI apps that answer the questions that matter most to the business.

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