

BICC Best Practices: Functions and Roles

Highlights

- **Business Intelligence Competency Centers are proven to help deliver business intelligence smoothly across the enterprise.**
- **BICCs come in many forms, but all help build BI expertise, encourage use of standards and share best practices.**
- **Organizations should focus a new BICC on addressing a single challenge, then expand and enhance services as the performance management culture matures.**

Enhancing BI expertise and adoption

"The urgent drives out the important."

So goes the adage describing our knee-jerk reactions that keep us from focussing on what's good for us. In the realm of performance management, urgency drives organizations to rush a system into place to meet immediate needs. But this knee-jerk reaction only creates stove-piped business intelligence implementations and inconsistent information delivery.

A business intelligence competency center (BICC) is a proven way of helping unite the stovepipes and deliver consistent business intelligence across an enterprise. A BICC is a virtual or

fixed team of IT and line-of-business professionals focussed on building BI expertise, standardizing technology and sharing best practices across an organization.

The nature of a BICC will vary from one organization to the next. Some centers originate in IT, while others begin within lines of business. Some come from on high, others from the ground up. Some start small and grow, others launch with full services. Some are centralized, while others consist of a federated network of BICCs across an organization. But the common thread in all of these diverse models remains: strengthening BI expertise and adoption.

The evolving BICC

A large transportation manufacturer founded a BICC in order to encourage the adoption of performance management tools across the company. Once a critical mass was using the standard tools, the center moved into providing:

- Technology support services
- User needs analysis
- Training to jumpstart implementation
- License management
- A best practices knowledge repository
- PM Project start-up help

"Having a BICC builds a larger community beyond the center itself," said a senior lead of the BICC. "A community of practice helps you sway the number one barrier to successful performance management: culture."

Common services

What kind of services does a BICC provide to achieve its goals? While again this will vary from one to another, the three functions most common to all BICCs are the following:

1. Capture and disseminate best practices

Knowledge sharing can be done through a repository of tips, methodologies and best practices. In a mature community of practice, all users can share and update the best practices as the performance management system evolves.

2. Advise and consult on projects

A BICC can provide start-up consulting services for performance management projects within the

organization. This may include expertise in business analysis. A BICC can help project leaders leverage existing tools, processes, best practices and training. Because of its involvement in many areas, it can also provide a valuable cross-business perspective.

3. Promote user adoption

When the tools are easy to use, user adoption is faster. However, changing users' habits is almost always work. A BICC can provide user support and training to build interest, confidence and skills in using the system. Some organizations choose to integrate BICC support functions into the existing helpdesk, which can perform triage on questions and direct users accordingly.

"Building community and creating a groundswell of interest in performance management can catalyze change, as long as you take an approach that is appropriate to your organizational culture."

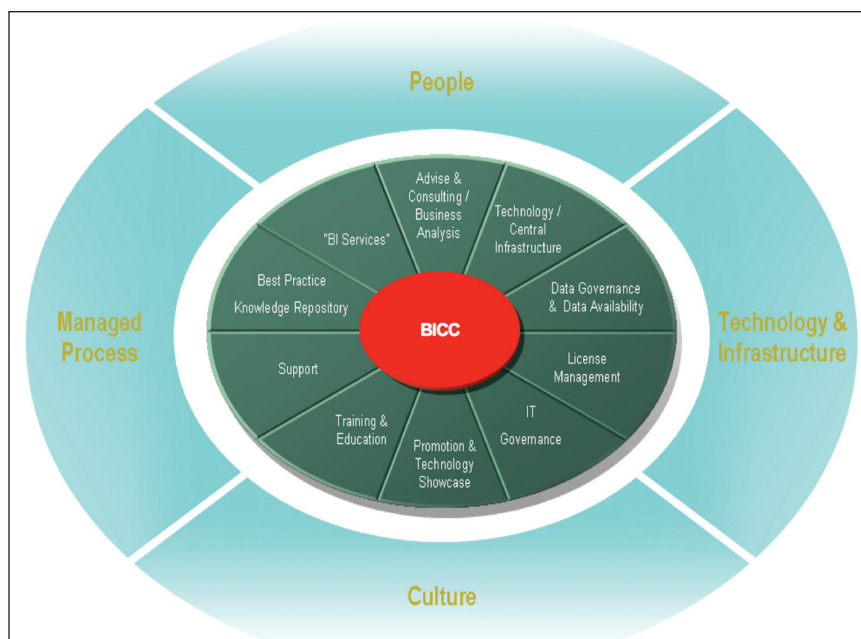
– Michael Dziekan from the IBM Cognos Office of Strategy

Functional areas

While these are the most common roles of BICCs, there is a larger range of services they can provide. Another way of looking at the complete range of functions of a BICC is through the interlocking areas of people, process, technology and culture.

Culture

How can a BICC influence a culture? An organization's collection of opinions, biases and practices is often thought to be the greatest ally—or barrier—to adopting performance management. The BICC can take on the role of promoting and showcasing PM tools and the successes they have enabled. Having executive sponsorship or, better yet, leadership of a BICC goes a long way in bringing organizational culture on board. Another important way of bringing about cultural change is to ensure the interlock between business and IT within a BICC.



A BICC can help in a range of areas, including functions related to people, process, technology and culture.

The grass roots BICC

Because of its decentralized nature, a global pharmaceutical and consumer packaged goods manufacturer built its BICC—in fact a federated network of BICCs—from the ground up. The network benefits from some enterprise-wide IT functions and loose sponsorship from the executive level. It supports the organization with standards, process excellence, training and consulting.

“It’s important to identify the people within the organization with a lot of passion for performance management and for the concept of a BICC,” said a BI technology manager at the company. “Collectively, they will carry the message forward and win over the culture.”

The company’s enterprise license agreement with IBM Cognos and its shared infrastructures have made deployment of PM straightforward. Close to 50,000 people use IBM Cognos, and the very active BI community of practice boasts almost 300 members.

People

What role can a BICC play to help individuals in a performance management context? Members can act as champions of the data platform and help build people’s trust in it, which can lead to more effective tool standardization. They can also help build competency in BI tools and processes by directing people to the training they need for their role.

Process

Silos don’t always refer to data. People and processes can be highly siloed. An effective BICC can unite people and dovetail processes that should be

working towards the common goal of enterprise performance management. To make this a reality, a BICC can enhance processes, procedures and service level agreements by creating and managing a best practices knowledge base that everyone can use, contribute to and update as the system evolves.

Technology

The BICC’s IT component can manage a number of technology issues that may include choosing standard tools in the architecture, harmonizing deployments, balancing server load and planning for new capacity coming

on board. It can help ensure that data is accurate, consistent and trustworthy. It can ensure best practices underlie all technology, including scorecards and coding. Managing licenses (who gets a license, how they are renewed or transferred and so on) can also come under the BICC.

Think strategically, start tactically

While a BICC over its lifetime can offer services in as many as 10 core functional areas, this does not mean that a newly hatched center needs to cover all of these functions. Many begin by identifying the most prominent issues that needs addressing, such as promoting the technology standard and increasing user adoption of the new system.

The goals of a BICC will naturally change over time. Once a standard is well established and users are on board, this function will move back into the company in some form and the focus of the BICC may shift to the diffusion of best practices and expertise, for example.

As your organization’s performance management culture matures, your BICC will grow and evolve, moving beyond functions as they mature, enhancing its offering to respond to ongoing needs.

The nascent BICC

A global food processing company has begun with a small, simple BICC—a perfect example of thinking strategically but starting tactically. It grew out of the growing pains of implementing performance management and the business owners' need to share tips on the tools. After IT became involved, the center expanded its reach to include broad user adoption within the company.

The BICC helped to bridge the silos of the company by getting groups to talk to one another about how they are using data now and how they plan to in the future. It also acts as a bridge between IT and the businesses.

"BICC members have become the ambassadors of BI," said a team lead for the production environment. "Now people go to them for help. Their BI skills are strong and they can talk the language of both business and IT. They continue to expand the expertise to the people they help. This solves some of the issues in IT, where we are always spread too thin."

About IBM Cognos BI and Performance Management

IBM Cognos business intelligence (BI) and performance management solutions deliver world-leading enterprise planning, consolidation and BI software, support and services to help companies plan, understand and manage financial and operational

performance. IBM Cognos solutions bring together technology, analytical applications, best practices, and a broad network of partners to give customers an open, adaptive and complete performance solution. Over 23,000 customers in more than 135 countries around the world choose IBM Cognos solutions.

About the IBM Cognos Innovation Center for Performance Management

The IBM Cognos Innovation Center was established in North America, Europe and Asia Pacific to advance the understanding of proven planning and performance management techniques, technologies, and practices. The Innovation Center is dedicated to transforming routine performance management practices into "next practices" that help cut costs, streamline processes, boost productivity, enable rapid response to opportunity, and increase management visibility.

Staffed globally by experts in planning, technology, and performance management, the Innovation Center partners with more than 3,000 IBM Cognos customers, academics, industry leaders, and others seeking to accelerate adoption, reduce risk, and maximize the impact of technology-enabled performance management practices.

To learn more about business intelligence competency centers, become a member of our online community at <http://communities.cognos.com> or learn more about BICC's at: <http://www.cognos.com/innovationcenter/businessintelligencecompetency/index.html>.

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December 2008
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