IBM Concert and IBM Cognos TM1—Improving performance by reducing decision-making latency

In-context metrics and collaboration for today's business users

Contents

Overview

Making business decisions is difficult enough when you have all the information you need right in front of you. But it can be maddening when you have to shift back and forth between applications and systems simply to verify the accuracy of your data and get prompt input and agreement from all the stakeholders who need to participate in the decision-making process.

In a business environment where speed and agility are highly prized, performance management capabilities need to be both mobile and collaborative. And those capabilities need to be delivered through an interface designed for a mobile workforce accustomed to working with social applications. In addition, for maximum flexibility and fast time-to-value, those capabilities need to be available in a cloud-based deployment.

IBM Concert — The new face of performance management

IBM® Concert is the solution that delivers the capabilities that business users need—and expect—in the second decade of the 21st century. It has the ability to transform the way people work in performance management processes anytime, anywhere, and in companies of any size. It dramatically improves the speed and quality of team-based decision-making with guided business processes, personalized task lists and a highly graphical user interface that enables co-workers to collaborate more easily. It lets decision makers share performance data through their mobile devices and it helps drive smarter decisions by providing access to in-context performance metrics and KPIs.

IBM Concert "wraps around" IBM Cognos TM1® and supports the entire conversation surrounding planning, budgeting, forecasting and analysis. By serving as a common user interface with other IBM Business Analytic solutions, IBM Concert allows seamless integration across applications. It takes a practical, "day in the life" approach to the way business users manage their daily responsibilities. And it enables a logical, task-list-driven process for project management. IBM Concert helps users prioritize tasks at a glance and offers activity streams that alert users to changes in important metrics as they occur. It helps team members share insights so that high-priority tasks can be acted upon quickly.

Mobile access to IBM Cognos TM1 data

IBM Concert is designed to bring business users the same level of speed and interactivity that they have come to expect from the popular applications they use in their daily lives. Notifications sent directly to mobile devices enable the user to focus on alerts or changes, and drill down into the details of key metrics. But perhaps more important is the fact that the same interface provides access to questions or comments from other participants in the decision-making process. Users can access reports containing data from Cognos TM1 at any time from any location. They can monitor progress on plans and forecasts, and participate in ongoing decision-making on both Android and Apple smartphones.

Cloud-based deployment of IBM Concert lowers cost and speeds time to value

As a cloud-deployable solution, IBM Concert frees the organization from the cost of maintaining hardware and the burden of installing software upgrades. Organizations can accelerate their time-to-value while enjoying greater flexibility to add or remove users virtually at will.

Cloud-based deployment offers a range of benefits, including a shift from capital-intensive to operational cost models, lower overall cost, greater agility and reduced complexity. It can also allow companies to shift their IT resources to higher-value-added activities. The availability of on-cloud deployment enables organizations to choose the best delivery mechanism for their particular corporate environment—without sacrificing capabilities or limiting future deployment options.

IBM Concert and IBM Cognos TM1— A budgeting scenario

Here's an example of how IBM Concert and Cognos TM1 can work together to speed decision making in a hypothetical budgeting scenario.

A sales manager opens the IBM Concert home page where an alert (shown on the left in Figure 1) indicates that the Sales Expense metric has changed from green to red. He also sees the Sales Expenses figure displayed at the top of the screen, indicating that the year-to-date actuals for Sales Expenses are over budget. To learn why, he clicks on the performance dashboard to get more details, drilling down into budget data drawn from Cognos TM1.

Figure 1: IBM Concert home page.

Figure 2: A dashboard displays metrics both graphically and through colored status indicators.

The graph on top (Figure 2) shows that sales expenses are indeed the culprit, and KPI's (shown on the lower right in Figure 3) indicate sales training is causing the overage. To address the problem, the sales manager uses the Conversations function on the right side of the screen to suggest a reduction in spending on sales training. He then creates a simple vote to gauge support for the idea and offer people an opportunity to agree or disagree, and voice their opinions.

Meanwhile, a Sales VP has received the same alert about the Sales Expenses metric changing from green to red delivered to her smartphone (Figure 4). The sales VP clicks on the alert, and sees the manager's suggestion to cut costs by reducing the sales training budget. She also sees the vote totals so far and the comments from others involved in the budget process, including a comment that sales training is needed to address changes in the product mix.
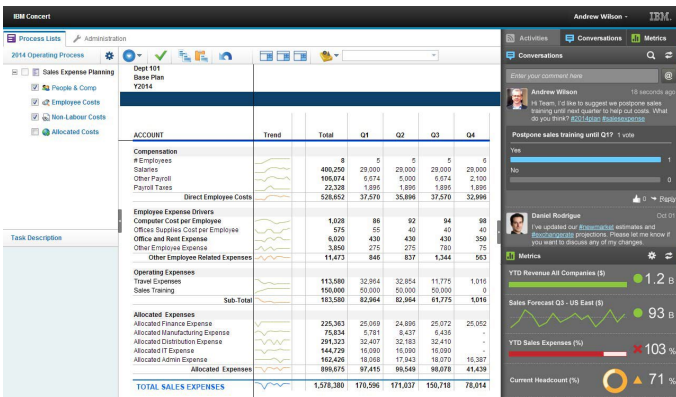
Figure 3: The Conversations function (on the right of the screen) includes a simple voting tool that enables users to quickly sample the opinions of co-workers.

The sales VP votes, enters a comment and invites the company CFO into the conversation, all from the same interface. The CFO receives the alert on his smartphone, where he is able to view the metrics that initiated the conversation and add his insight after being alerted by the VP of Sales. He suggests that the sales manager find another way to cut expenses.
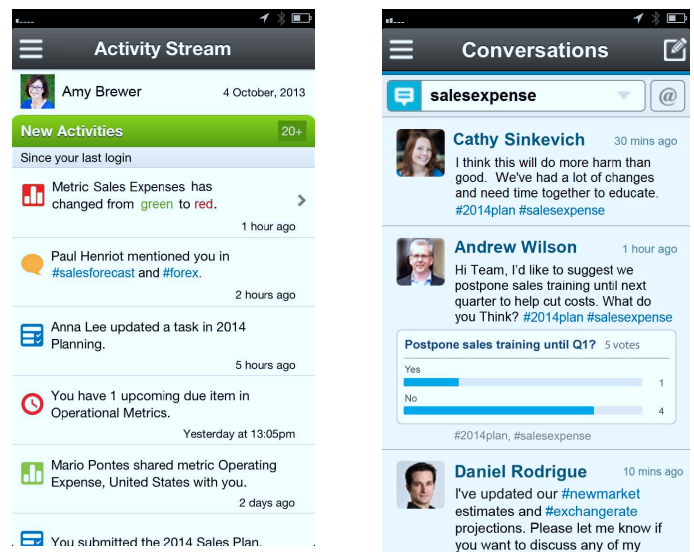
Figure 4: Alerts notify users when important metrics change. Users can poll colleagues to gauge sentiment on a proposed course of action.
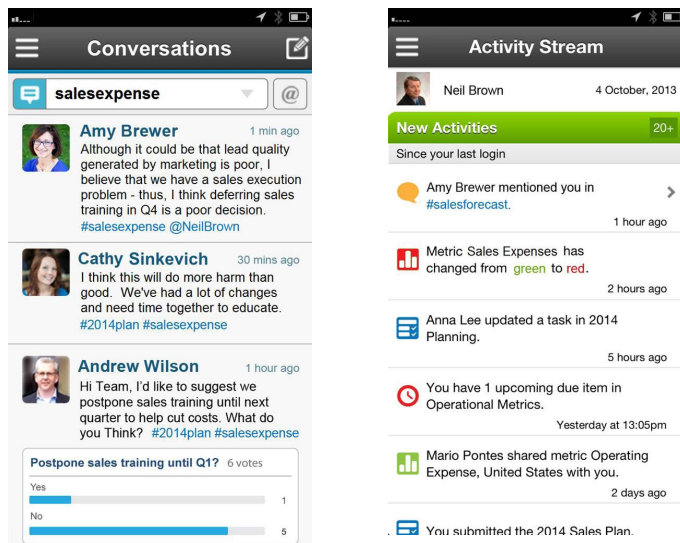
Without the collaboration facilitated by IBM Concert and access to the budget and forecast data from Cognos TM1, the sales manager might have moved ahead and made a decision without the insights and input from other key personnel. IBM Concert with its contextually relevant metrics and collaborative capabilities improves decision-making, driving better results.

Conclusion

IBM Concert offers a revolutionary collaborative environment for users of IBM Cognos TM1 and other IBM performance management solutions. This web-based, mobile-ready solution enables individuals to quickly access relevant reports and analysis, and easily view, understand and interact with the specific performance factors they need to act on. For organizations both large and small, IBM Concert offers access to performance management data through a single, intuitive, highly graphical user interface. And its collaborative environment allows everyone involved in a decision to interact through real-time comments and questions—dramatically improving the speed and quality of decision making.

Figure 5: Mobile users can be invited to participate in the decision-making process, with full access to shared metrics.

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 such areas 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 more information, see **ibm.com**/business-analytics.

Request a call

To request a call or to ask a question, go to **ibm.com**/business-analytics/contactus. An IBM representative will respond to your inquiry within two business days.