



## Intelligence at the Speed of Business

Rapidly transform enterprise data into competitive advantage

“Running your business effectively requires transparency into all aspects of the organization. It starts with the ability to ask – and answer – questions at the speed of business.”

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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In today’s economy, companies strive to make better use of their information assets. Cash, customers, sales, products and people – every company needs to analyze information from these data sources to grow and thrive. Obtaining timely insight from mountains of data can be the difference between a robust quarter and a disappointing one. Companies often overlook the valuable information they already have as the place to start building intelligence to improve services and processes and develop new strategies.

On-premise business intelligence (BI) solutions are wrought with cost, risk and usability challenges. Rather than creating an enterprise-wide view of the business, current practices typically result in a proliferation of complex information silos that are hard to build and maintain. Worse yet, they become the very source of information bottleneck and the dreaded multiple versions of the truth problem that they are intended to fix.

Organizations need tools to combine and analyze statistics and raw data quickly for meaningful and actionable business intelligence. On-demand business intelligence solutions put rich, analytic power into the hands of business users to free information trapped in corporate systems and enable faster and more intelligent business decisions. With business conditions shifting daily, perhaps even hourly, agility is a critical factor for success. The ability for business managers to see across the enterprise and to choose the best options for hundreds of daily decisions can transform the way companies compete.

This white paper describes how businesses can use on-demand BI solutions to maximize the value of their key information assets and create sustainable competitive advantage.

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## HARNESSING INFORMATION ASSETS

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The proliferation of information is one of the most demanding issues facing businesses today. Across every enterprise, whether large or small, business managers need timely intelligence to decide where to focus, where to reduce costs, and where to invest.

Most businesses use a handful of different applications supported by their IT departments, such as customer relationship management (CRM) to run sales, enterprise resource planning (ERP) to manage the supply chain, order management for purchasing, finance management for bookings and billings, and talent management for human resources. Harnessing information from these complex systems for timely, actionable insight is a major challenge. As a result, companies often overlook the valuable information they have about customers, sales, operations, products and people, as the place to start building intelligence to improve services and processes and develop new strategies.

With the emergence of sales, marketing, finance, inventory, and other transactional systems, an “analytics gap” has developed between the way businesses work and the systems supporting information analysis and sharing. On-premise business intelligence (BI) solutions based on traditional database technologies are too inflexible to keep up with the explosion of data, and extremely inefficient at supporting analytical questions. Too many companies force their employees to rely on generic IT reports, or to manually cut and paste in spreadsheets to go about their daily work. Rather than creating an enterprise-wide view of the business, current practices typically result in a proliferation of complex information silos that are hard to build and maintain. Worse yet, these silos become the very source of information bottlenecks and the dreaded multiple versions of the truth problem that they are intended to fix. Instead of helping IT deliver timely and accurate information to decision makers, traditional BI solutions can become a significant source of distraction for precious IT resources.

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## CLOSING THE ANALYTICS GAP

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Scattered throughout a typical organization are databases with information and individuals who have insights that are key to solving critical business issues. Isolated from each other they may have little value, but combined and put into context, information and insight become the foundation for creating a competitive advantage.

Organizations need tools to quickly combine and analyze statistics for meaningful and actionable business intelligence. For example, if a report shows sales are trending lower than expected, business managers can uncover the underlying issues quickly by getting answers to such questions as:

- Is the problem with one product line or with certain regions?
- What is different about underperforming products or regions compared to ones that are performing well?
- Is there a related problem with sales headcount, marketing campaigns, or something else?

It is far too inefficient to consult technically-sophisticated analysts or IT every time new questions arise that require rapid decisions. Business managers need to aggregate their data, conduct analyses, and explore results to gain actionable insights in a time frame that keeps pace with the dynamics of today’s environment. It should be easy for business users to securely analyze any data any way they want, and share their insights with colleagues and partners wherever they are, without burdening IT with ad-hoc report generation.

“The proliferation of information is one of the most demanding issues facing businesses today.”

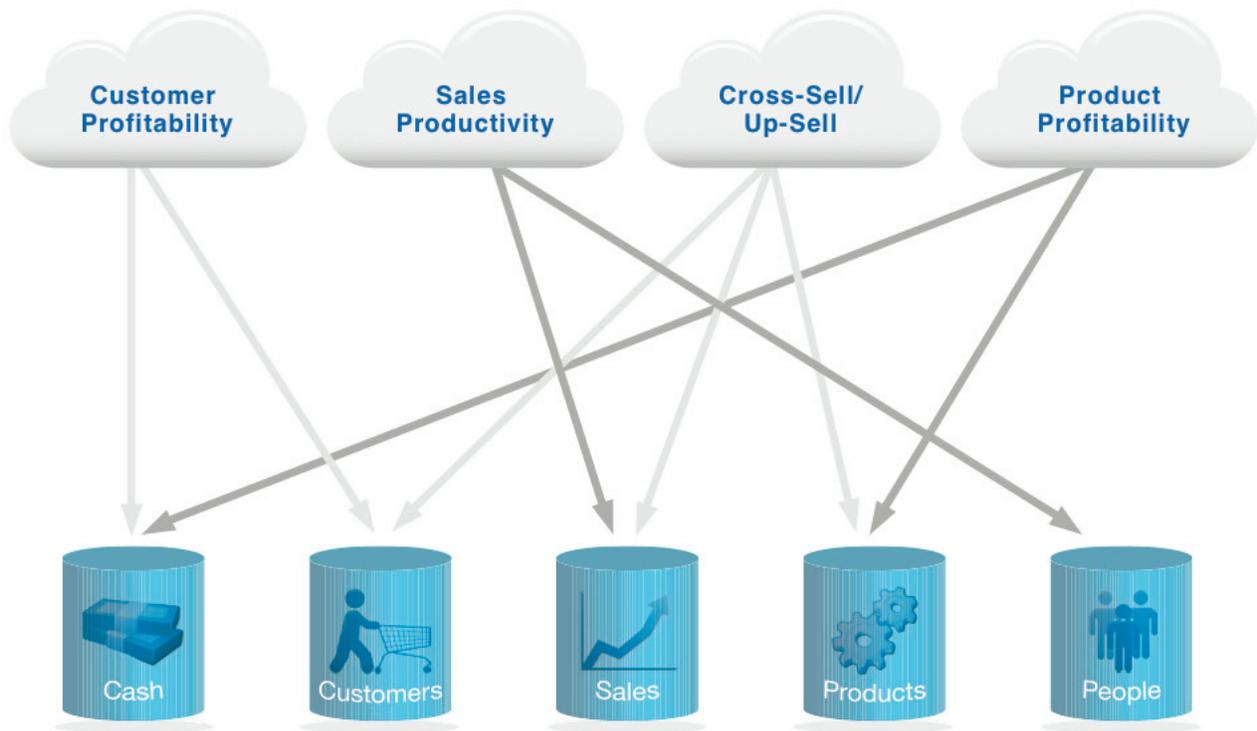
IMPROVING BUSINESS OUTCOMES

On-demand business intelligence puts rich, powerful tools in the hands of business users to help transform enterprise data into competitive advantage. Leveraging the Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) model, on-demand BI tools can free information trapped in corporate systems and transfer it to the people who are best equipped to make decisions. On-demand business intelligence provides information the way business users want to see it – in dashboards, charts, and reports – with access to pertinent information in a few clicks. IT is no longer a bottleneck for generating reports, and field salespeople are armed with timely information. With shifting business conditions, this kind of agility is critical for success. The ability for business managers to see across the enterprise – and to choose the best options for hundreds of daily decisions – can transform the way a company competes.

To improve outcomes, businesses need to move beyond using IT to generate reports from transactional systems. An on-demand BI solution can aggregate and combine multiple sources of data on the fly – in line with the way people actually work. The solution also enables a self-service approach to analysis that can be more relevant to certain business situations. As situations change, business managers can't wait days or weeks for IT to establish new queries or generate new reports. Managers need to get answers quickly and share their insights securely inside and outside the company.

Businesses can use on-demand BI to reveal the interdependencies among different types of enterprise information for a richer, more relevant analysis (Figure 1). See the Appendix for details on the benefits and possible outcomes from analyzing these interdependencies.

Figure 1: On-demand BI can reveal interdependencies among different types of enterprise data (See the Appendix for details on the benefits and possible outcomes from analyzing these interdependencies.)



With on-demand BI, business users can also:

- Focus on analysis rather than pulling data from multiple sources and incompatible systems
- Identify not only what happened, but why it happened and what will happen if it continues
- Quickly respond to changes in financial conditions, customer preferences, and supply chain operations
- Reduce guesswork and proactively make decisions
- Improve interdepartmental communication and collaboration

## ADOPTING ON-DEMAND BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE

Using a cloud-based SaaS infrastructure for an on-demand BI solution, businesses can increase collaboration within and beyond the extended enterprise by allowing authorized users to access relevant information anywhere, at any time. Partnering with the right on-demand solution provider can bring an unparalleled level of speed, quality, and reliability to business intelligence.

A cloud-based, on-demand BI solution that can scale securely across the enterprise – and with capabilities shown in Table 1 – not only frees IT from the onerous aspects of maintaining on-premise BI solutions, but also delivers newfound capabilities to develop analytical competence, which drives better performance.

The technical innovations of on-demand BI – cloud computing, SaaS, in-memory processing, columnar data storage, and enhanced UI design – provide companies with a quicker, more efficient way to aggregate, analyze, and distribute enterprise information. Business users can view and analyze timely, accurate data about core business activities relative to their roles in the organization with minimal training and without relying on IT for data access and report production. Security ensures that only authorized users can access confidential information, and secure systems can be deployed across the entire organization with zero replication of data.

**Table 1: Capabilities and benefits of on-demand BI**

CAPABILITY	BENEFIT
Data security across roles, groups, departments and even outside partners and suppliers	Provides self-service access to a wider audience while still complying with regulations and security policies
Enterprise grade authentication systems using standard protocols such as SAML 2.0	Enables faster access and better security when employees move departments or leave the company
Statement on Auditing Standards No. 70 (SAS 70) Type II certification	Ensures compliance with the Sarbanes–Oxley Act (SOX), the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), and other regulations
Combining information from multiple sources while maintaining analytic accuracy	Effectively leverages information about cash, customers, sales, product and people to create a competitive advantage
Self-service data access and report generation	Empowers the business user while reducing dependency on IT

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## MAXIMIZING BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE

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If success or failure depends upon accurate and timely decisions, an on-demand BI solution can make all the difference. Expensive and hard-to-use solutions in the business intelligence market frustrate managers and business analysts alike. On-demand SaaS solutions are low-risk, scalable, and offer the potential of higher returns. As a result, SaaS-based BI solutions are emerging as strong alternatives for companies of any size that aim at analytics-driven decision-making.

PivotLink's on-demand BI solution combines innovative technology with cloud-computing, enabling a fundamentally new approach to delivering business intelligence at scale. PivotLink makes it easy for organizations to maximize the value of their key information assets and create sustainable competitive advantage. PivotLink provides a comprehensive, scalable, and highly secure business intelligence platform in a SaaS model that greatly reduces the cost and complexity of business intelligence. PivotLink's on-demand BI platform can help businesses:

- Reduce the cost and complexity of BI deployments
- Unburden IT from time-consuming BI projects and shift its focus to data quality, service, and innovation
- Extend more data to more users in a self-service model
- Enable secure collaboration within and outside the organization

PivotLink's self-service BI solutions are designed for the way people work and consume analytical information in today's dynamic and information intensive business environment. Our dashboards, metrics and analytics make it easier than ever for business users to tap into their data online, get better insight into their day-to-day activities, make decisions confidently and react quickly to changes in the business.

PivotLink was founded on the simple, yet powerful principle that it should be easy for business users to securely analyze any data, any way they want, and share their insights with colleagues and partners wherever they are. PivotLink's approach is to put affordable, secure and easy-to-use analytic tools into the hands of the line of business users and empower them to make better, timelier decisions—without burdening IT.

## APPENDIX

## Benefits and Possible Outcomes from Analyzing Information Interdependencies

ENTERPRISE DATA FOR ANALYSIS	BENEFITS/OUTCOMES
<b>Finance</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Calculate daily payment and collection status</li> <li>• Improve purchasing by analyzing expenditures by supplier across locations</li> <li>• Audit spending and key cost ratios by region, department, and employee</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinated planning of resources and expenses</li> <li>• Timely understanding of the company's risk exposure</li> <li>• Fact-based strategic decisions</li> </ul>
<b>Customer</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor customer service levels by goal</li> <li>• Analyze customer service by segment and customer satisfaction</li> <li>• Analyze business operations (such as shipping, on-time delivery, and return rates) and tangible resource use (such as trucks, rooms, hospital beds, and people)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better alignment of conflicting departmental goals (such as the cost to serve a customer vs. customer satisfaction)</li> <li>• Customer growth in appropriate segments</li> <li>• Improved customer experience</li> </ul>
<b>Sales</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Combine pipelines from agents, distributors, and direct sales into a single forecast</li> <li>• Compare performance between new and seasoned sales reps</li> <li>• Analyze on-hand inventory, sales by product, margin by product, and discounts by demographics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved sales efficiency</li> <li>• Improved sales effectiveness, leading to reduced discounts and better customer satisfaction</li> <li>• Improved visibility, enabling more reliable forecasts and more confident decision-making</li> </ul>
<b>Supply Chain</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highlight out-of-stock situations with exception reports</li> <li>• Gain control of transportation costs by carrier, product, and region</li> <li>• Align production schedules with demand forecasts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Efficient parts sourcing – lowering costs without impacting quality or timeliness</li> <li>• Reliable delivery on customer commitments</li> <li>• Reduced inventory costs</li> </ul>
<b>Human Capital</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyze trends in staffing levels and turnover rates</li> <li>• Analyze cost and budget variances by department, level, and region</li> <li>• Track trends in health-care, overhead, on-boarding, and training costs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure compliance with benefits, medical leave acts, and labor laws</li> <li>• Lower employee turnover</li> <li>• Improve productivity by ensuring pay for performance</li> </ul>

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## LEARN MORE

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Learn how PivotLink's on-demand business intelligence can improve your business by visiting our website at [pivotlink.com](http://pivotlink.com).

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## ABOUT PIVOTLINK

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PivotLink, headquartered in San Francisco, CA, is the leader in on-demand business intelligence (BI). Built from the ground up by Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) and BI industry visionaries and veterans, PivotLink's award-winning solutions put affordable, secure and easy-to-use analytic tools into the hands of line of business users, freeing IT to focus on strategic business initiatives. PivotLink is a privately held company backed by Trident Capital, Emergence Capital Partners and StarVest Partners.

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