



SAP Crystal Reports

Review From A Customer

From IT Central Station, the leading review site for enterprise technology solutions.

Review by a Real User

Verified by IT Central Station



BI Expert at a healthcare company with 1,001-5,000 employees

it_user5802

WHAT IS MOST VALUABLE?

We use the InfoView web based interface to host the enterprise reports. The Crystal Reports is a good standard reporting product from any single data source. WEBI allows us to use multiple data sources to produce one WEBI document that can have many reports. If the Universes are designed with cross data source linking in mind, the Webi documents can be used as a great tool to relate data from multiple data sources and environments.

HOW HAS IT HELPED MY ORGANIZATION?

Our reports are no longer just a static product. Our users can actually interact with the reports. Because of this, we can generate a single enterprise wide report and the users can simply navigate to see only what is pertinent to them. Prior to this, the developers maintained a lot of "one off" reports. Basically the same report for different departments.

WHAT NEEDS IMPROVEMENT?

Business objects service packs are as notoriously bad as Microsoft new products. Full of bugs, they fix one thing but break others.

FOR HOW LONG HAVE I USED THE SOLUTION?

SAP Business Objects Universes and WEBI - we have been using it for 3 years. It was a progression from Crystal Reports which I have been using for 14 years.

WHAT WAS MY EXPERIENCE WITH DEPLOYMENT OF THE SOLUTION?

Once you get your security strategy built correctly, things go fairly smooth.

WHAT DO I THINK ABOUT THE STABILITY OF THE SOLUTION?

Once installed we have had to go back to Business Objects to get patches. Part of this is our own fault for going to Unix and Tomcat servers (to save licensing costs). On a Windows Environment this seems to work better. SQL Server ODBC's on the Tomcat servers are troublesome. Once it gets set, things go pretty well.

WHAT DO I THINK ABOUT THE SCALABILITY OF THE SOLUTION?

The scalability seems good. We have a large data repository. With over 23,000 users and 3,000 report. The reports are about 50/50 between WEBI and Crystal Reports

HOW ARE CUSTOMER SERVICE AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT?

Customer Service: Customer Service from SAP is good. Not stellar and not horrendously bad. I give them 6.5 out of 10. Technical Support: Depending on who you get. Some of their Technical support people are super great, others seem pretty novice about their product.

WHICH SOLUTION DID I USE PREVIOUSLY AND WHY DID I SWITCH?

We have been a Crystal report shop for a long time as it is a product supported by or primary data vendor. We have also tried to go to SQL Server Reporting Service but found it too limited. We have one product now using Cognos Elite. I find it very comparable but more clunky to use.

HOW WAS THE INITIAL SETUP?

Complex if you are not using Windows Servers. There are a huge number of options that allow you to make detrimental choices that you may not be aware of. Not much different than any other enterprise wide reporting system.

WHAT ABOUT THE IMPLEMENTATION TEAM?

In House

WHAT'S MY EXPERIENCE WITH PRICING, SETUP COST, AND LICENSING?

Unknown

WHICH OTHER SOLUTIONS DID I EVALUATE?

We did evaluate other options, but the fact that we were already invested in the Crystal Reports and our major vendor was supporting the Business Objects platform, we really saw the most benefit going with them.

WHAT OTHER ADVICE DO I HAVE?

Use Windows Servers if you can afford the licensing. If not be prepared to battle ODBC's, fonts, memory issues, and more. In the end, Cognos, Informatica, Business Objects, SQL Reporting Services require someone to know and understand the database structure. Good database structure results in good performance if the developers know what they are doing. If your databases are poor, you just amplify the problems with these kind of tools. These all simply provide an interface where someone has to define the table and data relationships. Finding the right person to do that is the key. Give them the tool that best suits the needs of the company.

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