



Pentaho Gives Open Source Business Intelligence a Boost

Industry Performer Report

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Executive Summary

Pentaho has established itself as a leader within the burgeoning open source Business Intelligence (BI) market with its Open BI Suite and Reporting Server products. Both offerings display an impressive range of choice BI functionality built on open source developed source code. The company features a veteran leadership team coupled with an impressive record of attracting funding from several prominent venture capital funds including Index Ventures and New Enterprise Associates.

Recently, Pentaho has acquired, sponsored and integrated various open source components for use within the Open BI Suite and reporting server. These additions have added enhanced analysis, data mining, and workflow features to the product architecture. As a BI platform, it is most suitable for customers that are comfortable making or have already made an investment in Java/J2EE platforms; want to reduce prohibitive BI software acquisition costs; are interested in leveraging BI as a competitive advantage; want a fully integrated yet open source solution; and need dedicated enterprise support services.

Entiva Group has selected Pentaho as a strong industry performer based on the company's strong vision for open source business intelligence (BI) as a platform as well as an understanding of the technical and operational dynamics related to assembling an enterprise class BI suite. Overall, the Pentaho platform exhibits the breadth of well designed features and stability expected of a market leader.

Who Should Consider Pentaho

Pentaho fills the niche for an integrated suite of open source tools within the business intelligence (BI) landscape filled with closed, proprietary products. Despite their status as a relative newcomer, the company has already begun to attract an impressive number of customers by offering a valuable cost proposition and a flexible, open source foundation. Presently, Professional Editions of both the Pentaho Open BI Suite and the Reporting Server are available. These versions extend the features and functionality of the open source BI suite and Reporting Server. The Professional Edition is for organizations and companies that want enterprise BI capabilities without the prohibitive Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) levels typically associated with proprietary products.

Recent activity by the company has notably strengthened the analysis, reporting and data integration components of the Pentaho Open BI Suite. In addition, there is also workflow, dashboard and other standard BI feature functions. Pentaho continues to ensure that the community and enterprise editions of their product remain significantly aligned by pledging to keep the vast majority of their developed source code available to the open source community, free of charge. A high percentage of shared source code between the two code bases is a strong signal that their product will remain open source.

An evaluation of the Pentaho BI platform reveals a number of security and administration upgrades have been added, along with key front-end user interface improvements. In general, the Pentaho suite and Reporting Server are a good fit for buyers that:

- ***Have made an investment or are comfortable making an investment in Java/J2EE based products.*** Both the open source and professional editions of Pentaho Reporting and Pentaho Open BI Suite are built on the Java SE/J2EE architecture. Each product set is compatible with Java version 1.4.2 or greater. Previous experience working with a Java enterprise environment will smooth the initial learning curve involved with grasping various product nuances. Nonetheless, since the Pentaho platform only utilizes standard Java API's, users who are not as well versed in managing Java architectures will not find it overly complex or cumbersome.
- ***View BI as a competitive differentiator.*** Business Intelligence is currently in the process of shifting from being viewed as a data-based domain with provisions for reporting, analytics to a significant priority amongst CxOs. The foremost force behind this change is the broad need to access and analyze information for use within strategic decision making, setting targets, and responding to rapidly changing market landscapes.

Leading organizations are already expanding the scope of their business intelligence efforts to include business process integration and performance management. The objective is to provide an edge when it comes to supporting customers and partners, keeping an edge on competition and realizing increased regulatory transparency throughout the information chain. All of which requires that updated information be made available to a number of different user groups in a business-driven context.

- ***Prefer fully integrated, stable open source products.*** Despite the relative youth of the open source business intelligence space in general, the Pentaho suite is a tried and true integrated and stable product. Even so, the product suite does need some time to prove that recent activity surrounding the incorporation of other open source components into its architecture has not introduced notable performance issues. As a balancing factor, stability has remained a high priority for the company as well as backwards compatibility. Users who prefer a single-point of entry to BI related functionality will find the Pentaho Reporting and Open BI suite capable of meeting enterprise requirements as they relate to stability, user/architectural features and compliance to industry standards.
- ***Require enterprise support services.*** Pentaho offers various levels of support for both the open source and professional versions of its Reporting server and BI suite. The Gold and Silver support levels consist of email and web support but lack the option of receiving remote

troubleshooting. The Platinum support package offers remote troubleshooting availability coupled with a guaranteed response time of 6 hours, compared to the two-to-three business day periods for Gold and Silver, respectively. Users of the open source versions can opt for the Gold and Silver packages, whereas the Platinum level is provided by default for the professional versions.

Product Architecture

Standards based	Pentaho employs J2EE based components including an XML- based repository that eases the task of standard import/export duties. Architecture components can be wrapped as Web Services for integration into service-based ecosystems. There is also support for JDBC 2.0 compliant database connectivity including Oracle, IBM DB2, NCR Teradata, MySQL and EnterpriseDB.
Cross Platform Support	The Pentaho BI platform and reporting server has been confirmed to run on Microsoft Windows, Linux, Solaris and Mac OS X 10.4.x. Support for Internet Explorer 6+, FireFox 1.5+, Safari 2.0.3+ and Netscape 8.0+ is also included. The product has been verified, internally by Pentaho, to run on JBoss 4.0.3 and Tomcat 5. However, it is actually capable of running within any application server or Servlet container that supports JDK 1.4+.
Production Ready	The Pentaho platform offers capabilities that support an array of configurations. All of which enable administrators to test, validate and deploy changes throughout the system lifecycle. Compliance and regulatory requirements can be met through visibility into user and system trends and patterns. One drawback is that there could be more direct support for reporting parameters.
Centralized BI Platform	BI suites have to meet an extensive continuum of user needs that span reporting, analysis, and dashboard support. Enterprise ready platforms are capable of providing this functionality with a single point of access. As one such platform, Pentaho meets the needs of enterprise deployments as well as the administrators, developers, and end users who are involved with deployments.
Data Integration support	BI solutions need to provide users with a single view of distributed information that exists across multiple locations in multiple forms. Pentaho has begun to address this requirement through the integration of ETL functionality for the cleansing and data migration.
End User support	Pentaho makes technical support available for the different aspects of a BI system deployment lifecycle. Premium offerings are available through telephone, email, as well as online channels delegated through a dedicated support contact for each customer.

Analysis

Considering the company's new entrant status within the BI software market, Pentaho has done well to provide a cost effective, feature rich suite. However, as is the case with any software product there are risks associated with its use. During the process of bringing together its BI suite in current form, Pentaho has been busy acquiring and replacing a number of open source components. It should be noted that the integration of these sizeable features and components into an existing product, while a necessity, is not a trivial task and will take time to pay its full dividends.

Even though the task of merging outside components into a significantly large code base typically increases the risk of introducing new incompatibilities, defects and bugs.

Pentaho's acquisition activity during the first two quarters of the 2006 calendar year should not be viewed as cause for concern. With the support and use of tools such as Enhydra Octopus being replaced with others like Kettle, time must be allotted to fully evaluate how these recent changes affect the entire product suite.

In the mean time, Pentaho has stood firm by their commitment to providing a completely stable and integrated product suite by electing to include only components that support open standards such as XML. This approach has resulted in the addition of libraries such as JFreeReport and Mondrian, both of which do not bring with them burdensome new models that clash with the current product architecture.

Pentaho insiders have also made it clear that users have no reason to be concerned about potential negative impacts on performance. "JFreeReport users now have a graphical Report Designer, integrated scheduling and e-mail distribution, portal integration, and access to OLAP sources for data. These are significant enhancements that provide a lot of value, all available in open source," says Lance Walter, vice president of marketing. Adding that, all acquisitions and integrations are "...non-disruptive, and fast to provide benefits."

Questions regarding the Pentaho Open BI Suite's capacity to meet the requirements of large (75+ users) deployments have been motivated, in part, by a slight bias towards considering open source solutions to be somehow less mature or scalable. One that continues to be disproved, but nonetheless persists. Notwithstanding, Pentaho has yet to be available long enough, in its current form, to prove such claims totally irrational.

Despite the fact that developing a high quality, complete BI suite typically takes an extended period of time, the open source development model provides robust testing and code coverage that ultimately leads to a very high quality end product. Additionally, since no single BI product can meet the needs of every single user nor can it cover every facet of business intelligence, missing features must be taken with a figurative grain of salt. Still, even if missing aspects do not make or break a first-class BI software platform, Pentaho must continue to address the lack of scorecard support as a priority going forward.

Company Overview

The Pentaho Business Intelligence (BI) suite and reporting server have already established Pentaho as the leader of the open source business intelligence (BI) space, ahead of Actuate and JasperSoft. The company is currently positioning itself as a cost effective alternative to BI suites provided by more established players such as Cognos and Hyperion Solutions, despite lacking the completeness, feature wise, as the products from those aforementioned vendors.

The recent release of Open BI 1.2 provides improved functionality and a flexible architecture that features enhancements to: report templates, drag-and-drop workflows and administrative functions, among other things. The design studio and the report

designer have also been overhauled towards achieving the goal of simplifying the development process and enhancing productivity. The company also entered a partnership with business process management vendor Adaptive Planning to deliver an end-to-end, open source BPM and BI solution in an apparent attempt to branch out of the pure BI space market.

By offering a complete Business Intelligence suite at a considerably lower price than traditional suites, Pentaho should continue to exhibit strong signs of growth throughout the remainder of 2006 and into the first part of 2007. Look for the existing functional gaps to be filled in upcoming releases in an effort to further fortify the entire product offering. Moreover, as technology buyers continue to become increasingly interested in open source BI solutions, Pentaho will gain more opportunities to compete for substantial business use at an enterprise level.

About Us

Entiva Group, Inc. is an independent industry analyst firm specializing in examining the ways in which Open Source Software can be used to improve the business operations of enterprises across the world. If you are interested in finding out how Entiva Group can empower your organization's open source business intelligence strategy, contact us here: info@entivagroup.com.