

Business Intelligence and Dashboards

Business Intelligence: Broad category of technology used to gather, store, analyze and present data for decision making/ performance measurement. One way to present data in the BI method is with a dashboard.

Dashboards: Visual display (graphical user interface) of the necessary information at a glance.

Dashboards- more than fancy playthings?

- Must be implemented around needs of the institution
- All elements must have direct relevance to critical institutional activities (what data will indicate success?)
- Must be able to act on what is presented

MD curriculum has many data elements, so which reveal the “essence of how a school is performing?”- Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

- Start with objectives and then find the appropriate metrics (not the other way around)
- Must be specific enough to indicate where to find the source of a problem if one exists
- Must be general enough to keep the reader or user from getting lost in the minutiae and complexities of the data

Challenges to Dashboard Implementation

- Poor communication with different offices/units
- Few power users
- No clear strategy
- Cost/Return on investment
- Time/Resources
- Credibility- Is BI just a buzzterm?
- Office politics

Dashboards- who are the users?

- Information consumers: view standard reports
- BI middle class: download reports and create own queries

- Power users: make decisions about what information others will see, experts in querying (SQL knowledge)

Dashboard Design 101

- Customize to match level and function of user
- Adapt to work with any form of data
- Able to present data in many ways
- Navigable layout/interactive
- Appealing graphics
- Browser-based

Common BI traps

- Loving your data just the way it is
- Technology alone can handle it
- People alone can handle it
- IT-driven implementation
- Little relationship between strategy and action
- Expecting users to come automatically
- Data overloading
- “Cool” trumps useful
- The more advanced it is the better it is

Are you ready for a Dashboard?- Answer these questions first:

- What data is currently available?
- What data will indicate success (KPIs)?
- What action will come based on KPIs?
- Is the institutional culture ready for change based on KPIs?

References:

Business Intelligence for Dummies (2008). Scheps. S. Hoboken NJ: Wiley
LogiXML white paper: Dashboard Best Practices (2004). Fuchs, G.