Chapter 83
Business Intelligence Tools for Social E–Enterprises

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ABSTRACT

Social enterprises can tackle a wide range of social and environmental issues and contribute to economic growth but they also benefit people and the planet. However, social enterprises face particular difficulties, in order to be financial sustainable and get their social mission accomplished in a global world. In recent time, technology applications in different fields, especially Business Intelligence (BI), have been developed rapidly and considered to be one of the most significant uses of information technology. BI is a broad category of applications and technologies for gathering, storing, analyzing, and providing access to data to help enterprise users make better business decisions. This represents a tremendous competitive advantage that allows achieving and exploring the collective intelligence of the organization, enabling contextual, agile, and simplified information exchange and collaboration among distributed stakeholders and networks of partners. Despite these advantages, the organizations applying such systems may also encounter problems in decision-making process because of the highly diversified interactions within the systems. Hence, the choice of a suitable BI platform for social enterprises is important to take the great advantage of using information technology in all organizational fields. This chapter aims at addressing the problems existed in the social e-enterprises, describing and evaluating the major open source BI tools that can have strong impact on social enterprise change and development.

INTRODUCTION

Organizations providing services to beneficiaries in the third sector face a huge number of valid competing pressures on their time and resources. Often technology gets relegated down the list because in many cases it is not part of core service delivery. Social enterprises can tackle a wide range of social and environmental issues and

operate in all parts of the economy, contributing to economic growth but they also benefit people and the planet. However, social enterprises face particular difficulties, in order to be financial sustainable and social mission accomplished in a global world.

According to Porter and Kramer (2011): "In recent years business increasingly has been viewed as a major cause of social, environmental,

and economic problems. Companies are widely perceived to be prospering at the expense of the broader community. (...) A big part of the problem lies with companies themselves, which remain trapped in an outdated approach to value creation that has emerged over the past few decades. They continue to view value creation narrowly, optimizing short-term financial performance in a bubble while missing the most important customer needs and ignoring the broader influences that determine their longer-term success. How else could companies overlook the wellbeing of their customers, the depletion of natural resources vital to their businesses, the viability of key suppliers, or the economic distress of the communities in which they produce and sell? The presumed trade-offs between economic efficiency and social progress have been institutionalized in decades of policy choices. Businesses must reconnect company success with social progress. Shared value is not social responsibility, philanthropy, or even sustainability, but a new way to achieve economic success. It is not on the margin of what companies do but at the center. We believe that it can give rise to the next major transformation of business thinking" (p. 64).

Porter and Kramer (2011) also say: "Businesses acting as businesses, not as charitable donors, are the most powerful force for addressing the pressing issues we face. The purpose of the corporation must be redefined as creating shared value, not just profit per se. This will drive the next wave of innovation and productivity growth in the global economy. It will also reshape capitalism and its relationship to society. Perhaps most important of all, learning how to create shared value is our best chance to legitimize business again" (p.64).

The Financial Times (2010) also has spoken of "a growing sense that both the state and the market have become too big and too powerful, and that local and civic life need more support." A number of indicators show that people, organizations and companies are ready for social enterprise to play a bigger role than ever before as a driver for social and economic change.

Research by the Social Enterprise Coalition has uncovered a large appetite among the general public for more employee-owned businesses and more business methods used to tackle social problems (Social Enterprise Coalition, 2010). Young people come out in the research as optimistic about businesses tackling social problems, and all age groups say they have lost faith in the traditional business community.

Social Enterprises create this shared value. Yet everywhere social enterprise is so poorly understood that it is conflated with the charitable or voluntary sector. Public debate about the future of civil society has focused on the role of charities and volunteer groups. The language that has developed lumps together "charities and social enterprises." But social enterprises are not charities. They are businesses.

Organizations are also increasingly dissatisfied with the costs imposed on them by large Information Technology (IT) vendors; their IT stack is having to morph to accommodate a much more decentralized, virtualized and mobile infrastructure; and their business users are expecting enterprise applications to behave like Google or Facebook.

In this changed IT world, traditional Business Intelligence (BI) is not able to keep up. BI is an umbrella term that spans the people, processes and applications/tools to organize information, enable access to it and analyze it to improve decisions and manage performance (Gartner, 2011). The cost of buying and deploying BI for everyone who needs it is prohibitive; the architecture, designed for the old IT stack, cannot be optimally deployed in a network-centric infrastructure; and the product design does not have the simplicity or interactivity expected by today's enterprise consumers.

The new IT world requires a new kind of business intelligence – one that can be affordably deployed to everyone, that is architected with the flexibility required by the new IT stack, and that is designed with the modern information worker in mind.

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