



In 2020, looking back on this decade, what will be the single most impactful technical advancement driving business growth?

In looking back at this decade, the ability for a decision maker to access all forms of required data, analyze the data, and use the analysis to make informed business decisions in a “just-in-time” manner will be considered one of the most impactful technical advancements driving business growth.

Businesses make decisions every day that affect the operations of their business and ultimately contribute to the success or failure of their business. Companies that effectively use data to make informed business decisions are outperforming companies who have not figured out how to use their data.

The following table is derived from two Aberdeen Group reports (“The Analytical Masses – Building Self Service Insight for Line-of-Business Decision Makers”, July 2011 and “Data Management for BI – Big Data, Bigger Insight, Superior Performance”, January 2012):

Company Performance

Annual Revenue Growth %

Days to Integrate New Data Sources

% Critical Info Delivered On Time

% Annual Increase in Accessible data

Best-in-Class

27%

21

94%

32%

Industry Average

12%

53

77%

16%

Laggard

1%

130

41%

6%

In my opinion, the above table shows a strong correlation between the ability to access and analyze required data and make timely business decisions to positively impact the growth of a company.

The problem of data and data analysis will grow throughout the decade. Today we are already seeing data volumes grow in size as well as complexity. According to 2011 research by the Aberdeen Group, organizations saw an average increase in data volume of 38% over the previous 12 months. In my opinion, the growth of data volume and complexity will not stop. Capturing, storing and managing data will continue to be an issue. How to effectively use data to gain insight to make better and quicker business decisions will become an even bigger issue that will become more important to solve. This means that businesses will realize that they must get a handle on their “big data” issues and will demand solutions to address these issues.

As these demands grow, solutions will emerge, and more and more companies will be able to make more informed business decisions and drive business growth.

With various forces combining to transform the IT landscape, how do you see the role of the IT department evolving?

The various forces that are transforming the IT landscape are providing useful information to make business decisions, moving IT infrastructures to the cloud, and the effects of a more mobile workforce. As companies realize that they must address these forces, they will realize that not only will business processes need to change, but the role of IT must also change.

In my response above, I identified how solving the “big data” issue will be considered the most technical advance driving business growth in this decade. In solving this issue, the IT department will play a key role. However, their role will not be as the provider of the data and reports, but as the provider of a robust information infrastructure that provides access to many forms of data wherever they reside (for example, data on employee devices including mobile devices, data in the cloud, or data from public sources). And, the IT department must provide the right tools for the business decision makers to analyze and manipulate the data to make business decisions.

This requires the IT department to collaborate with the business decision makers to understand what data they need and how they use the data for decision making. Then the IT department must become experts at finding and integrating data into their information infrastructure, identifying analytical tools to use on the data, and educating the business decision makers as to how to most effectively use the data and tools to gain more meaningful business insight. In other words, the IT department will enable the business decision makers to be much more informed as they make decisions.

Moving the IT infrastructure to the cloud implies that the IT department will no longer be responsible for supporting the IT infrastructure (except for those parts of the infrastructure that are locally based such as desktops, laptops, etc). This will allow the IT department to focus more on being a strategic partner of the company’s business leaders. The IT department’s role will be to ensure that appropriate technologies are being effectively used to further the growth and profitability of the company. This means that the IT department must anticipate the evolution of technology in order to plan ahead for the use of new technologies in the company.

One key set of technologies that the IT department must ensure is being properly used are mobile technologies. Today, enterprises are under constant pressure to integrate the use of mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets into the IT environment. Years ago when the workforce went mobile with laptops and notebooks, the problem was much simpler. Most enterprises supplied laptops to their employees and managed those laptops carefully. In today's environment, employees are buying their own mobile devices and demanding that they can use them for business (usually starting with e-mail access). The IT department must work with the company's management to ensure policies and procedures are in place to guarantee the security of the company's information regardless of how the information is accessed.

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