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**Lori Mitchell-Keller**  
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Published by Wellesley Information Services

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Postmaster: Send address changes to *SAPinsider*, 20 Carematrix Drive, Dedham, MA 02026, USA.

*SAPinsider* (Print ISSN# 1537-145X, Online ISSN# 2155-2444) is published quarterly by Wellesley Information Services, LLC (WIS), a division of UCG, at 20 Carematrix Drive, Dedham, MA 02026. A subscription to *SAPinsider* is free to qualified readers within the US and Canada. Outside North America, a fee of US\$39 is applied for international shipping and handling for an annual subscription. To subscribe, visit [sapinsider.wispubs.com](http://sapinsider.wispubs.com).

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# How SMEs Are Democratizing Access to Their Data

SAP BusinessObjects Edge Solutions Make BI Reliable and Affordable for Small Businesses and Midsize Enterprises

by Dr. Prasad Akella, SAP



Dr. Prasad Akella (prasad.akella@sap.com) is Vice President and Head of SME Marketing at SAP, responsible for marketing SAP's portfolio of business management and business analytics solutions to small businesses and midsize enterprises. Prior to joining SAP, he held a breadth of roles, spanning from research and development, to engineering, to business development and sales. Prasad is a co-founder of the social network pioneer Spoke Software. He holds a Ph.D. from Stanford University, where he was a Meakin fellow; an MBA with highest distinction from the Ross Business School at the University of Michigan; and a BS from IIT Madras. He holds three seminal patents in social networks and fraud detection.

In the inaugural "SME Insights" column, SAP's Prasad Akella explored the solutions within SAP's portfolio that best fit the diverse needs of small businesses and midsize enterprises (SMEs).<sup>1</sup> In this installment, he shines light on key components of the portfolio — SAP BusinessObjects Edge Business Intelligence (BI) software and SAP BusinessObjects Edge Rapid Marts packages — and discusses how they address SMEs' information management and BI needs by offering customer examples.

SMEs face three key challenges that impede their ability to make good, data-driven decisions. The first challenge is **ensuring the integrity of information**. An Economist Intelligence Unit study revealed that more than 70% of companies say that accurate and timely data improves their customer relations and sales processes.<sup>2</sup> In fact, the study found that data accuracy was reported as "very important," garnering nearly twice as much interest as the level of detail within that data.

The second challenge is **democratizing the availability of information**; broader access to better information drives better decisions.

And the third challenge is **controlling the cost of ownership** by reducing the IT resources required to successfully deploy and maintain BI solutions. Pre-integration with other business management systems, such as SAP ERP and SAP Customer Relationship Management (SAP CRM), and pre-packaging are great ways to control deployment and ongoing running costs.

To overcome these challenges, SAP BusinessObjects Edge solutions provide a comprehensive

set of offerings specially packaged and priced for SMEs. The solutions provide capabilities that help companies ensure information integrity, transform decision making, and optimize business performance. For example, SAP BusinessObjects Edge solutions that address BI, information management, and data warehousing (see **Figure 1**) are available in four incremental versions:

- **SAP BusinessObjects Edge BI, standard package**, includes capabilities such as dashboards, reports, flexible ad hoc queries and data exploration, and advanced analyses to address most BI requirements.
- **SAP BusinessObjects Edge BI, version with data integration**, adds data extraction, transformation, and loading (ETL) capabilities to the standard package.
- **SAP BusinessObjects Edge BI, version with data management**, adds data matching, deduplication, cleansing, and address validation capabilities to the version with data integration.
- **SAP BusinessObjects Edge Rapid Marts packages** are prebuilt data integration packages that provide line-of-business database schemas, semantic layers, reports, and dashboards for the ERP functionality in, and the CRM functionality add-on for, SAP Business All-in-One solutions.

<sup>1</sup> See "SAP's Best-Kept Secret" in the April-June 2011 issue of *SAPinsider* (sapinsider.wispubs.com).

<sup>2</sup> Economist Intelligence Unit, "Leveling the playing field: How companies use data for competitive advantage" (January 2011).

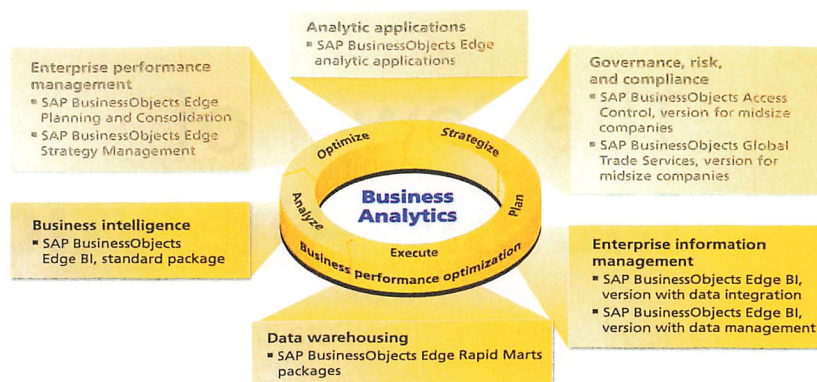


## Get the Right Information with Minimal IT Support

A leading midsize manufacturer of equipment and wound management products for hospitals and nursing homes has over two dozen product managers and sales directors who use SAP BusinessObjects Edge BI to monitor trends and variances in dashboards and drill down to the region, state, city, market segment, and product line levels to analyze the gap between targets and performance. These business users identify the “why” behind a particular trend or calculate customer/product profitability on the fly by easily developing BI queries themselves. And since SAP BusinessObjects Edge BI is available pre-integrated with SAP Business All-in-One, the manufacturer needs only one part-time IT team member to support its BI environment. This is an example of how business users at midsize organizations can develop these insights without the need for dedicated IT.

## Ensure the Integrity of Analysis with High Data Quality

OraSure Technologies, a \$75 million medical-device and diagnostic-solutions manufacturer, originally used spreadsheets to integrate data from the ERP functionality in its SAP Business All-in-One solution and other sources. It now uses SAP BusinessObjects



Edge BI, version with data integration, to consolidate data into SAP BusinessObjects Edge Rapid Marts to provide a single, trusted version of the truth. In less than 30 seconds, an employee can be analyzing the business, and because there is complete transparency of data lineage from the 30,000-foot level all the way back to the general ledger entries, decisions are made faster and with greater confidence in the accuracy.

**FIGURE 1 ▲** SAP BusinessObjects Edge solutions effectively address SMEs’ BI, information management, and data warehousing needs

## Success on the Edge

The success of these customers shows that SAP BusinessObjects Edge solutions address some of the top challenges SMEs face in making data-driven decisions. SMEs across the globe are choosing these solutions; for more information, please visit [www.sap.com/sme](http://www.sap.com/sme). ■

## Q&A with SAP’s John Wilkinson: An Exec’s Perspective on SME Needs

*Prasad Akella recently caught up with John Wilkinson, SAP’s Vice President of Business Analytics for Global Ecosystem and Channels, to get his perspective on the SME market. Here are some highlights from their discussion.*

### **Q: Based on your experience, what are the top challenges SMEs are facing in making good, data-driven decisions?**

**A:** When I speak with SMEs, they usually cite three challenges:

- Ensuring information integrity — accessing all their data, validating its accuracy, and maintaining consistency
- Democratizing information availability — making it easy for business users to access trusted data and perform their own analyses
- Controlling cost of ownership — deploying and maintaining solutions with limited resources

### **Q: Why do these challenges exist?**

**A:** One of the main reasons is that SMEs often start out using spreadsheets for business analysis. These spreadsheets are notoriously error-prone, resulting in poorly informed decisions. As

the business grows, the number and complexity of spreadsheets increase, and so do maintenance and security costs. And because so much time is spent gathering and validating data, business users don’t have timely access to information needed to respond to changing conditions.

### **Q: Why do you think SMEs are adopting SAP’s BI solutions?**

**A:** A key driver is that our solutions are complete, affordable, and pre-integrated with SAP and non-SAP solutions. Customers can implement them easily and predictably. For example, a European professional services firm used our information management capabilities to reduce the average time needed to produce a mailing list from 20 hours to 1 hour. A North American high-tech firm reduced the IT staff needed to support BI by 50% by using our comprehensive pre-integration capabilities.



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