

Build Versus Buy

ANALYTICS CATALOG FOR A UNIFIED VIEW OF INFORMATION

Businesses today often have strategic directives for digital transformation, data strategy advancement, modernization, and a never-ending stream of activities to support data-driven decisionmaking. These transformation initiatives involve BI and analytics initiatives to bring information into the hands of businesspeople for use. Often the success of these initiatives depends on the ability for businesspeople to access, discover, trust, and use information intuitively and consistently.

The catalyst for specific transformational programs typically begins with the identification of a business pain, for instance, information dispersed in siloed tools and applications, creating confusion and hindering business user productivity. Accordingly, many organizations realize the need for an analytics catalog to provide centralized information access and governance to reports and other analytics assets that may be dispersed in many tools and applications across the enterprise.

When the need is identified and validated, the next step is to assess the enterprise architecture, including the full BI and analytics ecosystem, to optimize existing resources and determine how to address any existing gaps.

At this point, organizations must make a crucial decision: Do we build a solution to address this pain, or do we look for a tool or platform instead?

It often becomes the task of IT leaders, enterprise architects, and application architects to recommend the best course of action – and then present findings to senior managers and executives with the budgetary decisions for allocating resources in support of that recommendation. Each approach has benefits and drawbacks but understanding certain considerations alongside the business requirements is critical to selecting the best approach for your organization.

The fact is that with the pace of innovation and technology today many organizations may realistically be able to build a solution that would fit the requirements for an analytics catalog. Organizations may address the need with custom development by creating a Web-based portal to centralize access to reports. On the surface, this may solve an initial challenge of accessing disparate information, but when considered at enterprise scale, this custom-built solution may just be scratching the surface of what enterprise users need.

Any In-House Development Requires Certain Resources, Including (But Not Limited to) Knowledge of:



The enterprise BI and analytics ecosystem tools and architecture



The business users' needs and business context for reports/dashboards/ analytics



Technical skills and programming needed to build and connect the source systems



Delivery mechanisms and user experience factors for productivity and efficiency

|  Considerations |  Custom Development |  ZenOptics |
|---|--|--|
| Purchase Cost | + VARIABLE Upfront cost based on technology stack choice. | - FIXED ONGOING Annual subscription license. |
| Development Cost | - HIGH COST Allocation of highly skilled internal resources – developers, analysts, and users – to scope, develop, and implement the solution. | + NO COST Dedicated product development focus with an experienced engineering and product team having subject matter expertise to develop an analytics catalog platform focused on tight integrations/connectors for unified analytics, report governance, and analytics adoption through business user enablement. |
| Maintenance Costs | - HIGH COST Allocation of skilled support resources to monitor, maintain and enhance the custom solution for integration compatibility, while continuously developing new functionality. | + NO COST Maintenance cost included in license fee. Customer Success and Support teams monitor the full spectrum of BI and Analytics vendors providing software releases for the analytics catalog that include updates for connectors, technology advancements, product features, etc. |
| Innovation & Scaling | - NARROW; USE CASE SPECIFIC The internal team monitors external factors and conducts its own research to scale functionality accordingly. Teams may have limited exposure to advances and new ideas. | + CONTINUOUS INNOVATION The vision for the ZenOptics analytics catalog platform spans breadth and depth revealed by industry exposure, customer needs, and SMEs beyond a single use case (e.g., consolidated catalog, BI Dictionary/Glossary, report governance, enterprise search, report statistics, collaboration, recommendations, report lifecycle management, and user experience, etc.). The product roadmap is influenced by customers, advisors, thought leaders, and research experts. |
| Partnership & Industry Alignment | - AD HOC Reliance on individual vendor license agreements and in-house knowledge will determine success. | + STRATEGIC Vendors may cultivate strategic partnerships with leading industry vendors and best practices to drive adoption. |
| Security | - RESOURCE INTENSIVE Develop and maintain your own security framework and controls. | + OUT OF THE BOX Solution inherits security permissions from underlying sources systems. |

The ability to develop a custom solution will be dependent on the availability of an organization's internal or external expertise. In most cases the initial scope of a custom-developed solution will be less expensive when compared to the purchase price and professional services costs of many tools. However, as new or additional features and functionality are added to a custom solution, the associated cost may prove to be significantly greater than the purchase price and configuration cost of a vendor product. With either approach, maintenance is a variable of the complexity of the solution and the environment – as well as the breadth of the implementation (departmental level, multiple departments, or enterprise rollout).

Beyond cost considerations, custom-developed solutions will include tailored/ad hoc features and functionality, while a platform or tool will offer a broad array of capabilities out of the box. The tradeoff with a custom solution is incorporating new technology and the ability to update the solution regularly. On the other hand, a vendor will regularly embrace tech advances because it opens more opportunities for future roadmap development, and proactively initiate updates with customers to meet their needs. With these considerations, buying a solution rather than building a solution is very compelling.

CONCLUSION

Ultimately, the decision to build or buy an analytics catalog will require the organization to determine where to allocate key resources. In many cases, strategic and operational business pains may best be addressed with existing technology to allow internal resources and expertise to focus on growing the core business.

About ZenOptics

ZenOptics' mission is to help customers maximize the value and increase the effectiveness of their existing analytic investments, by aggregating all their analytic assets into a single, collaborative easily managed web application.

Our web application is designed to provide increased ROI through user productivity enhancements and by reducing the total cost of analytics infrastructure. This is done by increasing and enhancing the use of all information by consumers, by providing management with tools to optimize their investments, and by providing both management and users the ability to establish a self-governing reporting enterprise.

ZenOptics uniquely offers knowledge worker efficiency, promotes self-service report governance and an automated path to optimizing analytic infrastructure investments.

Learn more about how ZenOptics can meet your current and future needs for unified access to all enterprise BI and analytic assets, assurance of trusted information, and acceleration of decision-making for your business users. Visit zenoptics.com

