RESEARCH NOTE
LEVERAGING IBM COGNOS SOFTWARE WITH TRAINING

THE BOTTOM LINE

When IBM Cognos users complement their deployments with formal training services, end users become more productive, report building costs are reduced, and more end users adopt IBM Cognos tools such as BI and PM.

IBM supports its customers who deploy IBM Cognos applications by providing a variety of types of education-related services:

- Instructor-led training, which can be provided in person or online, and may be customized by IBM for particular end-user populations or even individual users.
- Web-based training, which enables end users to attend online training on an as-needed basis and to complete the training at their own pace.
- User adoption services, which helps in the assesment of specific training needs so that end-user adoption is both high and fulfills business requirements.
- Learning assessment services, which are used to evaluate the end users of existing deployments, so that skills gaps can be identified and addressed.
- Enterprise learning licenses (ELL), under which specific training materials can be used to train an unlimited number of users an unlimited number of times. An ELL is most beneficial when a customer does not want to create its own training assets and needs the flexibility to train multiple groups of users at the time of its choosing.

By analyzing many deployments of IBM Cognos software, Nucleus has found that companies that deploy this software tend to also invest in training from IBM. In order to assess the benefits of this additional investment, Nucleus analyzed users of IBM training services in industries that include banking, hospitality, and high technology.

This document is intended for deployment teams, training managers, and champions of BI or PM who are preparing to deploy IBM Cognos technology or are looking for ways to enhance an existing deployment.

BENEFITS OF IBM COGNOS TRAINING

Nucleus found that by turning to IBM for training and education, users of IBM Cognos software were able to improve the productivity of end users, broaden adoption, reduce report building costs, and reduce the cost of in-house training activities.

Improved productivity

When users of IBM Cognos software have access to training assets from IBM, they accomplish reporting and analytical tasks more quickly. Although people can sometimes teach themselves how to use BI or PM functionality using help files or trial and error, Nucleus finds this can significantly reduce the benefits from a deployment. When people have minimal training, they tend to resist adoption or teach themselves only what they need in order to get by. Unfortunately, this prevents users from fully using these technologies to make better decisions and become more productive. Nucleus found that organizations with high-ROI deployments often used training to ensure that people adopted rapidly and used IBM Cognos software to complete their work more efficiently:

- *"We have to invest in training. We want our people doing their reporting with a lot of uniformity and speed so that they can be out on the road meeting with customers."*

- *"The productivity difference arises on the technical side. The more our report builders know, the faster reports build, and the more easily end users can use BI to do things faster."*

- *"We're using training because our goal is to have all of the 2,000 sales and marketing people using IBM Cognos software for routine reporting. Otherwise there's no return on the investment in the deployment."*

Broader adoption

When deployments of IBM Cognos are augmented with IBM training assets, the technology tends to be adopted by more end users, increasing overall benefits. In fact, Nucleus found that deployment teams often turned to IBM for the creation of training assets that would enable maximum adoption. Deployment teams with large adoption objectives typically focused their training efforts on both end users and content creators:

- *"We needed more than 400 people using IBM Cognos software and there were three different types of user groups. We got all of them on board with customized formal training for each population."*

- *"In order to help more end users, we send content creators for a lot of training. The more that the technical team, report builders, and metadata modelers know, the more they can deliver assets that save time for different types of users."*

- *"Training is as important as the functionality itself. BI and PM can be so different for people that are used to Excel that you must have training to get a reasonable level of adoption."*

Reduced report building costs

Because IBM training assets enable more people to better utilize IBM Cognos software, it can reduce the workload for report builders. The more end users can accomplish with IBM Cognos software, the more they perform analytical and reporting tasks independently of their IT department or report builders. In fact, Nucleus has found that the reduction of report building workloads is often a primary business requirement for deployments of this software. Achieving this goal is often the result of formalized training:

- *"One of the reasons we had a payback of just a year and a half is that all 450 end users received formal training. They learned how to build their own*

queries, reports, and analyses, which has lowered the workload for our financial BI staff."

- *"Because of IBM training assets, more than half of our reports are created independent of IT. We're on track to increase that percentage to 90 percent over the next three months."*

- *"Our technical people used some advanced IBM training to learn how to replicate all of the pre-deployment reports in IBM Cognos. We've eliminated so much report building that it has freed up one full-time employee."*

Reduced training costs

Companies can reduce training costs by turning to IBM rather than creating and delivering training assets internally. Without economies of scale, creating the capability to internally train employees on BI or PM can be difficult and costly. Materials have to be written and distributed. Trainers have to create and deliver lesson content and provide assistance as employees learn how to use these tools. Although the Web or an intranet can reduce these costs, content creation is still time consuming and expensive. Nucleus found companies were able to overcome these difficulties and spend less money creating an educated user base by turning to IBM, which benefits from economies of scale because of the number of end users it has trained. At one company, a training manager said, "*Compared to sending someone away for training, including travel and entertainment, we spend a lot less money by putting IBM Cognos-created content on the training portal.*"

When training assets are centralized and standardized, benefits can also extend to line-of-business managers, who spend less time requesting and approving training expenditures. One customer of IBM training said, "*The biggest benefit is that managers don't have to deal with training issues. When they hire someone or start a new project, having IBM training assets online is much easier than special requests with the training department.*"

CONCLUSION

Companies that invest in IBM Cognos applications should consider augmenting their deployments with training assets from IBM. Although end-user focused functionality in these tools enhances adoption rates, Nucleus found formal training can accelerate and broaden adoption. The more IBM Cognos software is used, and and the better people are trained, the higher will be the productivity benefits and overall returns. Deployment teams can also use customized training assets from IBM to ensure that specific user groups adopt IBM Cognos functionality and change their workflows so that the business requirements of the deployment are met. Ideally, the scope of training should include creators of a variety of content. Whether someone is building a training manual, report, or dashboard, the more these content creators know about IBM Cognos tools, the better they can broaden the footprint and functionality of an IBM Cognos deployment.