

Business Solution Audit

Connexica

Business Intelligence
BIV003 - April 2011

Strengths

- ✓ One of the most productive BI tools we have assessed.
- ✓ Point and click user interface with excellent functionality.
- ✓ Powerful graphics including somewhat unique interactive Venn diagrams.
- ✓ Very fast, on-the-fly aggregation of data.
- ✓ Business users will 'get it'.

Weaknesses

- ✗ Fairly large indexes – but a small price for the functionality delivered.

Advisory

Business intelligence (BI) technology holds out much promise, but experience would tend to indicate that it can be difficult to use, requiring specialist skills and imposing considerable latency between need and information delivery. Connexica addresses these issues for many business needs and the ease-of-use has to be seen to be appreciated. The technology is built on the well regarded Lucene open software search technology and because of this most things are possible. While Connexica does not give much profile to unstructured data search, a great deal of functionality is delivered out-of-the-box so that email and documents can be incorporated into search and analytics functionality. The key to understanding the power of Connexica is that it provides a search approach to BI.

What this means on a day-to-day level is that business users can formulate their own analytical and search needs with ease. This is a highly pragmatic, but in no way compromised BI tool and we would recommend that organisations of all sizes should look at the offering.

What it Does

CXAIR from Connexica provides the tools for business users to directly analyse and search their data. There are no real limitations on the size of data and the 'index everything' approach employed by CXAIR means that real-time performance is staggeringly fast.

When a user first accesses the toolset a panel is displayed showing all available data sources (this can of course be controlled through permissions). It then becomes a simple matter of entering search terms and discovering which data sets contain information that is of interest. Once this has been established the search can be refined to whatever level is appropriate. Having established the relevant data users can then use a point and click interface to formulate reports and queries. Once again the options are comprehensive and it is a fairly simple matter to create the typical type of report a manager would be interested in – with categorisation and totals within categories (although many other functions are available).

At any point a user can elect to drill down further into data or move back up to a higher level view. This 'online prototyping' functionality is due entirely to the speed at which CXAIR executes its searches, delivering sub-second responses even on very large data sets (millions of rows).

The Venn diagram capability is worthy of special mention and since it is interactive users can find subsets and intersections within data very easily. For example it might be useful to analyse transactions by month, region and amount. By interactively moving the data sets within the diagram so they overlap it becomes possible to see how these three variables interact.



Many products offer dashboards but once again Connexica provides a particularly easy-to-use interface so business users can construct a dashboard for their own needs. Information can be presented in tabular format, graphically, using text, employing maps, and Venn diagrams can also be displayed. The dashboard comes with multiple-page functionality, with each page tabbed for access. Some suppliers would call this an Enterprise Performance Management system, and indeed it can be used for this and many other purposes.

What's Different

It should be clear by now that Connexica offers something very different to the traditional and often arcane BI toolset. Business users will find themselves at home with the technology very quickly and should soon be unveiling insights that might have been very difficult to achieve any other way.

It is also worth pointing out that because CXAIR employs the Lucene search technology we suspect that the capability of the technology will move on very quickly, since Lucene is also establishing itself as something of a de facto search technology.

As search and BI technologies inevitably converge Connexica should benefit from its early lead in this space.

About Connexica

Connexica was established in 2006 and is a privately owned company. The technology is used in a number of industries including retail and local government.

www.connexica.com