TOP 7
Microsoft Dynamics Business Intelligence and Analytics Platforms
Business intelligence (BI) and analytics software has been instrumental in the steady advancement towards strategic decision making based on insight from performance trends, competitors, customers, industries, and suppliers. Recognizing the growth in demand for modern BI and analytics tools, Gartner forecasted a 7.3% increase in the BI and analytics software market alone this year. With a saturated market full of BI solutions to choose from, success will be given to those who carefully identify their data needs and strategically choose a platform that aligns with those requirements.

Every successful BI solution implementation starts with requirements gathering. Doing your due diligence in the beginning will help you deliver the best BI system for your organization and better prepare you for the project ahead. In this whitepaper, we will provide a full comparison of 7 well-known BI and analytics products in the Microsoft Dynamics ecosystem, including “must-have” functionality that we believe is pivotal to becoming a data-driven organization.
Risk of Business Intelligence Failure

When dealing with people, business processes, and technology, there is always a risk of failure. But what does failure really look like in a BI implementation? BI failure, plain and simple, means picking the wrong-fitting BI software or implementing a solution that your end users don't know how to use. Both of these “worst-case scenarios” result in huge setbacks, from over budget projects and out of scope deliverables, to misaligned user expectations and lost confidence in the overall value of analytics and whatever team drove the project.

The purpose of BI is to improve business decision making, efficiency and productivity within your organization. If you go back and look at the core issues behind choosing the wrong software or a solution your team is not on board with, most failed BI efforts are a result of inadequate planning. This is why requirements gathering and buy-in is an integral component of BI software selection. BI and analytics planning involves a lot of cooks in the kitchen, from end-users to executives. If you buy a BI tool without a proper understanding of why the business needs it and how it’s going to be used every day, nobody is going to use it well or effectively once deployed.

Although the risks might be great, the rewards are too. That’s why, according to Gartner, 60% of CIOs predict spending on analytics and BI applications will increase this year. Why? Because no matter what the risk, business intelligence is a good, if not necessary, investment into strategic, profitable decision making.

The best way to avoid the risk of failure is simple: Start with the business problem that needs to be solved, get an understanding of the specific capabilities required to solve those problems, and then purchase (or build) a BI tool that meets those specific needs.
Cost of Buying vs. Building Your Own BI Solution

Microsoft is known around the world for its innovative BI and analytics technology, recognized as a leader in the Gartner Magic Quadrant for Analytics and Business Intelligence Platforms for 11 years and counting. Every Microsoft Dynamics ERP solution has a robust BI toolkit built-in and ready for the making. The only stipulation is that you need to have the right experience and technical capabilities on staff to be able to use those tools successfully.

When you are running your business on a Dynamics ERP system, you have the choice to either build your own BI solution or buy it from a certified ISV vendor. If you have your own team of dedicated Dynamics resources, then your first instinct is to do it yourself. A project of this size includes extensive up-front analysis, planning, design, programming, testing, documentation, change management, and maintenance. The average BI project from scratch to minimum requirements takes at least 300 to 500 hours. With the average BI technical resource charging $200/hour, you’re looking at $50,000 to just get started.

What most companies don’t realize is business intelligence is about more than the software. It takes a significant amount of time to build an analytics solution from the ground up, even with Microsoft’s BI and analytics tools available to you, but when you add up data and application integration, reporting engines, data visualizations, and system security, you are looking at a year to 18 months from start to finish. This doesn’t even include ongoing updates, support, and maintenance; in particular, how your BI solution will respond to or integrate with a Dynamics ERP upgrade when major upgrades are planned by Microsoft every 6 months. When your reports and dashboards are not portable to the newest version, a big portion of the backend programming usually has to be redone entirely.

The reality is, the do-it-yourself approach is much more risky, expensive and time-consuming than a third-party BI solution in the long run. Comparatively, a pre-built analytics solution has all the heavy lifting done for you, both up-front and ongoing. These vendors have already spent the time coding and testing a solution that you are able to deploy and adopt quickly. Their solutions are also tried and tested by other companies with the exact same data challenges as you. You assume none of the risk of building, yet you reap all the rewards that intelligence and analytics can bring to your organization.

The only risk you have to take on now is what BI solution will best fit your business processes, people, and infrastructure. To help you make the right decision, we have put together a complete overview of the top business intelligence and analytics vendors in the Microsoft Dynamics channel and outlined important functionality that every user needs in a BI solution.
Top 7 BI Vendors in the Microsoft Dynamics Channel

If you decide that buying is the more cost-effective and less stressful way to business intelligence and analytics, you now have to go through the vetting process of software selection. While your ERP partner is often responsible for guiding you through planning, design, implementation, and installation, your solution vendor is the man behind the mask. Or, the brains behind the software.

What you look for in a partner is quite similar to what you need in a vendor. You want to make sure the company has a good reputation amongst its users, and that the solution itself is affordable, compatible, and supported. To get you more familiar with what solutions are available, here is an overview of the top 7 Microsoft Dynamics BI and analytics vendors in the channel today.

Jet Global
Jet Global provides flexible, easy-to-use reporting and analytics solutions that are built directly inside of Excel. As a vendor, Jet Global is devoted to providing unparalleled access to data through fast and adaptable solutions that are cost effective, provide rapid time-to-value, and are built specifically for the needs of Microsoft Dynamics ERP users. All their reporting and BI solutions are incredibly easy to implement and adopt, with immediate ROI and global support you can rely on.

Website - [http://www.jetglobal.com](http://www.jetglobal.com)
Headquarters - Portland, Oregon (United States)
Global Reach: 14 regional offices
Year founded – 2002

Halo
Halo is an analytics software and advisory services provider that delivers an innovative blend of technology to manage demand forecasts, inventory, and supplier relationships. Halo’s Advanced Information Hub is a first-of-its-kind solution to help companies leverage all their corporate data to analyze, plan, and generate new insight for competitive advantage. Enterprise scaled, rapidly implemented, data secured.

Website - [https://halobi.com](https://halobi.com)
Headquarters - San Diego, California (United States)
Global Reach: Offices in United States, Australia, China, New Zealand and Austria
Year founded – 2008

TARGIT
TARGIT Decision Suite is a business intelligence platform that offers visual data discovery tools, self-service business analytics, reporting, and dashboards in a single, integrated solution. TARGIT combines the control of a centralized BI solution with the flexibility of a decentralized solution with robust security and dependability. The enterprise-wide platform has a vast range of deployment options that bring centralized BI to everyone in the organization.

Website - [http://www.targit.com/](http://www.targit.com/)
Headquarters - Aalborg, Nordjylland (Denmark)
Global Reach: Offices in Denmark, Finland, Brazil, Italy, Greece, Spain and Germany
Year founded – 1986
**Solver**

Solver is the provider of the leading Corporate Performance Management (CPM) solution for today’s mid-market enterprise. At the forefront of CPM technology with deep ERP integrations, Solver’s BI360 is a cloud solution with an option for an on-premise deployment. It offers powerful and intuitive modules for reporting, consolidations, budgeting, forecasting, and data warehousing.

**Website** - [http://www.solverglobal.com/](http://www.solverglobal.com/)
**Headquarters** - Los Angeles, California (United States)
**Global Reach:** Offices in United States, Sweden (EMEA HQ), United Kingdom, Singapore (APAC HQ), Mexico, Peru, India and Italy
**Year founded** – 1996

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**BI4Dynamics**

BI4Dynamics provides rich business intelligence capabilities to companies of all sizes and industries. From the first day, you can analyze your data quickly, accurately and make informed decisions. Business data from Microsoft Dynamics AX & NAV is processed in BI4Dynamics data warehouse to provide new insights and enhance performance. OLAP cubes and predefined Excel reports include rich KPIs and cover all AX & NAV application areas.

**Website** - [http://www.bi4dynamics.com](http://www.bi4dynamics.com)
**Headquarters** – Chesterfield, Derbyshire (United Kingdom)
**Global Reach:** Offices in United Kingdom, Singapore, Denmark, Netherlands, Dubai
**Year founded** – 1993

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**Qlik**

Qlik delivers intuitive platform solutions for self-service data visualization, guided analytics applications, embedded analytics and reporting to customers worldwide. Companies of all sizes, across all industries and geographies, use Qlik solutions to visualize and explore information, generate insight, and make better decisions.

**Website** - [http://www.qlik.com/](http://www.qlik.com/)
**Headquarters** - Radnor, Pennsylvania (United States)
**Global Reach:** Offices in 30 countries
**Year founded** – 1993

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**Microsoft Power BI**

Power BI is a powerful data visualization tool that produces stunning and interactive reports and dashboards. Everyone in your organization can create personalized dashboards with a unique, 360-degree view of the business, publish them on the web and across mobile devices, and scale across the enterprise, with governance and security built-in.

**Year founded** – N/A
Now that you know who the top players are in the Dynamics market, it’s time to get familiar with the must-have and nice-to-have features that come with business intelligence solutions. The purpose of BI and analytics is to get the right information from your Dynamics ERP system in a format that is easy to understand and make actionable decisions on quickly. A “must-have” feature is a core component that you need in a BI solution in order to help you achieve that purpose.

BI products are known for having a lot of bells and whistles. Beautiful visuals might look really good in a demo, but what features do you really need to achieve your analytics goals? Before the demo, write out a list of your must-have features. With that, you will be able to easily vet products and vendors with confidence. Remember, well-documented deliverables and a clear understanding of what your business needs will help ensure a successful BI implementation. To help you get started, we have outlined 6 major must-have BI features and explained they are important for Dynamics ERP users.
1. Frontend Functionality
One of the first things you will come across in your analytics research is the difference between frontend and backend tools. Some BI products only offer frontend capabilities, while other solutions deliver the full stack. Frontend features are what your users see, such as an intuitive user interface that’s easy for them to use on their own while simultaneously getting access to the data they need. Backend features are the underlying technical components that extract, transform and load your Dynamics data, like a data warehouse. While the frontend features look great, don’t be fooled; data visualization tools are only as good as the backend they are built on.

To become a data-driven organization, where everyone is able to create and share reports and dashboards, you need a self-service BI tool with an intuitive user interface. Every feature on the surface that your users interact with can be considered frontend functionality. Its purpose is to enhance usability, simplify training, ensure adoption, and streamline the dissemination of information quickly and easily. This is achieved through the following features:

- **Data Visualization**
  Dashboards, charts, graphs, and other visuals that illustrate key insights into your data and allow you to present it in an easily digestible way.

- **Native Excel Integration**
  Built specifically for Microsoft Excel, allowing for seamless integration and quick adoption.

- **Financial Reporting**
  Statements that disclose an organization’s financial status to management, investors, and government.

- **Operational/Transaction Reporting**
  Tactical reporting in real-time that reflects and supports day-to-day activity at an organizational level.

- **Self-Service Analytics**
  BI interface that allows business professionals to perform queries and generate reports without development or IT support.

- **Available on Any Device**
  Critical data and analytics fully accessible to all users at any time, on any device with a web browser.

- **Web-Based Sharing and Management**
  Web-based applications or portals that allow easy sharing and communication throughout an organization.
2. Backend Functionality
Your Dynamics ERP solution is your primary source of data, collecting valuable information from your business and operations on a daily basis. You may have other sources of data as well, be it legacy systems or industry specific platforms. Your focus should be on what happens to all that data in the background and how it is going to be pulled, transformed, consolidated, and analyzed to present meaningful information in the frontend. Here’s what you need in order to have a strong, structured backbone fueling your BI and analytics solution:

Data Warehouse Automation
Technology designed to build data warehouses efficiently by automating the entire data warehousing life cycle, from planning analysis, design and development to operations, maintenance and change management. Helps reduce resources, time, and costs to any BI project by eliminating manual SQL coding.

Pre-Built, Turnkey, Customizable Data Warehouse for Dynamics
A large store of data drawing from a wide range of sources that can be processed, split, and analyzed to extract insights that guide management decisions. Typically, relational databases that contain historical data and are designed for query and analysis.

Pre-Built, Turnkey, Customizable OLAP Cubes for Dynamics
A method of storing or organizing data in a multidimensional form to provide interactive analysis by different dimensions, levels of data, and desired calculations. Cubes are pre-summaries across dimensions to drastically improve query time and accuracy from relational databases, as well as store it in an intuitive way for output.

Predictive Planning and Forecasting
Analytics that use statistical models and forecasting techniques to assess possible outcomes.

Master Data Management Capabilities
Master Data Management enables the data warehouse to connect to multiple data sources and facilitates the logic of the data so that business decision makers can see all of the related data to a topic, including a customer, product, customer service scenario, etc.
3. Microsoft Dynamics ERP Product Focus
As a Microsoft user, you are connected to a talented network of Independent Software Vendors (ISVs) who build productivity solutions specifically to meet the requirements of your Dynamics ERP system. While it’s possible to go with a solution that can be configured and customized to meet your needs, you will have better and faster results with a BI and analytics solution tailored to your current system. An analytics solution designed for Microsoft Dynamics will have the ability to deliver most of your BI needs directly upon installation, which cuts development costs significantly. These solutions are tested and repeatedly implemented with Dynamics AX, NAV, GP and 365 to work right out of the box from day one. Plus, they will also offer customized content for your Dynamics system, including pre-built and customizable OLAP cubes and data warehouse.

4. Estimated Implementation Time
When it comes to business intelligence, think about your ROI. From the time it takes to start planning to the time it takes to build your first dashboard, you need a clear understanding of how long your solution implementation will take. A 17-month implementation means increased expenses, wasted time, and erosion of support from key stakeholders. You need to see value from your BI investment right away to ensure your solution is addressing your current business needs – not the ones from months ago. Pre-built reports, dashboards, cubes, automated data warehousing, and an intuitive design means rapid time-to-value.

5. Other Features to Consider
Other areas that would be helpful to compare in your software selection include the product’s user base and the vendor’s ability to provide continuous improvement, training, and support.

User Base
The number one sign of a good BI solution that delivers on its promises? Plenty of happy customers! A strong user base and product community will give you all the insight you need to gain confidence in a product and a vendor. As you get further into the software selection process, you can request client interviews and really dig deep into if this is the solution for your business.

Continuous Improvement
While continuous product investment is a little harder to measure than a user base, take a look at how often a vendor releases regular updates to the system and what kind of enhancements they make.

Training and Support
As for training and support, make sure the vendor you choose has a help center, an active community, a strong training program, and a knowledgebase of material that you can take advantage of. This will ensure your employees are fully trained and can keep up-to-date on the product and new features.
Comparing Business Intelligence *Apples to Apples*

This table outlines the critical functionality every Microsoft Dynamics user needs in a BI and analytics solution and compares how each of the top 7 business intelligence vendors in the Dynamics ecosystem meet those requirements. This comparison is intended for Dynamics customers in the software selection phase and can be customized to include other vendors (see printable version on Page 13).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Jet Analytics</th>
<th>Halo</th>
<th>Targit</th>
<th>Solver BI360</th>
<th>BI4Dynamics</th>
<th>Qlik*</th>
<th>Power BI</th>
<th>Build Your Own</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>FRONTEND FUNCTIONALITY</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y – Power BI templates</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N (Excel or purchase externally)</td>
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<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Reporting</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Depends, maybe with SSRS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operational/Transaction Reporting</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Depends, maybe with SSRS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Service Analytics</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Available on Any Device</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y (via Power BI)</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Depends on build</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real-Time Reporting Option</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y (via REST APIs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BACKEND FUNCTIONALITY</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Warehouse Automation</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Built, Turnkey, Customizable Data Warehouse for Dynamics</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Built, Turnkey, Customizable Multidimensional OLAP Cubes &amp; Tabular Data Models for Dynamics</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predictive Planning and Forecasting</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y (manual, using SQL tools)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master Data Management Focus</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
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<td><strong>GENERAL INFORMATION</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Estimated Initial Implementation Time</td>
<td>4 hours</td>
<td>3-6 months*</td>
<td>3-9 months*</td>
<td>1 day (Backend only)</td>
<td>QlikSense: 3 months to over a year QlikView: 3 months</td>
<td>3 months, depending on what third party sources are integrated</td>
<td>6-18 months</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Based on Gartner Peer Insights</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Microsoft Dynamics Focus</td>
<td>100% Dedicated</td>
<td>Less than 5% Dedicated – Generic Platform</td>
<td>Less than 20% Dedicated</td>
<td>30% Dedicated</td>
<td>100% Dedicated</td>
<td>Less than 1% Dedicated</td>
<td>N, requires custom building of model with PBI connectors</td>
<td>0% Dedicated</td>
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<td>Global Presence</td>
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<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N/A (in-house IT)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Continuous Improvement and Investment in Products</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Dependent on internal capacity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Qlik (like Domo, Cognos and Tableau) is not a direct competitor. Qlik’s focus is on complex enterprise analytics and BI for large industries with no platform focus, like Microsoft Dynamics.*
Start your software selection process with a customizable checklist on the next page.

Just input the vendors you want to compare and add up the scores!
# Printable BI Comparison Checklist

This table outlines the critical functionality every Microsoft Dynamics user needs in a BI and analytics solution.

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Visit [www.jetglobal.com](http://www.jetglobal.com) to see why 14,210 companies rely on Jet Global for their business insight every day.
Choose the Right BI Platform for your Analytical Needs

Since 2002, Jet Global has worked with thousands of Microsoft Dynamics users to deliver the best reporting and analytics solutions. Our business was built on providing meaningful data that everyone in an organization can use to make better decisions and improve productivity. As seasoned BI and Dynamics veterans, we’ve seen first-hand the power that due diligence and thorough software evaluation can have on the successful implementation and adoption of a BI solution. When it comes time to compare vendors, take our advice and use the printable checklist to assess your options. Remember, the right BI solution for your unique Dynamics system and business processes is just around the corner!

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