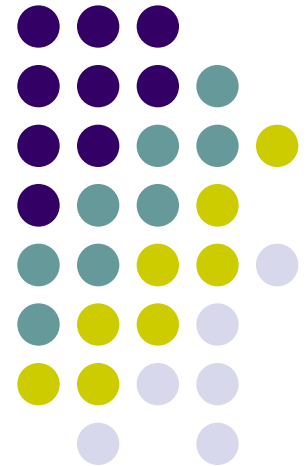


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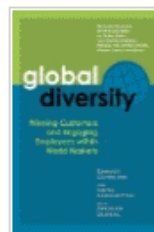
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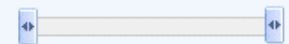
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Since founding DecisionPath Consulting in 1999, Nancy and I have had the privilege of working with great clients and colleagues. We have always approached our engagements in the spirit of partnership: we bring our general business knowledge, enthusiasm, and expertise in business intelligence and data warehousing, and our clients afford us an opportunity to help them succeed. In the process of achieving those successes, we've observed a variety of challenges that can derail even the most promising BI opportunities. Simply put, most of these challenges are *business* challenges.

This experience has led us to conclude that if companies are going to fully realize the profit potential of business intelligence (BI), there needs to be a better understanding of BI in the executive and managerial ranks. That is the reason for this book.

At the enterprise level, BI has demonstrated its ability to improve profits by tens or hundreds of millions of dollars annually, depending on the size of the company. Accordingly, BI should be a key tool for managing and improving performance—and profits—at just about any company in just about any industry. It should certainly rank alongside of management tools and techniques such as Strategic Planning, Benchmarking, Pay-for-Performance, Outsourcing, Customer Segmentation, Reengineering, Balanced Scorecard, and Total Quality Management.

That being said, many large companies tend to see BI as primarily a technology play. Thus, they fail to focus on the business challenges of leveraging business information and analytical techniques to drive better performance and improved profits. Some of the typical business challenges we have seen include:

- Misalignment between business strategies, core business processes that drive performance, and the BI program or initiative
- Lack of clarity about how BI will be used *by the business* to improve profits
- Insufficient leadership to drive changes to how the company uses information and analytical tools to drive results
- Insufficient recognition by IT management that BI needs to be managed differently than transactional systems
- Weak business sponsorship and lack of accountability for the BI program or initiative
- Under-investment in developing BI and data warehousing core competencies

In addition to observing these business challenges first-hand in many different companies, we also hear these themes echoed by the BI professionals we meet when we teach at industry conferences. On the flip side, we serve as judges for TDWT's annual best practices competition: a key aspect of winning companies is their ability to overcome such challenges. More broadly, by improving business performance, BI helps companies compete successfully in an increasingly global economy, which protects local jobs, economies, and communities.

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