The deficiencies of using dashboards

Technology, Information Technology

Hypothetical Interview of SAP and ORACLE Employee and overall review of all response form 3 companies: IBM, Oracle and SAP In order to understand theimportance of dashboard application in modern era an interview was conducted among the employees of both SAP and Oracle. Among all the players, Oracle is most well known for making Business Intelligence dashboard as in their opinion, dashboard is most important for the IT department of any organization and at the same time this dashboards are helpful to " displays the current status of metrics and key performance indicators (KPIs) for an enterprise."(Rouse, 2010). There are 6 questions given to all the participants of both the organization and based on their answers following results are developed.

1. What kind of dashboard is most important?

The answer given by the employees of both the organizations are more or less same for this question. Majority of the people who have participated in this survey believes that the dashboard are mostly used for the analytical percusses. The percentage is as high as 42% and 40% respectively for SAP and Oracle. Among Sap employees, 32% believes that the second most important use of dashboard in any organization is for Strategic decision making whereas among Oracle employees, 39% believes that Dashboard next best used in the operational purposes for any company.

Figure 1: Choice of application via dashboard in an organization

2. Which field needs the dashboard technology most?

The pattern for this answer is same for both the companies and it is also at par with the response given by the people of IBM. 50% of SAP employees believe that dashboard is mostly used by the IT department whereas for

Oracle, the percentage is as high as 58%. The second most popular section according to SAP is production and strategic department(31%) whereas according to Oracle the second most important section is the production and operation, where in their opinion the importance of dashboard is almost 25%. Unlike the people of IBM, both these companies believes that in marketing and sales department, the use of dashboard it not so much as in that department this can be helpful only to record the data and to understand the trend based on which decision are taken by the top authorities.

Figure 2: Use of dashboard in various field of Operation

3. What are the points that company needs to remember while making an effective dashboard?

While making any dashboard application it is important for the IT companies to remember what are the needs of the client. Like IBM, SAP and Oracle both believes that grouping of relevant data accurately is the key behind the successful implementation of dashboard in any organization. According to the people of SAP, this point is the main (51%) where as people of Oracle believes that like this point, developing an proper type of dashboard also plays an important role. In their opinion both data grouping and effective type have equal importance (35% each). As per Sap, second most important thing is that the dashboard needs to be customer friendly in operations and people must understand the operation and proper use of the same without much of a hassle, and the people of SAP have given this point the second most priority with 31%.

Figure 3: key factors associated with designing a Dashboard

4. Why the use of Dashboard is declining?

While giving answer to this question, employees from both the organization have given various points. Here are some points which are common in both of their answer and closely related to the reply given by the employees of IBM also.

1. In modern era the design of the dashboard is getting more complicated as to make it more eye catchy, organizations started to incorporate more data and three dimensional graphs and tables which making the application very attractive but it is getting harder for the end users to interpret data at one go.

2. Another point according to Sap employees behind declining rate of use of dashboard is larger screen size. In their opinion, to make dashboard an interesting tool for all section of people in an organization the screen size needs to be as small as a desktop screen with only relevant data presented with proper diagrams. In recent time, excessive scrolling to watch all the data of a dashboard is pulling the usage rate of the same downwards.

3. Oracle also mentioned that, while putting up graphs with colour, use of similar kind of colors to represent various results as well as not distinguishing properly between two different results is another reason behind declining use of dashboard. In modern era people want to understand the analysis at one goes so the dashboard needs to be perfect in terms of representing data in graphs with properly distinguishable colors for different segments of the pie chart or line graph with proper area allocation. (InetSoft Technology Corporation, 2014)

4. Some other common points mentioned by them in describing the reason

behind decline in the use of dashboards are as follows:

5. Mentioning information's' in the dashboard which are not appropriate and also not able to support the bottom line.

6. Separating data up to an unnecessary level.

7. Unable to link up between contents which are co related and can influence the final decision.

8. Enforcing a rigid systematical grid in the dashboard. (Few, 2008)

5. What are the points that need to be addressed while making dashboard in the future? /what are the changes that you want to make in future dashboards?

Here are the few points mentioned by both the organization's employee which in their views are must in the success behind any dashboard applications. If one summarizes the response given by all the participants of both Oracle and Sap following 6 key points are coming out which in their view are most important things to consider while designing any dashboards.

1. For whom the dashboard is developing- in their view a most effective dashboard is the one which address only one specific group of people at a time and the displayed information are specific to that user group only.

2. Selecting right kind of dashboards- according to their review there are 3 kinds of dashboards namely operational, strategic or executive and analytical. Operational dashboard used by the production and operation team of any business unit, strategic dashboard generally represents KPI or key performance indicators for the top managements to take final call on their future strategies and analytical dashboard displays both forms of data simultaneously. Quintero (2012) in her review has mentioned that "

Analytical dashboards will offer drill-down functionality - allowing the user to explore more of the data and get different insights."(Quintero, 2012)

3. Make it sure that all data are grouped logically and the place in the dashboard is used wisely.

4. Making all the data relevant for the target audience-while making an effective dashboard ITcompany first must think who are their target audience. Are they individuals in an organizations, or the suppliers or any department or the whole company? Based on the answer they must finalize their design.

5. Do not make Dashboard a Clattered one- Companies must provide important and relevant data in the dashboard. Sometime messy presentations refract the focus from the significant messages.

6. Finally, It companies must decide how often the data needs to be refreshed while installing the operation as various kinds of dashboards needs various time frame. The data refreshment can be on a daily basis or monthly or weekly or fourth nightly basis, at the same time it can be on the real time basis also. For example, " As a rule of thumb operational dashboard's require data in real-time or near real-time whereas Executive / strategic dashboard's require data refreshed on a less frequent basis."(Quintero, 2012)

Learning from the Interviews of IBM, SAP and Oracle Employees:

By analyzing all the answers given by employees of top 3 IT companies one can easily make it out that dashboard if designed properly can be an important tool for the success of the organization. Not only for the IT department of any organization, dashboard can be effectively used by the others department also like the operational team, strategic management

team and the marketing team. Another key point coming out from their answers is that the grouping of data or use of relevant data is absolutely key behind the success ofany dashboard. In recent year use of various unnecessary data, representation of the same in more complicated way, unnecessary relation making between various department and use of too many historical data-all these points are resulting into continuous decline of the use of dashboard. While giving their suggestion , employees from all 3 companies have mentioned that to increase the use of dashboard, It companies must first analyze the requirement of the users and then design the dashboard with using only the relevant data, representing those in a simple graphical form with more emphasize on recent data rather than history and using simple graphical representation. According to their suggestion another key point associated with successful dashboard making is proper training of the people who are using the same, making it department specific and at the same time set a proper time frame for data refreshing unless the table or graphs will become irrelevant after a certain period of time and decision taken on the basis of those will not be beneficial for the users of the dashboard.

Reference:

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Table:

Name of the

Choiceof application in Dashboard

Organization

Analytical

Operational

Strategic

SAP

42%

26%

32%

Oracle

40%

39%

20%

Name of the

Field of Operation

Organization

IT related

Sales andMktg.

Production &

Strategy

Operation

Development

SAP

50%

10%

9%

31%

Oracle

58%

8%

25%

9%

Name of the

Factors important while designing

Organization

Dashboard for the Consumer

Target Section

Types of Dashboard

Grouping of

Easy Operation

Relevant Data

SAP

10%

8%

51%

31%

Oracle

12%

35%

35%

18%