BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE GOES SPATIAL

Location Intelligence via Web-based Mapping Platforms

Location Intelligence combines Business Intelligence with spatial analysis and includes the visualisation of various data on a map. Location Intelligence is an important tool for optimising business processes, business structures and customer relationships. Although some initial investment is necessary with respect to licenses, data, training and integration efforts, various companies have already discovered the benefits and have been using a classic Geographic Information System (GIS) since the early 1990s. Now, with the release of web-based mapping platforms such as Google Maps, MapQuest, Bing Maps or Nokia/Navteq Location Platform (to name but a few) and their professional developer interfaces (APIs), the chance has arisen to add a spatial dimension to business tasks without requiring substantial initial investment. This article explains the differences between web mapping platforms' APIs and the classic GIS solutions. It also focuses on some business examples and attempts to predict a number of market trends relating to the two basic architectures for commercial use.

Many enterprises plan, optimise and monitor their business processes as well as their Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) by using IT-supported Business Intelligence (BI) systems. These systems are intended to collect, aggregate, extrapolate and visualise data in order to generate essential and transparent facts to aid decision-making. The data processed for these tasks originates mainly from Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems, Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems and other important information sources within the company. Business Intelligence systems are typically based on data warehouses with powerful data import and calculation methods which enable large datasets to be processed within a relatively short space of time. By definition, a BI system has a powerful cockpit to allow the visualisation of data in the form of charts, dashboards and reports.

Well-known BI systems include SAP Business Warehouse (SAP BW), Oracle Business Intelligence Suite, Microsoft Business Intelligence and IBM Cognos. In addition to the large BI system manufacturers, there are also many smaller, often highly specialised providers of BI systems such as Qlickview, Corporate Planning, KHK Sage and Evans Consulting.

In the past, BI systems have primarily been implemented and used in large, international companies. Today, however, increasing numbers of smaller companies are also investing in professional data structures. In view of this, and the fact that BI systems are now available with standard functionality and affordable pricing for licensing and implementation, it is clear that the number of implementations of BI systems among smaller companies is growing tremendously. According to Gartner Inc., revenues in the global market for Business Intelligence software reached USD12.2 billion in 2011.

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