



The Experts in Telecoms Data Management

# Top 10 Reasons Business Intelligence Projects Fail

Case Study

July 7, 2016



## Aperio CI Overview

There are many companies who claim they can help you address your Business Intelligence (BI) problems. We have designed and implemented data systems and BI solutions for leading companies worldwide. Recently we have specialized in fixing broken data systems and completing BI projects that were way behind schedule and headed for failure.

Our customers will tell you that an Aperio CI system just works, day-in, day-out to support marketing, analytical and operational groups. We accomplish this by viewing Excellence in Data Management and Application Delivery as a Mind-Set, not a Skill-Set. If the data is not timely, accurate, relevant, accessible and actionable then it is of no value.

Aperio CI's core delivery team including: certified program management, solution architects, data scientists, test/audit professionals and data operations experts, have the proven experience, stability and discipline to successfully deliver even the most challenging BI projects.

With Aperio CI you have:

- Absolute focus on delivery – Full requirements compliance Delivered On-time and On-budget
  - Once project requirements are frozen and schedule and fees agreed we never ask for more time or money
- Broad Industry Knowledge
  - Aperio CI has 25+ years delivering BI solutions and data systems worldwide
- Infrastructure and Tool Agnostic Approach
  - Any infrastructure (Oracle, Netezza, Teradata, Redshift, etc.)
  - Any Tools (Oracle, SAS, DataStage, IBM Campaign, Tableau, MicroStrategy, etc.)
- Highly Experienced Team - We only have an "A" team
  - Our core team members have an average of 20+ years experience delivering BI projects and have delivered hundreds of projects for clients worldwide
  - The stability of our staff provides you the comfort of knowing that the team that starts the project will be the same team who finishes it.
- Nimble and Intense
  - Small number of customers by design allows us to gain an in-depth understanding of your requirements and maintain a "Laser" focus on the success of your project
  - Our delivery focused, fixed-priced philosophy provides you with a clear delivery path and price certainty.

With Aperio CI you have an experienced, highly focused team capable of designing and delivering your total project, working with you to deliver a portion of the project, or a team with the knowledge to fix a broken system.

## Reason 1 – Not Having the “Right” Team

There are many companies who can design and implement your BI solution. Unfortunately too many want to sell you their tool sets or infrastructure products and are not focused on delivering a BI solution designed to meet your unique requirements.

In many cases you are hiring a vendor to provide critical skill sets needed to deliver the solution. Will the vendor work well with your team? Do they clearly understand the project deliverables; have a process to monitor project status and highlight when there is risk in missing delivery milestones? When the schedule is at risk how will they respond? Will they point fingers or dig in a help get the project back on track?

## Reason 2 – Myth that Hiring a Big Company Ensures Success

The “Big Company” philosophy is that more is better. They throw bodies at a problem with the expectation that the more people working on a project the better chance of success. However: Are you getting their “A” team to implement your project or the “B” or even “C” team? Does the team have stability and continuity to complete your project on time? What level of experience does each of the team members have and how many projects has that specific team delivered together? Finally, are you receiving the best value for the money and do you have price certainty?

## Reason 3 – Lack of Clear and Decisive Management

A successful BI solution starts with clear and decisive management that must provide the leadership and discipline to keep the project on track. The overall goals and deliverables of the project must be clearly communicated internally to your team and to the vendors.

Our mantra is “Keep the *Main Thing*, the *Main Thing*”. This means that we stay focused on the agreed project goals and never allow “Scope Creep” to prohibit successful delivery.

## Reason 4 – Poor Data Quality

Having the ideal BI solution won’t overcome bad data. If your data is of poor quality – inaccurate, or lacks clear operational controls and data governance your BI system will be unable to provide valuable and timely insights.

We know that data excellence isn’t a tool-set or a skill-set, but rather a *mind-set*. If any of the data is invalid, then we assume all of the data is invalid. This zero tolerance towards bad data focuses us on building fully auditable systems where every data element is traceable back to its source. It also allows us to guarantee that no bad data will ever get loaded into the data warehouse.

## Reason 5 – Do Users Question the Credibility of the BI Output

Do the Users trust the content of your BI system? Are they confident that when they query the system it will return the accurate answer? Are results consistent and do they make logical sense? When there are variances in the results, are they explainable?

The delivery of a new data system is always a momentous day, but it's only one day, not unlike the wedding day. We focus on ensuring the data system works and delivers value to your business every day, not unlike a great marriage. We build systems where the data is right the first day and every day thereafter. Users interact with our systems with the confidence that the underlying data is accurate which leads to credible metrics. Because we know that if users do not trust the system, they will stop using it and will start to build their own ad-hoc systems to get the information they need.

## Reason 6 – BI Solution Does Not Deliver Actionable Information

You can build the best data system in the world, but if it does not bring *measurable* value to your business then you are just wasting time and money. Did you rush into your BI implement without fully realizing the needs of the business? Do the selected tools provide the appropriate information and are they in formats familiar to Users? Does the BI Solution interface easily to other applications used by marketing, customer care, and front-line sales. Ultimately, has the system increased your company's profitability?

## Reason 7 – Underestimating Time and Money Required

The one thing that all large scale data warehouse migration projects have in common is the potential to become out of control beasts if they are not adequately planned, staffed and funded.

Data warehouse migration projects are complicated. They have to ensure that:

- All legacy systems and processes are uninterrupted
- The new EDW hardware and software infrastructure is properly installed
- All key legacy data and reference information is mapped into the new model
- All existing production processes are replicated
- All user expectations have been met
- Data integrity is verifiable and flawless

To accomplish this it is imperative that the business requirements are complete and accurate; the use cases are well defined and understood; the business expectations are clear and agreed; and success criteria has been clearly defined and is measurable.

## **Reason 8 – The Myth of Future Proofed Data Models**

When embarking on a large data warehouse project, it is easy to become enamored with the idea of designing a fully normalized data model using 3NF that will accommodate not only the current business needs, but also all future needs. The myth is that if the LDM is properly designed, it will never need to be changed. This sounds great in theory as an academic study; however in reality, a data warehouse is a living, breathing entity that needs to continually adapt in order to support ever changing business needs.

It's a "Data Model" not a "Do everything that I could ever dream of" model.

The desire to create the ideal data model typically leads to the creation of an overly complex system requiring very complicated ETL logic to map source data into the data warehouse. It also creates a data warehouse that is difficult for end users to understand, validate and maintain.

## **Reason 9 – The Myth of a Single Vendor Solution**

Maybe you invested significant effort in understanding the business requirements but you shortlisted your vendor selection process. Don't be dazzled by slick brochures and presentations showing exciting features.

Don't lose sight of the business objectives and how your Users will interact with the BI system. Consider the following:

- Are the selected tools capable of meeting the requirements?
- Do they integrate seamlessly into the selected infrastructure?
- Are there verifiable successes stories of projects using the exact set of tools you have selected?
- Does your company have the skill sets required to utilize the tools and maximize their value? If not, are these skills easily attainable?

## **Reason 10 – No Clear Understanding of the Business Needs**

We believe that the success of a BI solution starts with a clear understanding of the business requirements. We always start by asking the following questions:

1. What are the benefits you expect to gain from your BI system?
2. How will this system help to make you money?
3. How are you going to verify that you are receiving the desired results?

We do not start a project until we have clear answers to these questions. From this starting point we work with you to ensure you are selecting the "right" business intelligence solution. We then review your data warehouse to ensure your data is accurate, with clear operational controls and data governance. For your BI system to provide valuable and timely insights, your data must be easily accessible, accurate and up to date.