

Why Should You Consider SQL Server Reporting Services (SSRS)?

SSRS - An Ideal BI Reporting Tool

Why should you go for Business Intelligence (BI)?

BI has always been perceived as behemoth systems involving huge amount of money, time and labor. Trying to assemble a working system from shrink-wrapped software is often considered daunting. Pulling together products from multiple vendors could prove a challenge; pieces and parts may have worked individually, but integrating them together could prove a monumental task. Fully custom-built solutions can represent an astronomical expense.

But not anymore. While the Microsoft BI platform is not magic—some work is required to achieve results—Microsoft's SQL Server platform and integrated BI tools have overcome these past challenges.

The delivery of BI information to decision makers in a company can be accomplished in a number of ways. This is where Microsoft SQL Server Reporting Services acts as an excellent vehicle for the basic display and dissemination of BI information.

SQL Server Reporting Services (SSRS) combines the benefits of a centrally-managed reporting system with the flexibility and on-demand nature of desktop and web-based applications. A complete reporting platform, Reporting Services supports the entire report lifecycle, from authoring through deployment.

What makes SQL Server Reporting Services (SSRS) an ideal BI Reporting tool?

1. Support for Five Styles of BI

As a company forays into Business Intelligence, it must have a technology that can seamlessly deliver all five styles of BI with a single unified architecture and metadata. The five styles of BI are:

- i. Reporting
- ii. Scorecards and Dashboards
- iii. OLAP Analysis
- iv. Ad-hoc Query and Analysis
- v. Alerting and Report Delivery

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Equally important is the need for a single technology to provide all five styles as plug-and-play components on a single unified backplane and through a unified user interface. The unified backplane ensures that all styles of BI share common services and automatically build upon one another. The unified user interface ensures a common experience for all users, allowing them to seamlessly move between styles of BI without cumbersome application switching.

Companies can post reports on a portal, email them to users, or allow users to use the web-based report server to access reports from a folder hierarchy. Navigation, search, and subscription features help users locate and run the reports they need. Personalized subscriptions let them select the rendering format they prefer.

2. High Data and User Scalability

Over years, companies are faced with an explosion in the volume and scope of data they collect and generate. The myriad of systems, including ERP, CRM, Web sites, salesforce automation, SEC compliance, and supply chain management, contributes to this massive data influx. BI must be able to access all these databases to be truly effective.

A ROLAP (relational OLAP) architecture is necessary to access all data to the full depth and breadth of the largest databases. Relational OLAP architecture provides access to the largest databases with the highest interactive performance. SSRS, in conjunction with SQL Server Analysis Services, can access very large databases, yet maintaining considerable user interactivity. The product's modular, web-based design scales easily support high volume environments. One could create a reporting server farm with multiple reporting servers accessing the same core reports, serving thousands of web-based clients.

To achieve the highest user scale, companies need a BI technology like that of SSRS, capable of reaching all business users through the interface of their choice; a zero-footprint Web Interface that is instantly deployable to geographically distributed users; and a dynamic caching architecture. A dynamic, multi-level caching architecture provides increased performance as more people use the system, making each user's experience faster and more interactive, while imposing the absolute minimum load on database resources.

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3. User Self-Service – Ad hoc reporting

As the population of users and amount of data in the enterprise grows, user self-service becomes absolutely critical. To achieve broad-based self-service, companies need the SSRS technology that offers “what you see is what you get” (WYSIWYG) design, eliminating tedious user training in report design.

SSRS has an ad hoc reporting tool which enables business users to create their own reports and explore corporate data. Report Builder incorporates a user-friendly business query model that enables users to build reports without deep technical understanding of the underlying data sources.

4. Automated Maintainability

Cost-effective enterprise BI requires the ability to update all reports automatically, reflecting continual changes to underlying business definitions, business structure, and database structures. SSRS provides **centrally defined and administered business rules** which ensure all users have a single version of truth to look at.

5. Cost Effective

If your company has an Enterprise or Standard edition of Microsoft SQL Server running, you already have SSRS available with you. You don't need to shell out extra money for purchasing SSRS. That's the advantage that companies can draw from Microsoft Business Intelligence stack which provides a complete set of tools for end-to-end BI solutions.

Even if your company does not have an existing implementation of SQL Server, SSRS has the lowest licensing cost amongst the important vendors in the BI space. It does not require an 'army of consultants' for implementation. In addition, the server-based license model of SQL Server is definitely more cost effective as against user-based licenses.

In the long run, report maintenance becomes the dominant issue in total cost of ownership. Automated instantaneous updating provided by SSRS becomes a critical requirement and ensures the cost per report is minimized.

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6. Granular analytic capability - Drill through and parameterized reports

Even more effective for user self-service is a BI technology that can drill anywhere, allowing users to seamlessly drill through any combination of data in the database. SSRS provides the users with functionalities that have become standard in today's BI market. They arm the end users with key insights into their KPIs.

As they say, facts never lie. SSRS, with its advanced functionalities, has the capability to provide a measure of your company's past and current performance with intuitive analysis. If blended with planning and trending data, it can also give an insight to the future performance.

7. Microsoft Office integration

It's no surprise that SSRS provides seamless integration with Microsoft Office products. The integration does not require any customization or programming. End-users can use the familiar desktop environment which enables them to be more productive without learning new software.

Integration with SharePoint Server enables an end-user to view and manage reports completely from within a SharePoint document library. In addition, SSRS can also export reports into PDF for pixel perfect reporting.

8. Open APIs

Reporting Services offer a complete, server-based platform for creating, managing, and delivering traditional and interactive reports. At the same time, the modular design and extensive application programming interfaces (APIs) of Reporting Services enable software developers, data providers, and enterprises to integrate reporting with legacy systems or third party applications.

Because of the complexity and time required to embed reports into applications, reports are often created outside of the application using third-party tools and distributed manually or through batch jobs. By using SSRS, these applications can easily be extended to include a complete reporting solution, embedded within the application. SSRS also provides a tight integration with the Visual Studio .Net development environment.

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9. Presentation formatting with company branding

SSRS offers picture perfect formatting with company branding. No longer is a manual process required to juxtapose company logo and client information with the invoices. SSRS integration with Microsoft office and Adobe PDF provides for a one-step process to come out with a reporting document with company branding.

10. Security and administration

SSRS implements a flexible and a role-based security model to protect reporting resources. This ensures that every employee is allowed access to data which the user role is entitled to. In today's world, security of data has assumed paramount importance. SSRS provides enough security measures to ensure the safety of company data. SSRS also includes extensible interfaces for integrating other security models if desired.

About eDynamic

Established in 1999, eDynamic is a Global Web Solutions Firm. We are a one stop shop for Web solutions offering a wide range of services including Web and Enterprise Content Management, Portals, Web Design/User Experience, Online Marketing, Custom Application Development, Business Intelligence and Managed Services. We blend strategy, technology and creativity to deliver integrated, fully customized business solutions, and partner with our clients for cornerstone strategies and critical Web initiatives.

eDynamic has a flexible delivery model that is driven by agile methodologies & a cutting edge technology resource base. We also have partnerships in place with Sitecore, Ektron, Microsoft, Open Text, IBM, Kentico, Media Chase. Through our offices in New York, Phoenix, Los Angeles, Toronto, Dubai, and New Delhi, we are serving customers such as Suncor Energy, UPS, PepsiCo, New York Life, Aviva Insurance, Minnesota State University, Moneris Solutions, HarperCollins, Estee Lauder, GlaxoSmithKline, Sunlife, General Electric, Allianz, Advance America, Intercontinental Hotels, Jet Airways, Samsung, Sony, among many others.

eDynamic's BI offerings include

- ▶ Data Warehousing
- ▶ Analytical BI (OLAP)
- ▶ Google mash-ups
- ▶ Benchmark reporting
- ▶ Portal integration with BI tools
- ▶ Business process management
- ▶ Company branded reports
- ▶ Dashboard & scorecards
- ▶ Operational BI (OLTP)
- ▶ Key Performance Indicator analysis
- ▶ e-Statements
- ▶ Invoice generation
- ▶ BI solution maintenance and support
- ▶ Report designing, modification, customization

For more information on eDynamic's expertise in BI, refer to the link below:

www.edynamic.net/home/Services/ITServices/BusinessIntelligenceDataWarehousing.aspx

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