

Infor10 ION BI: The Comprehensive Business Intelligence Solution



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Executive summary.

Many organizations struggle with better managing increasing amounts of information—which often comes from multiple data sources. Not only can it be difficult for users to get to all the information they need, they can easily suffer from data overload.

To stay competitive and keep pace with business change, organizations need to put a solution in place that gives users business intelligence (BI) reporting and analytical tools that provide the most up-to-date information in a timely fashion. And the information needs to be delivered in a cohesive format that can help drive an organization's business decisions and actions.

Even with sophisticated IT infrastructures, many organizations still encounter problems finding the information users need, when and how they need it. To overcome these obstacles, organizations need to implement a robust BI solution that accesses, filters, analyzes, and publishes information throughout the organization—anytime, anywhere. The solution should merge data from multiple sources into a single report, helping users quickly transform raw data into valuable information.

This paper examines such a solution, Infor10™ ION BI, which provides powerful BI capabilities to organizations and helps them understand and gain insight into the key factors that impact their business.

Infor10 ION BI overview.

Infor10 ION BI is a fully integrated, state of the art solution suite that supports all types of financial, operational, and sales BI requirements. More than 3,000 customers in over 100 countries around the world use Infor10 ION BI for standard reporting, dashboards, flexible ad-hoc reporting and analysis, business planning, budgeting, forecasting, and financial consolidation.

Infor10 ION BI is predominantly used to fulfill highly specific business needs. In many cases the solution is implemented using a multidimensional, online, analytical processing (OLAP)-based approach.

The Infor10 ION BI suite is a comprehensive BI platform that consists of:

- **Infor10 ION BI OLAP Server**—A real-time, in-memory, OLAP database for multidimensional analysis, planning, and modeling.
- **Infor10 ION BI Application Studio**—A web-based front end for data visualization, including reports, analysis, dashboards, and data entry.
- **Infor10 ION BI Office Plus**—A fully integrated Excel® interface for reporting, ad-hoc analysis, cell-based reporting, and other uses.

- **Infor10 ION BI ImportMaster**—An ETL layer that facilitates integration with both Infor and non-Infor source systems.
- **Infor10 ION BI DeltaMiner**—An analysis tool with data-driven and advanced analysis methods.
- **Infor10 ION BI Consolidation**—A statutory and management consolidation tool that leverages the Infor10 ION BI OLAP Server.
- **Infor10 ION BI Planning**—A tool for financial and operational budgeting, forecasting, and business planning.
- **Infor10 ION BI Business Analytics**—Predefined, role-based content for sales, finance, production, and other functional areas.

The Infor10 ION BI suite combines all the relevant business intelligence tools into one solution with consistent data, interface, and audit trail for financial and operational planning, reporting, and analysis.

Infor10 ION BI is designed for business users and requires minimal IT resources and involvement. Finance, operations, sales, and other business users can easily update and administer the solution without heavy reliance on IT resources. This can help your organization keep up with the dynamic nature of your business.



Infor10 ION BI: A fully integrated, business intelligence solution for business users.

Infor10 ION BI is part of the unified Infor10 ION Suite of middleware, an open software architecture that integrates with applications and data sources of all kinds. Infor10 ION BI's enhanced reporting and analysis capabilities are key components of the Infor 10 ION Suite. You can use Infor10 ION BI in conjunction with the Infor10 ION Suite, or as a stand-alone solution.

Architecture.

All of Infor10 ION BI's applications use the same, fully integrated framework. Infor10 ION BI OLAP Server—an analytical, in-memory database—serves as the central data repository, which stores one version of the truth. This approach allows for seamless integration of various BI topics.

The data integration layer allows the analytical OLAP database to connect to almost any type of source system through Infor10 ION BI ImportMaster's ETL component.

Infor10 ION BI Application Studio supports web-based user access for large user groups for standardized reports, dashboards, and ad-hoc browsing—as well as for planning, budgeting, and forecasting.

Infor10 ION BI Office Plus's fully integrated Excel add-in client allows system users to leverage their spreadsheet knowledge and familiarity to perform ad-hoc data browsing and cell-based reporting.

The client-based Infor10 ION BI DeltaMiner allows power users to perform advanced analysis functions.

Infor10 ION BI Consolidation and Infor10 ION BI Planning are predefined solutions that are based primarily on Infor10 ION BI OLAP Server and Infor10 ION BI Application Studio. Infor10 ION BI Business Analytics also leverages the Infor10 ION Suite architecture, including the Infor10 Business Vault.

Core components.

Multidimensional, in-memory, OLAP database.

Infor10 ION BI uses a multidimensional database server that allows all financial, non-financial, and other qualitative information to be integrated into a single repository. All of the data stored in this layer can be accessed by the Infor10 ION BI front ends, such as Infor10 ION BI Application Studio, Infor10 ION BI Office Plus, and Infor10 ION BI DeltaMiner.

The database's memory-based, real-time approach produces fast query performance and needs minimal time to refresh data in reports or ad-hoc-analysis.

Its multi-dimensional structure supports classifying and analyzing data by a variable number of dimensions. The database uses a multi-cube-approach with shared dimensions. This makes it possible to use the same dimensions in multiple cubes for complex technical processes. This also means that structures don't have to be manually synchronized across dimensions. Different cubes can be connected in real time by using simple-to-understand business rules.

Modular BI solutions can be created where different cubes are designed for different topics, such as a sales cube for sales forecasting, a manufacturing cube for production planning, or a finance cube for financial statement planning. With inter-cube connectivity, changes in one cube are reflected immediately in related cubes. For example, a change in forecasted revenue in a sales module would immediately be reflected in the financial statements and associated revenue items.

User interfaces.

Information stored in Infor10 ION BI's analytical database can be accessed quickly and intuitively with the user-friendly front ends: Infor10 ION BI Application Studio, Infor10 ION BI Office Plus, and Infor10 ION BI DeltaMiner.



The Infor10 ION BI user interface.

Web-based Infor10 ION BI Application Studio: This Infor10 ION BI user interface supports dashboards, reporting, ad-hoc analysis, planning, budgeting, and forecasting—all in one tool.

End-users get fast, automated access to correct and relevant information, whether that information is stored in the Infor10 ION BI OLAP Server database, other multidimensional solutions (such as Microsoft SQL Server® Analysis Services or SAP NetWeaver® Business Warehouse), relational databases (such as Microsoft SQL Server, Oracle Database via ODBC, or DataLinks), or even in text files.

Infor10 ION BI Application Studio supports all typical BI requirements with a powerful list concept (such as sorting, filtering, and picking), unique techniques for structuring dynamic and multi-lingual reports, multiple formatting options, charts, graphs, and the ability to build sophisticated applications.

Defining and creating Infor10 ION BI Application Studio reports is based on spreadsheet look and feel and usability. Users can create planning and reporting interfaces without needing any programming skills.

Infor10 ION BI Office Plus Excel add-in: Seamlessly integrated into Excel as an add-in, this Infor10 ION BI user interface pulls information directly from the Infor10 ION BI OLAP Server database and also sends data from Excel directly back into the database. This makes Infor10 ION BI the perfect environment for budgeting or forecasting solutions where a spreadsheet environment is needed. Infor10 ION BI Office Plus can also access data from Infor10 Corporate Performance Management, other multidimensional solutions, or select relational databases.

The Infor10 ION BI Office Plus Excel add-in is an easy to use, “slice and dice,” ad-hoc browser that can be used in tabular or graphical structures. Within the Excel environment, users can retrieve or enter data in a highly flexible manner. In addition to its ad-hoc-browsing option, Infor10 ION BI Office Plus also supports flexible and easy-to-use cell-based formula reports.

Users can take advantage of their existing knowledge of Excel to create reports quickly and easily, which utilize Excel's built-in functionality, such as formulas, formatting, and creating graphs.

Infor10 ION BI DeltaMiner for advanced analysis: BI users often create reports based solely on their existing knowledge and on their assumptions of the business they are analyzing. But what if the assumptions are wrong or the data isn't what they expected? You won't always find all the pertinent information you seek using traditional approaches.

In today's world of overwhelming amounts of data, it's impossible to look into all the data and consider the unlimited combinations of possibilities in order to find the decisive elements that explain why your business is running the way it is. Infor10 ION BI DeltaMiner uses predefined and ready-to-run data analysis sets, and statistical and data-mining methods to help you find key business information and answers to important questions you haven't thought to ask.

Data integration (ETL).

Infor10 ION BI ImportMaster can obtain information from a variety of Infor and non-Infor source systems throughout your organization. Infor10 ION BI ImportMaster integrates with many Infor solutions using a standard interface, and includes a certified interface to extract data from SAP NetWeaver Business Warehouse and SAP® ERP applications.

Infor10 ION BI ImportMaster can also integrate data from any source system that can be accessed via ODBC, or that can export CSV or flat files. Data can be imported into the system on an ad-hoc or scheduled basis.

Infor10 ION BI ImportMaster interfaces with surrounding IT systems in an intuitive environment that utilizes drag-and-drop functionality to define dimension structures and data-upload logic. The interface includes powerful mapping and look-up functions. The mapping process, which facilitates the collection of data from the underlying source systems, can be maintained without requiring sophisticated IT knowledge.

Infor10 ION BI Business Analytics.

Infor10 ION BI Business Analytics supplies role-based reports, dashboards, key performance indicators (KPIs), and analytics for business users across the enterprise—including predefined content for managers in finance, sales, production, and other departments. Because Infor10 ION BI Business Analytics is powered by the Infor10 ION BI platform, it integrates seamlessly with Infor applications using Infor10 ION, Infor10 ION Workspace, and supports integration with Infor10 ION Business Vault.

Infor10 ION BI Consolidation.

Infor10 ION BI Consolidation is a standardized application based on the Infor10 ION BI platform. It allows all of Infor10 ION BI's components and functions to be used with statutory and management consolidation processes, including closing the books, financial reporting business combinations, and other processes. Infor10 ION BI Consolidation is the technical backbone that lets you to complete a fast close.

Infor10 ION BI Consolidation supports International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS), Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP), and other regulatory reporting requirements. A user-friendly, workflow-based navigation streamlines entering, validating, reconciling, calculating currency conversions, and consolidating company data.

Infor10 ION BI Consolidation supports individual, corporate, and segment accounts in different currencies, the elimination of intercompany profits, integrated currency translation, and scenario consolidations. Dynamic and flexible movement schedules for fixed assets, equity, and provisions are also supported.

Infor10 ION BI Planning.

Infor10 ION BI Planning allows flexible financial and operational planning and forecasting, such as creating, managing, and enhancing budgets, as well as rolling forecasts and other types of business plans. Additionally, specialized plans that require large multidimensional structures such as daily, customer, and product-level planning (which can span hundreds or thousands of different items) can be managed efficiently and effectively with the OLAP-based Infor10 ION BI Planning.

Because planning assumptions are constantly changing in dynamic business environments, plans must often be revised or "what-if" scenarios need to be calculated. All of Infor10 ION BI's calculations—such as aggregations, KPIs, and driver-based calculations—are performed on the fly, which allows for highly flexible driver-based and scenario planning, as well as "what-if" analysis.

Copying and spreading algorithms allow copying and/or spreading data across multiple data categories and perform calculations efficiently. With a business-oriented user interface and syntax, even complex scenarios can be generated and compared by issuing just a few simple commands.

Your organization's specific planning requirements can be met by Infor10 ION BI Planning's advanced planning capabilities, which include copying, splashing/spreading, redistribution, top-down planning, driver-based planning, and other planning functions.

Key features.

Multidimensional data analysis.

Infor10 ION BI's multidimensional data analysis approach of financial and non-financial data provides you with flexible ways to analyze, plan, and report data throughout your organization.

You can quickly drill down and "slice-and-dice" through BI data by clicking on graphs, links, or tables, as well as drill-down or roll-up aggregations as needed using Infor10 ION BI's graphical front-end. Drill-downs can be performed on the deeper details of one dimension (such as an account chart) or across a dimension (such as for a specific account across the organizational chart).

Any dimension can be applied across every level of other dimensions. Any dimension can be combined and analyzed with any selection of any other dimension in a pivot-table-like environment. For example, the revenue generated by particular customers with certain products can easily be switched to a view that shows which customer generated which revenue in which period.

Infor10 ION BI performs in-memory calculations, so queries are performed quickly.

Flexible KPI calculation.

In addition to the multidimensional aggregation of data, Infor10 ION BI can perform complex calculations, such as user-defined KPIs for percent ratios, day sales outstanding, and cash flow calculations. Complex calculations are centrally stored in the Infor10 ION BI database and not in local spreadsheets. This reduces risk, errors, and the rekeying of information, and ensures that everyone is using the same data and information to make key business decisions. You can define calculations using the business-user-oriented business-rule editor, without needing to write any programming code.

Combine numbers with comments, notes, and attachments.

You can add descriptions and comments to individual values. You can post textual information into single data cells of the database or as Excel-like notes linked to cells on any given level and combination of any data cube. You can also create links to websites, other reports, and documents (such as PDF and Microsoft® Office files).

The combination of quantitative and supporting textual information can significantly enhance the data quality. In addition to a number in a cell, you can provide an explanation of the assumptions behind that number. This can also enhance the quality of your processes. You can publish accounting or reporting guidelines to individual accounts. You can also include notifications to users, such as general reminders or month-end-related instructions.

Global solutions with multilingual applications.

Infor10 ION BI operates in multilingual environments, with support for German, English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Czech, Japanese, Chinese (simplified), Russian, and Dutch. The application, reports, and metadata can be provided in virtually any language and character set because of its Unicode architecture. You can even easily switch between languages as needed.

Conclusion.

Increase your organization's understanding and gain insight into the key elements that impact your business with Infor10 ION BI's comprehensive, integrated business intelligence platform. Stay competitive and keep pace with business change with Infor10 ION BI's financial and operational reporting and analysis, dashboards, planning, budgeting, forecasting, role-based analytics, and financial consolidation functionality. The powerful solution suite can be owned and managed by business users with minimal ongoing IT involvement because of its ease of use. Infor10 ION BI is a proven global solution that integrates easily with Infor and non-Infor systems, as well as other data sources.



About Infor.

Infor is a leading provider of business software and services, helping more than 70,000 customers in 164 countries improve operations and drive growth. To learn more about Infor, please visit www.infor.com.

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