More targeted information with IBM Cognos 8 BI

What's new in IBM Cognos 8 BI version 8.3

The wider adoption and increased use of business intelligence (BI) software broadens the range of people working with reports, analysis, dashboards, and scorecards. It can also threaten to overwhelm them with information; particularly as new data sources are connected to a BI system. What is most reliable? What can they trust? BI software must be more flexible, and ensure it helps make data serve the users, rather than the other way around.

Problems prioritizing data and seeing through it to useful information are common complaints. Both new and experienced users will benefit from software that doesn't just serve up data, but helps tailor the information so it is consumable and presented to make the best sense for the audience. You need the ability to choose what information you see based on your role. Data must serve your decisions.

IBM Cognos 8 BI recognizes these issues. IBM Cognos 8 BI is the only software delivering the complete range of BI capabilities: reporting, analysis, scorecarding, and dashboards on a single, proven architecture. It's part of the complete and integrated Cognos platform for performance management.

The newest version of this industry-leading business intelligence software extends features and benefits to help business users and IT administrators get more value from your software, and your corporate data assets.

Overview: More targeted information features

As a IBM Cognos 8 BI customer, you now have more options for information delivery through self-service personal alerts and enhanced dashboard interactivity. The new version of IBM Cognos BI software introduces and enhances watch rules, report alerts, and watch items to allow you to target the information that is delivered to you. Global synchronized filters and tabbed portal pages deliver information to you in briefing-book style within a portal.

As a business user, having the right data, modeled in a way that makes sense for your business is a critical element for self-sufficiency. IBM Cognos Transformer, the IBM Cognos PowerCube® engine and modeling environment, has been integrated with IBM Cognos 8 BI security and metadata in this newest software version. As a business user with specialized domain knowledge, you can generate OLAP cubes with targeted data that suits your needs. You can leverage reports created in IBM Cognos 8 BI as metadata sources for multidimensional data cubes, and easily integrate external data sources such as Excel files.

IBM Cognos 8 BI supports Sharepoint 2003 and 2007, and lets you save report outputs to a file system. These enhancements target the value of IBM Cognos BI by integrating with important information delivery and archiving solutions within your organization.

Other features and benefits of IBM Cognos 8 BI are captured in these issue papers connected with the newest software release, version 8.3: *Support for more user communities* and *Easier modeling and management*.

Specific features of more targeted information

Briefing books

When IBM Cognos ReportNet™ was first introduced, one of its key features was the ability to present more than one report on a single page, with ease of use and flexibility in the overall presentation. Its approach was to simplify report creation based on users' requirements, so they can access the data more easily. In the newest version of IBM Cognos 8 BI, the "Briefing Book" facility extends this value.

With briefing books, you can tell an extended data story with multiple pages of reports, with exceptional flexibility in creating these briefing books. Best of all, you can save, schedule, and burst multi-page reports as if they were a single item for IT to maintain. Briefing book features listed below, are also applicable in most regular reports.

Presentation
- Create and mix different formats in the same report.
- Create multiple reports in a single report.
- Play with the layout to ensure the data is presented the way it should, rather than force-fitting data into pre-existing formats.

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- Add table of contents (TOC) items directly inside reports. The TOC items also provide page numbers and dynamic links to the content.

- Mix orientations—portrait or landscape—and paper sizes for presentation in a single briefing book report, so they match the requirements of the data.

- Span reports across two or more page widths in a PDF. This is useful when you want wide data in lists and crosstabs to show in its original size. In previous releases, the size of the list or crosstab was scaled down when necessary to fit on a single page.
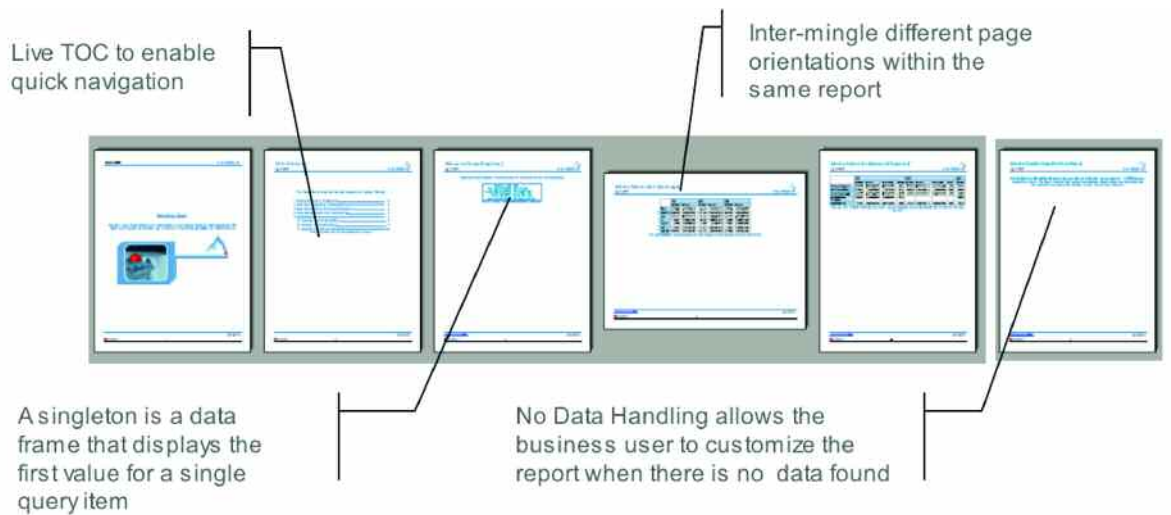
Use of Data

- Insert a single data item anywhere in your report using the singleton object. The singleton object retrieves only the first row value for that query.

- Inserting a single data item is useful when you want to show a value independent from others in the report or when you want to insert boilerplate text—company name and address—or adding the total revenue value in the header of each page in a report.

- Handle situations where no data is available in a report. When a query returns no data, you can choose either to provide alternate content or to remove the data frame from the report. In this way, you know if you've received data…or the report has an error.

- Use guided drill-through capacity—the hallmark of IBM Cognos 8 BI—so you can go from summary information to underlying detail in your data.

Personal alerts

Creating, editing, and using alerts is a powerful way to ensure information, and changes in information, you deem important find you rather than the other way round. The newest version of IBM Cognos BI software lets you:

- Set up a notification that pings you if a value changes inside any type of IBM Cognos 8 BI report. For example, see immediately if a customer complaint log changes, satisfaction index, or total revenue so you can take action.

- Choose what information is important to you among the various fields of a more general corporate report.

- Create and edit your own alerts as a business user, independent of IT, for greater freedom and flexibility.

Live TOC to enable quick navigation

Inter-mingle different page orientations within the same report

A singleton is a data frame that displays the first value for a single query item

No Data Handling allows the business user to customize the report when there is no data found

Define how you would like to be alerted

Highlight the report, or value within a report that you wish to be alerted on

New Transformer modeling

IBM Cognos Transformer has been a powerful utility for users, mostly more technical users, enabling them to build their own OLAP data "cubes", or IBM Cognos PowerCube data sources. Transformer is now fully integrated into IBM Cognos 8 Business Intelligence. This includes the ability to leverage Cognos metadata, support for cube building on IBM Cognos 8 BI platforms, and integration with IBM Cognos 8 BI security.

With this latest version of IBM Cognos 8 BI, any user can build a data cube for analysis, and not rely on IT for support. This minimizes the impact on resources, and speeds up time to decisions.

- If you are setting up a complex query, the number of columns of data can dramatically slow down query performance.
- With IBM Cognos 8 BI, you can save this complex query as a report.
- You can then open up your report with Transformer, and it converts the rows and columns to a multidimensional data model. With this model, you can compare the interactions among specific columns to see how data changes depending on your view.
- With IBM Cognos 8 BI, you can start in one BI capability, and move to another easily—letting the type of data and your need for it direct how you use it.

Global dashboard filtering

A dashboard can show you views of multiple regions, different operations, and levels of view. However, good dashboards typically share a context for all the gauges shown. The power in a dashboard is the simple, graphical view, and the fact you can easily compare one dial against another. The global dashboard filtering feature supports this examination.

You can select the dashboard context in the portal with one or more global filters. A global filter may be a prompt, a drill up or down action, or report based on drilling through content.

For example, you can add a prompt control to a portal page to automatically pass the selection to all reports on the page. When a prompt answer is changed, all related reports will refresh accordingly. So, if you answer a country prompt with Brazil, all related reports on the page will be filtered to show the data for Brazil.

When these techniques are used on a tabbed dashboard, the context is passed to all corresponding sections of the dashboard. This functionality allows for a single selection to drive a number of reports at once, if you choose.

More flexible organization of information

Users now have a greater facility to save and store reports anywhere, rather than being forced to save them through a root directory system. This makes it easier for non-technical people to use them.

You can now export report results directly to a server file system using Cognos Connection, the standard information portal that is part of Cognos software. You decide which formats to export, and select from a predefined set of directory locations. This feature makes it easy to integrate Cognos content into other external applications.

IBM Cognos 8 BI does not keep a record of the exported reports, but it does prevent and resolve name conflicts that arise when the same file is saved multiple times to the same directory. You are responsible for managing the reports after export. The software creates an XML descriptor file with the same file name prefix, which can be used by an external application to locate and manage the exported reports.

Get information your way with IBM Cognos Go!

The newest version of IBM Cognos 8 BI takes further advantage of pre-existing functionality in the product. The IBM Cognos 8 Go! family of capabilities is all about delivering information in new ways for new users.

IBM Cognos 8 Go! consumer modes help you increase business intelligence user adoption rates within your organization by letting users view and consume reports, analyses, and other BI content using familiar applications or devices, such as a BlackBerry®, search engine, MS Office application, or Web browser.

All IBM Cognos 8 Go! consumer modes leverage the IBM Cognos 8 Business Intelligence architecture, including security and metadata. There is no need to deploy or maintain a separate business intelligence environment.

IBM Cognos 8 Go! Mobile

- IBM Cognos 8 Go! Mobile lets users securely receive and interact with reports and analysis through their BlackBerry® handheld devices.
- Single authoring environment will let users access BI content regardless of language or locale.
- Rich client will provide users with actual IBM Cognos 8 BI content, not static renditions authored specifically for the mobile device.
- Leverages IBM Cognos 8 Business Intelligence, including report structures, security, metadata, etc. No need to build or configure a separate wireless environment.
- Purpose-built rich client will deliver optimized viewing and interactivity.

IBM Cognos 8 Go! Search

- IBM Cognos 8 Go! Search lets users find existing reports in IBM Cognos 8 Business Intelligence more quickly. It also lets you integrate BI content into enterprise search applications such as those provided by Autonomy, Fast, Google, and IBM.
- Search a broad array of BI content and data sources, including relational, OLAP, and unstructured data.

- Search full data content of reports, as well as titles, descriptions, and metadata.
- Industry-standard tips and techniques such as Boolean logic, phrases, and word stemming helps users fine-tune search terms and eliminate ambiguity.
- Sophisticated ranking and contextual support of search criteria delivers the most relevant data.

IBM Cognos 8 Go! Office

- IBM Cognos 8 Go! Office lets users view, interact with, and refresh BI content within MS Office applications such as Microsoft® Excel®, PowerPoint®, and Word®.
- Insert BI elements such as cross tabs, graphs, charts, and tables.
- Automatically refresh BI content and maintain links to contextual information.
- Create complex desktop reports such as briefing books and dashboards.

Summary

IBM Cognos 8 BI launched with a promise of leveraging all of your data, through all BI capabilities, for all of your users. This newest version of the software continues that promise with new features designed to help you target information more effectively.

For Cognos, an IBM company, the desired end result is not simply better use of data, or better reporting, but better decisions and business performance. That's the value of business intelligence from Cognos.

About Cognos, an IBM Company

Cognos, an IBM Company, is the world leader in business intelligence and performance management solutions. It provides world-class enterprise planning and BI software and services to help companies plan, understand and manage financial and operational performance. Cognos was acquired by IBM in February 2008. For more information, visit **www.cognos.com.**

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