Growing Business Intelligence: An Agile Approach to Leveraging Data and Analytics for Maximum Business Value

By Larry Burns

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How do we enable our organizations to enjoy the often significant benefits of BI and analytics, while at the same time minimizing the cost and risk of failure? In this book, I am not going to try to be prescriptive; I won't tell you exactly how to build your BI environment. Instead, I am going to focus on a few core principles that will enable you to navigate the rocky shoals of BI architecture and arrive at a destination best suited for your particular organization. Some of these core principles include:

- Have an overarching strategy, plan, and roadmap
- Recognize and leverage your existing technology investments
- Support both data discovery and data reuse
- Keep data in motion, not at rest
- Separate information delivery from data storage
- Emphasize data transparency over data quality
- Take an agile approach to BI development.

This book will show you how to successfully navigate both the jungle of BI technology and the minefield of human nature. It will show you how to create a BI architecture and strategy that addresses the needs of all organizational stakeholders. It will show you how to maximize the value of your BI investments. It will show you how to manage the risk of disruptive technology. And it will show you how to use agile methodologies to deliver on the promise of BI and analytics quickly, succinctly, and iteratively.

This book is about many things. But principally, it's about success. The goal of any enterprise initiative is to succeed and to derive benefit--benefit that all stakeholders can share in. I want you to be successful. I want your organization to be successful. This book will show you how.

This book is for anyone who is currently or will someday be working on a BI, analytics, or Big Data project, and for organizations that want to get the maximum amount of value from both their data and their BI technology

investment. This includes all stakeholders in the BI effort--not just the data people or the IT people, but also the business stakeholders who have the responsibility for the definition and use of data. There are six sections to this book:

- In Section I, What Kind of Garden Do You Want?, we will examine the benefits and risks of Business Intelligence, making the central point that BI is a business (not IT) process designed to manage data assets in pursuit of enterprise goals. We will show how data, when properly managed and used, can be a key enabler of several types of core business processes. The purpose of this section is to help you define the particular benefit(s) you want from BI.
- In Section II, Building the Bones, we will talk about how to design and build out the "hardscape" (infrastructure) of your BI environment. This stage of the process involves leveraging existing technology investments and iteratively moving toward your desired target state BI architecture.
- In Section III, From the Ground Up, we explore the more detailed aspects of implementing your BI operational environment.
- In Section IV, Weeds, Pests and Critters, we talk about the myriad of things that can go wrong on a BI project, and discuss ways of mitigating these risks.
- In Section V, The Sustainable Garden, we talk about how to create a BI infrastructure that is easy and inexpensive to maintain.
- Finally, Section VI presents a case study illustrating the principles of this book, as applied to a fictional manufacturing company (the Blue Moon Guitar Company).

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Editorial Review

From the Inside Flap
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About the Author
Larry Burns has worked in IT for more than 30 years as a database developer, DBA, data modeler, application developer, consultant, and teacher. He holds a B.S. in Mathematics from the University of Washington, and a Master's degree in Software Engineering from Seattle University. He currently works for a global Fortune 500 company as a Data and BI Architect and Data Engineer (i.e., data modeler). He has written numerous articles for TDAN.com and DMReview.com, and is the author of Building the Agile Database (Technics Publications LLC, 2011). His interests include music, gardening, and landscaping. He is also an active member of Toastmasters, the international public speaking organization. He lives in Kent, Washington with his wife Becky.

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Pearlie Wong:

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