Realizing Benefits of Data and Analytics on SAP HANA

A perspective on how organizations can realize significant operational efficiencies

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A rapidly changing market environment, fast-evolving business conditions and an influx of new regulations require organizations to rethink their ways-of-working with external business partners, customers and suppliers at a global scale.

Most of the enterprise-wide technologies that have been utilized in recent years to support core processes are outdated and not agile or scalable enough for today's new digital economy. Now, however, leveraging some of the latest innovations and technologies, organizations can reimagine new ways to achieve CFO priorities, and those of the greater enterprise, with the ability to quickly and effectively provide individual and standardized reporting.

Financial reporting challenges are numerous and often complex. We will explore these in more detail, and share our insights into how key components of the SAP HANA platform can provide a seamless and advanced analytics capability that can move an organization forward.

The Complexity of Efficient Financial Reporting

Companies are facing ever more challenges – not least being increased pressure from the market and regulators to enable better and faster decision making based on real-time data. Also, smarter company processes are now required to deal with the ever-increasing volume of data and its sheer complexity.

Layer on to this the complex technology landscape that exists in large global companies that operate across markets with many business units and entities – and you have immediate complexity. Some of the key issues many organizations face include:

- **Report creation takes too long**

- **Data is not centrally stored and too many data sources require interfaces**

- **Global reports for headquarter functions are often difficult to produce**

- **Reports are created multiple times leading to little efficiency in data consolidation**

- **Different reporting tools provide varying types of reporting**

- **Slow data access due to legacy database technology**

In addition, the legacy software landscape is heterogeneous, with some components residing on-premise and others in the cloud, which minimizes efficient report creation within organizations.

6 Reasons for SAP HANA Analytics

With SAP HANA, analytics capabilities immediately became stronger[1]. Being a cross-functional framework, this advantage covers most SAP components, such as SAP Finance and Controlling, Supply Chain Management and Human Capital Management[2].

Key functional areas are provided by different analytics solutions for business intelligence, predictive analysis[3] and enterprise performance management[4].

SAP Analytics is also fully available on the cloud, which enables organizations to leverage all advantages with a powerful in-memory technology in combination with all additional advantages of a scalable, flexible and short-to-ramp-up solution.

Key Platform Benefits

Ease of Use – Previous business intelligence and warehouse solutions were dependent on experts contributing special technical knowledge. SAP S/4 comes with more functionality in order to easily enable planning, analysis and visualization without the support of the IT department. One example is the state-of-the-art Query Designer. However, native access to the data can also be gained through other reporting tools, such as ClickView, Tableau or Power BI[5].

High Flexibility – SAP Analytics comprises of a number of tools which are built for non-technical users to help the entire organization have access to key decision-making data. Based on a modular and scalable concept, data can be blended and enriched by bringing disparate data sources together. Time and cost with having to integrate data are significantly reduced. Connection to live-streaming IoT data can be processed and visualized in real-time.

Availability of Data – SAP HANA provides mechanisms for business continuity and disaster recovery management[6]. Analytical tools are embedded as state-of-the-art components, such as Query Designer and the Fiori Mobile Apps. This ensures self-service BI, including flexible reporting and analysis of data. A more simple data model structure ensures core data services to be used, which provide a logical, real-time view into the existing business objects[7].

Virtualization – Through virtualization of the computing capabilities, data can now be provided much faster and more efficiently[8], as the platform provides reporting capabilities through data views. Maintenance is simplified and development cycles are shorter. For reporting, modeling, formatting and calculations

can be done flexibly within the BI toolset by the business users directly.

Performance Increase – Increasing demand for fast data access and reporting was a core driver to improve database architecture. The latest architecture is built on an analytical database. This delivers an enormous gain in performance due to the fast availability of the data based on an in-memory technology [9]. Also, decisions can be done on a real-time basis.

Single Source of Truth – The way all data is centrally managed and stored enables report creation based on the same set of data [10] across a diverse range of stakeholders. Core data can be enhanced by departmental or local views as extensions. Moreover, data recognition is more intelligent, supporting machine learning, in order to disclose patterns or dependencies within sub-sets.

Real-time Business Intelligence = Increased Efficiency

Taking advantage of the latest capabilities of SAP Analytics for SAP S/4 HANA or SAP HANA, business leaders and front-line stakeholders can reshape the way they work by simplifying business processes and exposing real-time data to make critical decisions – thus significantly increasing the value to the organization.

Enterprises moving to a digitized shared services framework will also experience a significant improvement in efficiency, increased agility to adapt to changing markets, and a reduction in working capital. This in particular resonates strongly with the CFO in any progressive organization.

Finally, through the virtualized architecture, reports can quickly be created and used, with a fast access to the objects. A proven methodology ensures an agile approach, so that potential proof-of-concepts can easily be created. Result validation, providing navigations and report layouts can be done on the fly, without time-consuming specification efforts.

When moving to SAP HANA, companies will increase efficiency based on business intelligence framework comprising:

- Simplified, inbuilt S/4 or dedicated HANA-based data warehouse component
- Modern BI tools providing dashboarding, self-service, prediction and planning capabilities
- Availability on both cloud, on-premise or in combination
- Applicable to enhance existing landscape via a single component

Using SAP Analytics capabilities will make a significant impact on a company's and people's way of performing business across all levels, divisions and functions, with high impact on strategic and operational aspects of the business.

Real-time Business Intelligence

Increased Efficiency

About the Experts

Ernst Clauder – **Principal, SAP Digital Transformation Practice**

Ernst has been with the organization since 2017, engaging with clients as a principal in the areas of new business models, end-to-end processes and requirement engineering. Ernst has 21 years of consulting experience, having held various roles for large companies in the telecommunications and payment industries.

Stefan Ley – **Associate Partner, SAP Digital Transformation Practice**

Stefan joined Infosys Consulting in 2016 and currently leads the European S/4HANA Center-of-Excellence for the firm. The CoE focuses on the continuous enhancement of S/4HANA capabilities as well as providing a holistic range of services to large enterprises across the German market. He possesses nearly 25 years of consulting experience advising clients on large business transformation projects enabled by SAP.

Oliver Becker – **Senior Principal, SAP Digital Transformation Practice**

Oliver joined Infosys Consulting in 2016 as a lead data warehouse architect. He has been providing deep experience in projects in this space for more than 18 years. In his role he has supported a number of German customers in their journey with HANA data capabilities and has led functional and technical initiatives across a diverse range of clients. As head of our CoE on S/4 Analytics, Oliver is responsible for our internal analytical portfolio and offerings. He also drives the HANA learning and certification process within the European community.

Marcus Steinert – **Partner & SAP Digital Transformation Practice Head**

Marcus leads our SAP Digital Transformation practice across Europe, including some of our top accounts in the region. Since joining the firm in 2009, he has held a variety of senior roles, including engagement manager for global roll-out implementations and a range of CIO advisory projects. He currently manages an impressive portfolio of our top clients-Novartis and Lonza. During his career, Marcus has had successful stints with SAP and Hewlett-Packard.

Sources

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[4] See https://www.sap.com/products/analytics.html

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[6] See https://www.tutorialspoint.com/sap_hana/sap_hana_high_availability.htm

[7] See https://mindsquare.de/knowhow/hana-core-data-services/

[8] See https://wiki.scn.sap.com/wiki/display/SAPHANA/SAP+HANA+virtualized+-+Overview

[9] See https://blogs.sap.com/2015/05/21/hana-performance-test-benchmarks/

[10] See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SAP_HANA

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