IBM Analytic Answers

Highlights

- Requires no analytics, statistics or modeling expertise

- Provides a web-based user interface for uploading data and downloading answers

- Includes setup and modeling services from IBM analytics specialists

- Removes perceived barriers to analytics adoption, such as skill requirements and upfront cost

Overview

Your organization makes thousands, even millions, of operational decisions about its business every day. Consider debt collection, which requires deciding if a client is likely to make a payment on an outstanding account balance and how best to recover it. Or think about retail, which requires identifying which product recommendations will drive higher per-transaction spending for a specific customer. Individually, each decision about an approach or offer might have a relatively small value to your organization. But taken together, they can add up to have a significant effect on the success of your business strategy and on your bottom line.

In-house advanced analytics solutions address the specific business problems involved in making these and other operational decisions. Such solutions combine and integrate predictive analytics, business rules, scoring and optimization techniques into an organization's systems to provide optimal answers at the point of impact. The result is consistent, optimized outcomes for the organization.

These types of analytics solutions are often adopted when an organization is implementing an enterprise transformation initiative or developing an analytics center of excellence. However, many companies, often small and midsize businesses, perceive the deployment, implementation and use of such onsite analytics solutions as too costly, very time-consuming and requiring analytics expertise that they just do not have. At the same time, many would like to take advantage of the benefits that analytics solutions provide.

The cloud offers a real opportunity for organizations to take advantage of advanced analytics and to overcome what they perceive as obstacles to implementation:

- The need for in-house expertise or outside consultants
- Upfront capital investment in analytics software, skills and infrastructure
- Dependence on IT to integrate analysis with organizational decision-making
- The time and resources it takes to implement an in-house solution

With that in mind, IBM offers IBM® Analytic Answers, a portfolio of cloud-based solutions that is designed to provide key predictive and prescriptive insights for better business decisions. And, no software license purchase, analytics expertise or infrastructure implementation is required.

Just add data and go

Built and hosted on one of the leading analytics platforms and offered by subscription, the applications in the IBM Analytic Answers portfolio:

- Make predictions and recommendations at the individual level that can address key business problems for your specific industry.
- Use your data and are tailored to your business but are based on IBM's analytics expertise to help get you up and running faster.
- Provide answers in a format you can read directly, easily integrate into business workflows or import into IBM Cognos® Insight for more detailed exploration of the analytical results.

Best of all, the process is not complicated, involves no upfront investment and requires no statistics or modeling expertise. In fact, the solution provides the recommendations you need in just a few steps (Figure 1):

1. In an initial engagement, you provide historical data to IBM's analytic specialists who then use your data to build and customize predictive models and analytic processes. This work is included with your Analytics Answers subscription.

2. After the initial setup is complete, you use your web browser to upload your latest purchase data and Analytic Answers applies your models to make predictions and recommendations.

3. You download the insights and recommendations and apply this information to your business activities and operations.

You repeat Steps 2 and 3 as often as you like to get new and refreshed insights and recommendations.
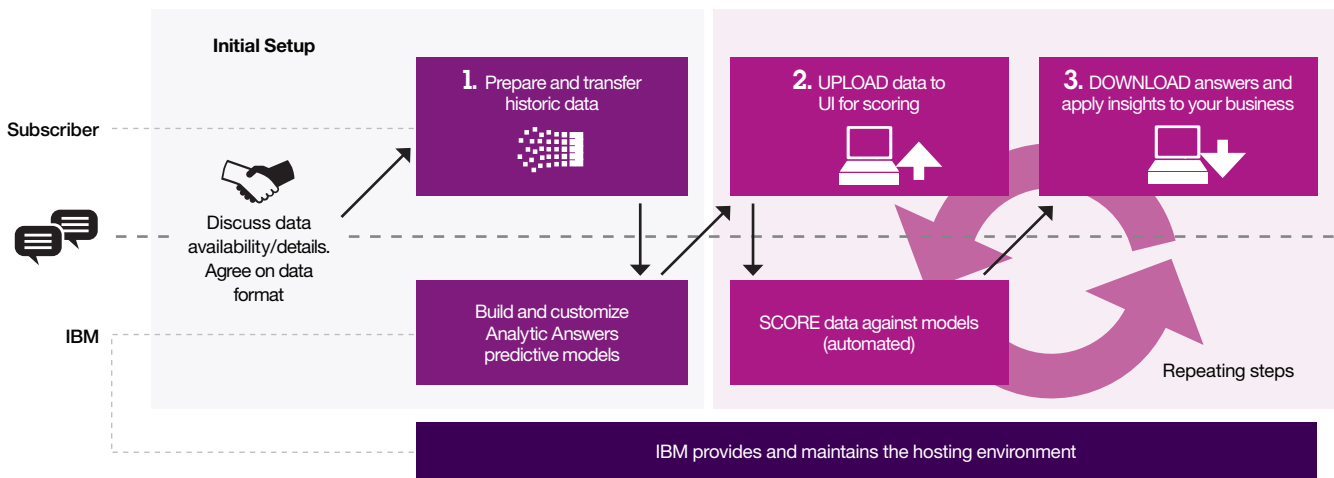
Analytic Answers in three simple steps

Figure 1: Analytic Answers provide insights and recommendations in just a few steps.

No analytics expertise?
Budget constraints? No problem

Analytic Answers is a pay-as-you-go model that enables you to answer a specific business question quickly. In addition, the solution is scalable so it can grow with your business.

Analytic Answers was developed for companies who could benefit from advanced analytics but face budget constraints and might not have the analytics expertise or resources required to implement an in-house solution. Analytic Answers delivers high-value, predictive and prescriptive information and is designed for business users who are not statisticians or modelers. The answers are expressed in terms that can be directly acted on, such as recommendations of products to offer a retail customer or which incentive will keep an insurance policy holder loyal.

The results provided by Analytic Answers offer predictions and recommendations at the level of individual cases. They can be used by other systems and applications such as workflow systems or CRM tools to drive actions that result in better outcomes and higher returns. They can also be imported into business intelligence tools such as Cognos Insight, enabling you to explore the patterns, relationships and insights behind the analytical results. This might involve, for example, studying the profiles of loyal insurance policy holders versus those most likely to defect or observing how potential customer value varies by location.

Because Analytic Answers uses IBM's platform and extensive analytics expertise, you can get up and running quickly while still benefitting from a solution tailored to your business. By eliminating the need to purchase software licenses, host infrastructure, hire analytics experts or train people on new skills, you can adopt advanced analytics faster and at a lower cost.

Why Analytic Answers is right for you

Analytic Answers is an ideal solution for companies of any size who want the benefits of advanced analytics without making major capital investments, hiring or engaging analytics experts or taking the time and resources for a major infrastructure investment. It is cloud based, backed by IBM Lab Services and designed for your busy organization.

Cloud-based

Because it is cloud based, the infrastructure, software, implementation and analytical processing are handled by IBM. And, because it is a subscription, you pay as you go. No personally identifiable data needs to be uploaded to the cloud, so you can be assured that your sensitive and confidential data remains your own. IBM data centers are built to high specifications for resiliency and security to protect applications and data. In addition, IBM data center operations include proven practices for process and energy efficiency, which enables IBM to realize cost savings that are shared with customers.

Backed by IBM Lab Services

Because it is backed by IBM Lab Services, you get help from specialists. You receive a combination of technology and consultant guidance in a mix of prepackaged software and customized delivery.

Specialists tailor your models for your data and to fit your business, so they are uniquely yours and not a "one-size-fits-all" solution that can be used by all your competitors. The combination is unusual in the cloud era and is designed to provide the precise price and performance balance that businesses need.

Designed for business users

Because it is designed for business users who are not technical experts, the insights and recommendations go straight to those who need them the most: the lines of business. You log into the system, select a question from the services you have subscribed to and upload your data. The system returns the answers you are looking for in the context of your own data. No coding, no query language and no statistics expertise are required. Even the answers arrive in a simple format: a flexible CSV file that can be opened with Excel or other software used by most businesses.

The Analytic Answers applications

One of the main objectives of Analytic Answers is to provide solutions for specific industries and business functions. For that reason, four applications are available to different industries and government organizations and more are being developed. These applications are:

- *Analytic Answers for Retail Purchase Analysis and Offer Targeting.* Better understand customer purchases and design targeted promotions and recommendations with the best chance for success.
- *Analytic Answers for Insurance Renewals.* Keep policyholders loyal while making more efficient use of retention expenditures.
- *Analytic Answers for Prioritized Collections.* Make informed decisions about how best to pursue outstanding debts and which debts to write off.
- *Analytic Answers for Student Retention.* Take the steps necessary to encourage at-risk students to stay enrolled.

Conclusion

Analytic Answers helps make it possible for organizations of all types to take advantage of the power of advanced analytics. IBM's extensive analytics expertise and powerful analytics platform are combined to create a solution tailored to your business, using your data. Multiple types of answers address a variety of business objectives for a number of industries.

Companies concerned about the high cost of software licensing and hosting infrastructure, heavy reliance on analytic experts, and long implementation times can benefit from Analytic Answers. With an Analytic Answers subscription, you are insulated from these challenges. After IBM's specialists have set up and tailored the solution for you, all you need to do is upload data to a simple web-based user interface and then download the results, or "answers."

About IBM Business Analytics

IBM Business Analytics software delivers data-driven insights that help organizations work smarter and outperform their peers. This comprehensive portfolio includes solutions for business intelligence, predictive analytics and decision management, performance management, and risk management.

Business Analytics solutions enable companies to identify and visualize trends and patterns in areas, such as customer analytics, that can have a profound effect on business performance. They can compare scenarios, anticipate potential threats and opportunities, better plan, budget and forecast resources, balance risks against expected returns and work to meet regulatory requirements. By making analytics widely available, organizations can align tactical and strategic decision-making to achieve business goals. For further information please visit **ibm.com**/business-analytics.

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