

Implementing Business Warehouse the Smart Way



Over the past 20 years, companies who have implemented Business Warehouse (BW) have gone through the typical phases of an Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) implementation. Business end users gather business requirements - or a "Blueprint" - for the reports, key metrics and analytics they are interested in seeing.

Once confirmed, these user requirements are "built" within BW. They are either met via Standard Content within the cubes or,

more frequently, by customizing the reports and the underlying data model (cubes, extractors, etc.) themselves to add or pull data objects from the source environment. BW implementations, in all but a very few cases, frequently involve some form of customization to meet business requirements.

Clarkston has on occasion been asked to re-implement BW. During assessments with clients on how these situations come about, we found that during Blueprinting, business users, through no fault of their own, at times do not know what they want, and subsequently fall back on replicating existing legacy reports in BW. This unfortunately comes with a price. What we frequently observe is that BW has to undergo significant changes post go-live. In some cases, even re-implementation. This is predominantly due to changing requirements from a business community who, post go-live, has a better understanding of the BW system and what it can do, what it can show them and what it is capable of. It's the classic example of now that I can touch it, play with it and know it better, I now know what I truly want.

Too often companies have to re-implement BW as a result. Too often customized reports are no longer used and cast aside as not relevant and unusable. Too often the return from this investment is questioned.

In an effort to recognize and overcome this scenario, Clarkston recommends a different approach to implementing BW – namely, a phased approach. With this approach, there are initially zero customizations to the cubes. This means no joins or new cubes are introduced and there are minimal customizations of the queries themselves. We believe that for companies who have not implemented BW before and are planning to in the future, this is a more cost effective and value added approach to implementing BW. Listed below are our reasons.

This approach:

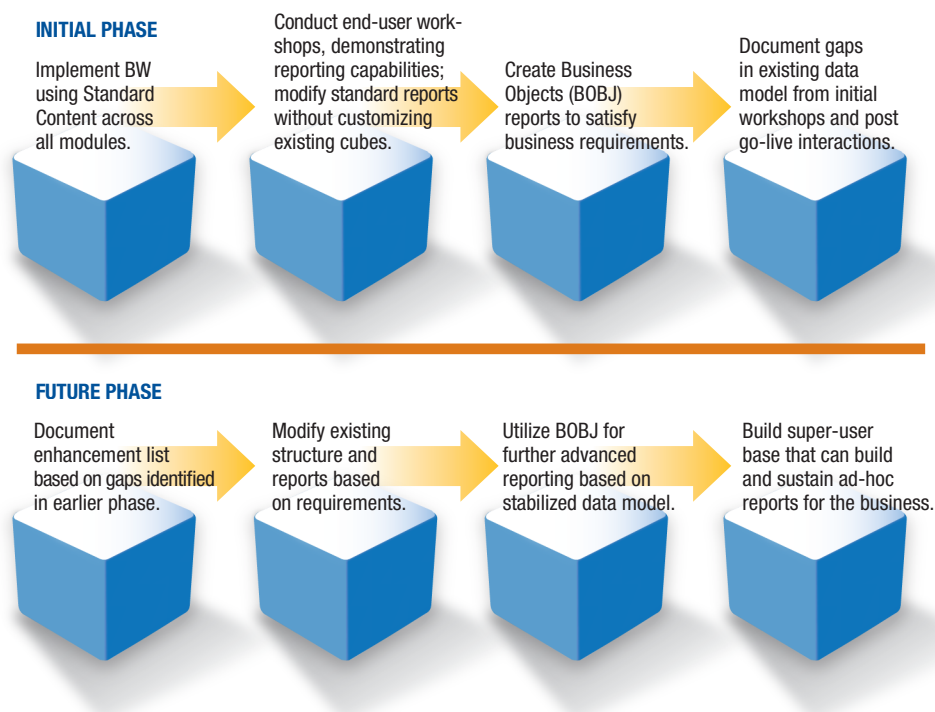
- Enables better understanding of the out of the box BW functionality.
- Allows end users to become accustomed to the application and identify much better requirements for future enhancements.
- Establishes a stable foundation and platform for future growth.
- Requires a shorter implementation timeline due to Standard Content being implemented.
- Is much easier to test.
- Imprints a good first impression with the end user – easy to use application with lots of functionality.
- Saves money.

“Clarkston’s phased implementation approach provided Banner’s internal business resources with the opportunity to learn about the power of the BW technology. It significantly advanced the understanding we had of our reporting and business data analysis needs, with a condensed, easy to maintain, and inexpensive approach.”

Bill Bissinger, Former CIO, Banner Pharmacaps

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Phased Implementation Approach for Implementing BW



Who benefits from this approach?

While this approach can be adopted by most new implementations, it is most suitable for clients who are:

- New to the data warehouse concept and its use.
- Looking to leverage basic analytical capabilities across all functional areas.
- Looking to implement BW analytics

along with the SAP ECC implementation at a lower overall cost so that BW reports can be used in tandem with ECC reports.

- Unsure of BW's capabilities and are hesitant to commit significant time and money to implement it.
- Looking to quickly leverage standard industry key performance indicators (KPIs) to analyze their business.

Who does not?

While this approach might suit many, it would not be ideal for corporations who are:

- Mature in their existing BW environment and hence Standard Content would not make sense.
- Currently existing in a highly customized ECC environment where BW's Standard Content would not be able to reflect the current ECC environment.

Why is the phased implementation approach more effective?

Traditional Blueprinting approach doesn't always work

One size does not fit all. This is especially true for BW projects. User requirements are very difficult to gather around reporting. Most BW projects strive to give the end user the power to slice and dice his data as he wishes, and once the power of the tool is understood, users will want better and more custom information. The idea with this approach is to use standard data flows and queries to introduce the basic BW analytics. Once users get used to this ability, it frequently leads to:

- Better understanding of the underlying data and where it is coming from.
- Greater clarity around gaps.
- Increased understanding around what is truly needed going forward.

The present technology market offers confusing options

There are always more products than a customer can keep tabs on. Clients find themselves invariably trying to figure out the best, most suitable tool for their organization to stay current. In this quest the data validation and mapping invariably takes a back seat.

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This approach builds the data model foundation first, independent of the analytical tools to be used. Once the end users understand the data and how to work with the tools, they are much better at articulating what they need going forward.

A customized data model becomes difficult to maintain

In the traditional “build-to-requirements” model, a lot of customization takes place up-front in the data model. This might work great for a particular set of reports or reporting area, but given the overlapping nature of reports it might not suit the requirements in other areas. This will in turn lead to more customized objects being developed.

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What are the advantages of this approach over others?

Quicker implementation of BW with wider coverage

Since the first phase involves activation of standard cubes and only minor tweaks to queries, the implementation timeline is considerably shortened. This

invariably leads to cost savings and a higher adoption rate among end users.

Better user understanding of analytical capabilities as well as underlying data

Overall understanding by the user of BW data analytics is very much enhanced after the first phase. They now understand the underlying source data better, and they become adept at using the tools since it is based on the standard delivered model. All this leads to better quality enhancement requests and stronger customized design in future phases.

Can still customize reports based on standard data model

Even though the data model for BW is non-customized, there is some ability to build/customize queries which use the standard data model. So for example, using the standard BW cube for inventory, queries can be customized to display:

- Inventory aging based on company requirement.
- Inventory movements for fiscal posting period as against calendar months.
- Inventory by customized product groups.

Comprehensive gap list can be broken down and addressed in phases

As users start using reports from the first phase, they will identify enhancements in the data model which may

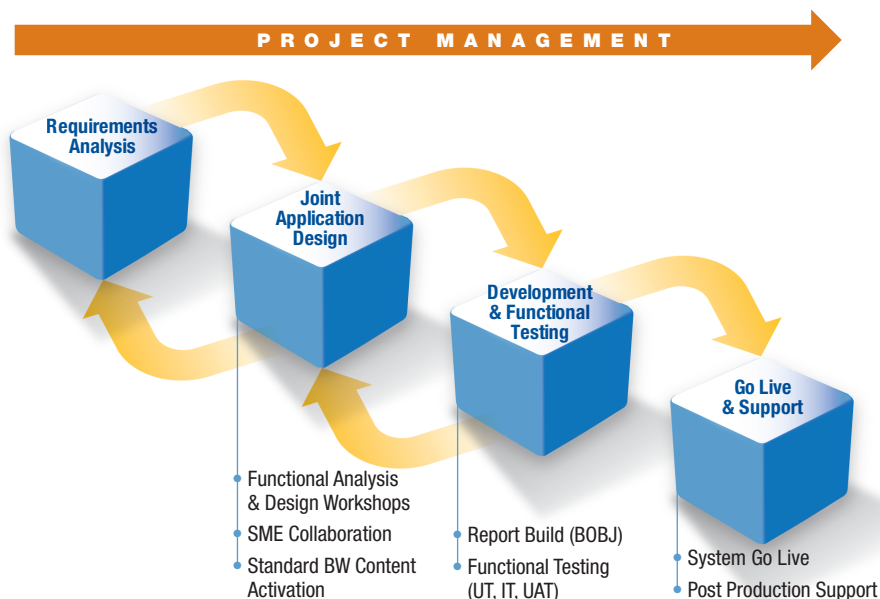
require customization. Since all modules will be up and running, the impact of any such enhancement in one area on all other areas can be better analyzed and prioritized.

For example, the batch master record might need enhancements to bring in attributes such as expiry date and vendor batch number. This might enable reporting expired batches in inventory management. However, since quality management and sales cubes also use batch, these attributes can then be used in many other reports. This would make this enhancement high priority since it will provide value across different functional areas.

Customized reports in ECC can be avoided

If the first phase of BW is done along with the initial ERP implementation, a lot of reports that are usually built in ECC can be avoided. BW can be used to present these same reports which will save a lot of time, money and effort. Examples include:

- **Master data attributes for reporting:** Often times reports in ECC need to be customized to bring in the master data attributes of customer, material, etc. However, all BW reports can use master data attributes available as standard functionality.
- **Complex calculations:** To avoid doing complex calculations on value fields, users require reports which can include these calculations. In BW, Excel users can save their calculations in a workbook using a query. These workbooks are connected to BW and get refreshed as more data is posted.



How can a service provider like Clarkston Consulting help?

Clarkston has its own methodology and approach to implementing Business Warehouse. This methodology utilizes tools and templates which significantly cut down the time and effort in implementing standard BW.

The various phases of the methodology are depicted above.

Along with this methodology, Clarkston also provides accelerators which can save time and cost during the implementation.

Some of these accelerators are:

- Detailed project plan with key dates and milestones.
- List of pre-delivered cubes and reports which can be used in initial planning to set scope.
- Sample test scripts to test master data and transactional data loads into the cube.
- Sample test scripts to test and tie out BW reports with ECC reports/tables.
- Blueprint workshop design templates and presentations.
- End user training materials which include presentation decks, hand-outs and training assessments.

Conclusion

To summarize, the phased approach to implementing BW allows for a more rapid implementation with a higher adoption rate of the tools and application by the end user. The traditional way of implementing BW is more apt to those who already have a data warehouse and are currently running reports from it. If, however, your enterprise is still new to the concept and functionality, the phased implementation approach allows for a risk averse approach to introducing BW to end users. Obviously, one method does not fit everyone's needs. If you are not sure of the data and the application and your user base is not mature, this method will provide you with a fast and efficient way to maximize the returns from Business Warehouse.



Meet the Experts

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