

# Dashboards

*Driving accountability.*



by **Shadan Malik**

**I**MPROVING PERFORMANCE is a top priority. Leaders who can clearly identify and articulate their strategic goals are well positioned to compete and succeed. Although many companies have mastered the development and communication of their strategy, their downfall lies in their inability to execute its various components. This failure can undermine the initial successes of the strategy.

Without the means to operationalize and measure at all levels, leaders can't monitor the effectiveness of their strategies, negating the purpose of the strategy. To realize their strategic goals and objectives, leaders must evaluate and manage actual performance in a timely, accurate, and coordinated way.

To alleviate this problem, many leaders are turning to enterprise dashboards. Dashboards are not only concerned with measuring enterprise performance against preset success metrics (key performance indicators or KPIs), they also communicate this information in an easily understood, interactive format. Dashboards enable all employees to look at the relevant information, understand it at-a-glance, and take immediate action to correct problems or to meet goals. Dashboards provide companies with an effective method for measuring progress of each individual in a timely manner, thereby translating top-level strategic goals into individual accountability.

Moreover, dashboards facilitate getting the right information to the right people at the right time. Before dashboards, access to real insight into operations took hours of combing through data. Now, dashboards are eliminating the need for reports and allowing companies to view data in a single, visually rich interface. When combined with an analytics engine, dashboards provide a user-friendly and quick solution for companies to avoid being mired in data.

If deployed effectively, dashboards can empower managers to make better, smarter decisions faster than by relying on measurable data drawn from these KPIs.

Cultures are changing as a result of dashboards with real-time data. Leaders can drill down through division and department data to see how groups are performing toward strategic and operational goals, and members of teams can see how their peers are contributing to goals. The transparency of the dashboard system makes that peer pressure toward accountability more intense. Within a group, managers can quickly respond to realign staffing to catch up in needed areas to meet goals.

Dashboards showcase the state of an organization and present a holistic, high-level view. Any company can look at a P&L report and see if it has a profit or a loss. However, this report does not show which factors contribute to that outcome. Dashboards provide the necessary solution: with the ability to illustrate why business is down and how it relates to the bottom-line, dashboards present information in a way that allows executives to easily identify the contributing factors.

Training dashboards can also push accountability. When new laws impact an industry, employees need to complete self-study modules or Webinar training quickly. Dashboards can track compliance and help managers track the percentage of training completed.

One of the best ways to manage performance is by creating a culture of accountability. In doing so, the leaders must communicate the objectives and involve everyone in the review, measurement, and improvement of the tactical processes that drive the strategy. Dashboard technology can play a key role. Creating a culture of accountability requires the ability to handle large numbers and types of users and data; provide the means for information access, sharing, feedback and alerts to ensure timely action; and easily adapt to changing conditions.

Dashboards also enable managers to determine which solution has the ideal balance. Dashboard software has become a standard tool for viewing the business and evaluating performance. Dashboards provide management with a clear view of the bottom line, and provide other staff with a view of the top line, giving them an effective means for translating top-level strategic goals into individual accountability and measuring progress against these goals in a timely manner. Dashboards facilitate a culture of accountability. **LE**

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**ACTION:** Use dashboards to drive accountability.