Competing With BI and Analytics at Monster Worldwide

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ABSTRACT

In the face of stiff competition, many organizations turn to business intelligence tools to successfully compete in the marketplace. However, successfully implementing and growing a business intelligence solution to combat market pressure is an arduous task. The stages of growth models present one approach that could guide organizations in the implementation and growth of successful business intelligence (BI) efforts. At Monster.com, upper management chose to design and implement a business intelligence framework to compete in the online job search arena. While the progressive steps that led to Monster’s successful BI solution did not strictly follow established BI stage models, it helped the company effectively steer clear of competition and remain a major player in the online job search marketplace.

Keywords: Business Intelligence Innovation, Business Marketplace, Maturity Models, Predictive Analytics, Stages of Growth

1. INTRODUCTION

In the midst of the Internet revolution, Jeff Taylor changed the way labor markets worked by launching the world’s biggest online job search site, Monster.com. With a brand almost as synonymous with “online jobs” as Band-Aid is to adhesive bandages, Monster powered its way through the bursting dot-com bubble, and joined a short list of success stories that survived the infamous bubble burst (McLean, 2003). The company was enjoying first-mover’s advantage, record-breaking Web traffic, industry dominance, and soaring profits.

However, like any other great idea, it was only a matter of time until competitors smelled the potential profits and moved in to get a piece of the market share. By 2005, Monster began to realize the effects of increased competition. In response, the company turned to business intelligence (BI) and analytics to maintain its industry leading position by optimizing key business processes. Monster recognized the value of using BI as a mission critical resource and with strong support emanating from the upper echelons of the organization, implemented a BI solution that overtime included a wide variety of BI capabilities starting from standard reports, to advanced analytics and triggers. Strategically using BI, Monster expanded and
grew its BI capabilities to give features and functionality to Monster customers as well as to engage in advanced BI analytics to get interesting insights that would help them serve their customers better.

Consequently, at present, Monster is still enjoying profitability, and has created a solid foundation in BI to foster long-term sustainable value, even though it is currently operating in some of the most turbulent economic conditions in recent history. Many organizations fall short of accomplishing its BI goals as they do not successfully move along the path to BI maturity. The objective of this paper is to describe the implementation of a successful business intelligence solution at Monster using maturity model frameworks. While Monster did not develop their BI solution using established maturity models as a guideline, the existing maturity models provide a great lens to examine the BI success attained at Monster. In so doing, the paper identifies a wide spectrum of BI capabilities that can be used to combat competitive pressures. First, the paper presents the importance of BI solutions to combat competitive pressures along with a discussion of BI maturity models. Next, the history and background of Monster is briefly described, followed by a discussion of the severe competition faced by Monster. The business intelligence and analytics capabilities implemented at Monster to combat competition are presented next. Finally the paper concludes with a discussion of future initiatives planned at Monster.

2. BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE

Today organizations compete in a hyper-competitive business environment characterized by a massive influx of data. Information has gained significance as a key resource in organizations and it is undisputed that effective information use is a source of major competitive advantage (Bucher, Gericke, & Sigg, 2009). In this dynamic environment, business intelligence (BI) is seen as a critical solution that will help organizations leverage information to make informed, intelligent business decisions to survive in the business world (Jordan & Ellen, 2009). BI describes the concepts and methods used to improve decision making using fact based systems (Watson & Wixom, 2007).

Using BI initiatives, businesses are gaining insights from growing volumes of data generated by applications such as customer relationship management, supply-chain management, and web analytics. BI enables access to diverse data, manipulation and transformation of these data, and provide business managers and analysts the ability to conduct appropriate analyses and perform actions (Turban, Sharda, Aronson, & King, 2008). As such, organizations are eager to adopt these technologies to take advantage of the power of BI. BI is seen as a critical solution that is a necessity to survive in the business world (Bucher, Gericke, & Sigg, 2009). According to a survey of over 4000 Chief Information Officers conducted by Gartner Group, revealed that business intelligence is rated as the number one technology priority in organizations (Strange, 2009). A similar survey of CIO’s by IBM revealed that BI is the top visionary plan for enhancing enterprise competitiveness (IBM, 2009).

As a result, the BI field has experienced steady growth despite the recent economic downturn that has affected the growth of other IT applications. In its worldwide forecast for BI for 2007-2012, Gartner forecasts the BI market to grow at a compound annual growth rate of 8.1 per cent through 2012, reaching $7.7 billion in 2012 despite the economic downturn (Knight, 2010). IDC breaks the total BI market into two segments as “BI Query, Reporting and Analysis Tools” and “Advanced Analytics Tools” to assess growth and demand. Analytics represent a subset of business intelligence (Davenport, 2006). According to Davenport the former segment addresses “what happened; how many, how often, where; where exactly is the problem; what actions are needed.” Whereas the latter can address, “why is this happening; what if these trends continue; what will happen next; what is the best that can happen” (Hamel, 2009). While the “BI Query, Reporting and Analysis”
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