SISENSE

3 TRUTHS ABOUT CLOUD BI

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INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS CLOUD BI?

Cloud BI gets a lot of hearts racing in the business world – but sometimes for the wrong reasons. Too many organizations believe too readily that moving to the cloud will magically clear up all their business problems, especially when it comes to self-service insights and total cost of ownership.

It's certainly true that the right Cloud BI solution will make a huge difference in all three areas, but at it's very core cloud hosting is simply a way of accessing your technology and data from anywhere. That means your BI platform has to tick these boxes as it stands, even in on-premise version – before you even think about whether to deploy it in the cloud.

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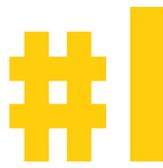
SELF-SERVICE DOESN'T ALWAYS MEAN SELF-SERVICE

If you already use tools and platforms like Google Analytics, Salesforce or Zendesk, it's totally understandable that you might assume all cloud-based systems are automatically self-service.

After all, these systems are all designed to make it easy for you to access your data from wherever you are, making it simpler to run complex business functions without the constant intervention of your IT department.

Consider: The Range of Self Service - From Basic to Powerful

The thing is, while the best BI software does this too, it's not a given. In fact, different vendors mean very different things by "self-service" in the first place. Realistically, this can range anywhere from a rigid front-end visualization tool that lets you perform basic analyses on a limited pool of data, right through to a powerful system that lets non-technical business users manipulate huge, disparate data sets, build their own dashboards, extract granular insights and even "talk" to their BI platform using natural language through a dedicated chatbot.

Consider: The Amount of Data It Can Handle

Plus, of course, BI typically relies on enormous swathes of data. That has to be kept somewhere, and your platform needs to be able to access what it needs without grinding to a halt. Whether or not your BI is truly self-service depends largely on how it stores and handles this information – i.e. whether you really can dip into any part of your data and draw out insights quickly, without technical support or prohibitively expensive hardware requirements.

Consider: Location, Location, Location

Another key point is data proximity. When deciding whether or not to use a cloud service, the location of your existing data, should also be a factor. Cloud deployments actually reside on physical servers, somewhere in the world. Data takes time getting from point to point. If you're data is located on-premise, you'll need to spend time transferring it to your cloud deployment. This means, using a cloud solution, may include latency, when the data is not in close proximity to the location of the cloud solution.

This incredibly broad variation makes it essential to be very clear on what you need your BI tool to do, and who will be using it. If you need genuinely self-service BI, make sure your chosen solution offers end-to end ease of use for business users.

Ultimately, if a BI solution offers both an on-premise and a cloud solution, and it is not self-service in its on-premise version, it won't be self-service in the cloud, either. The cloud is a location, not a methodology – moving your BI from one place to another won't magically make it self-service. It has to be set up that way from the outset.

#2

YOUR SECURITY MUST BE UP TO SCRATCH

Okay, so the security of your BI platform isn't quite as hot a topic as it was a few years ago – not because security is any less important, but because many cloud IT providers have come on in leaps and bounds when it comes to security.

That said, this is no time to get complacent. If you're handling sensitive client information, it's on you to make sure you're doing all you can to keep it safe. That means choosing a BI vendor that absolutely does not share client data between different systems or environments, and which does adhere to all major industry standards.

Also, if you live in a particularly sensitive-data-heavy industry like healthcare or finance, you will of course need to be 100% certain that your BI lives up to all relevant regulations.

Some countries have regulations as to taking data out of the geographical location of the country. Using a cloud service may be a problem, if the servers are located in an offshore data center. I know this is an issue, for example in the German banking system.

A sensible start when you're gauging if a vendor is up to the task is to take a look at their client list; if they already work with major players in your industry, that's a good sign that they pass the security litmus test.

SISENSE

#3

IT'S ABOUT THE TCO, NOT THE PRICE TAG

As with any major new technology rollout, the license or subscription fee is only one small part of your total budget consideration. A whole bunch of other factors goes into figuring out how much you'll really spend (and save) by having each system in place – called the Total Cost of Ownership (TCO).

On the face of it, switching to a cloud-based solution sounds like it would eliminate many of the costs that come with on-premise, legacy systems. If everything's online, you wouldn't need to splash out on pricey hardware, right?

Unfortunately, unless you're careful about the vendor you choose, that's just not the case. If you need to shell out on extensive external data warehousing and ETL functions, your implementation and maintenance costs can spiral, while the simple act of accessing the data you need can prove too memory-intensive a task for clunky, outdated hardware.

Once again, these problems aren't solved by moving to the cloud, but they ARE solved by choosing a BI solution, cloud-hosted or otherwise, that's built to handle this volume of data rapidly and intelligently. The benefit of combining this with cloud technology is that you can also leverage the vendor's expertise, including regular upgrades to ensure you're always working at optimal capacity.

Tip:

Cloud BI has the potential to save you a lot of money. Bear in mind, though, that for certain companies dealing with massive on-premise datasets, hosting and transferring all this data over the internet can quickly become unfeasibly expensive. If you have unavoidable security or regulatory reasons for keeping your data onsite, on-premise BI may work out at a lower TCO for you.

CLOUD BI AT SISENSE

At Sisense, our [Cloud BI solution](#) offers all the perks of our on-premise version: it's self-service, scalable, high-performing and agile, allowing business users to draw out extremely granular insights without having to run all their queries through IT.

The difference is that, by hosting your BI in the cloud, our experts can handle even more of the technical and infrastructure elements of deploying and managing your solution, reducing your need for extra IT resources. Essentially, we keep everything under the hood, leaving you free to focus on data preparation and analytics, critical metrics and KPIs.

SEE HOW SISENSE WORKS BY TRYING IN ON YOUR OWN DATA:

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