

State of BI

Insights for Data Leaders on the Strategic Edge

Executive Summary

In 2015, Microsoft Power BI was released, ushering in a shift toward self-serve analytics at many enterprises, and enabling a new era of data-driven decision making. A decade later, most data and analytics leaders now have purview over an expansive business intelligence environment, with more data and a growing number of tools that create ballooning numbers of datasets, reports and dashboards. This consumption layer, where business users interact with the data, is make or break for corporate data programs and the companies themselves.

Today, another technological shift appears to be taking place. AI is permeating nearly every business conversation. But talk to analytics practitioners and leaders, and it is clear that more urgent challenges with the operation of BI environments are occupying their day-to-day workflows. Over a four-month period, Datalogz partnered with Intake Media to interview 50+ BI operators. This included a survey of 30 of those practitioners. **When asked in our survey what was keeping them up at night, only 10% of data and analytics practitioners and executives said AI was their top concern.** While many are actively exploring AI, today they are balancing that eye on the future with managing their existing BI environment, trying to increase speed and performance, and reduce cost, while maintaining data quality, reliability, security, and governance.

Together, the problems that interviewees identified describe **BI Sprawl, challenge which 2 out of 3 respondents to our accompanying survey said they were facing on some level.** If overlooked, these challenges could hobble a company's ability to deliver on key tenets of data and analytics strategy, including improved decision making, self serve analytics, and the introduction of AI.

The rapid growth of business intelligence has **compounded challenges managing the velocity and volume of data**, as more users create a growing number of reports using myriad platforms. More than half (56%) of data leaders reported using 3 or more business intelligence platforms, while more than 75% reported using 2 or more. In reality, data leaders are balancing legacy, self-serve and AI platforms. Transformation is constant, and no organization exists in one era. **Business intelligence environments are fragmented**, as different teams and platforms operate using their own rules and norms. If a data team is unable to keep up with new data, they fall behind on maintenance of the existing environment, and certainly won't have time to make forward-looking improvements.

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When considering how to improve BI environments, **cost is a major driver of change**. A key outcome of BI governance is improved performance, which can in turn reduce cost. Equally, introducing a new platform or expanding compute resources can increase costs, leading executives to question current BI adoption rates and efficacy before increasing budget. When seeking improvement or expansion, data leaders must employ these calculations, weighing competing factors.

As leaders weigh the contributions that BI makes to a business as a whole, **trust is a major driver of success**. A data leader's ideal outcome for BI is a tool that is widely used and credited with contributing to the competitive edge of the business. To deliver this, they must create a BI environment where consistent and reliable data is used to create reports that are widely viewed across the organization as the source of truth. The factors named above can undercut each of these aims.

Understanding challenges and opportunities today can help point to where BI is heading next. Through our interviews, Datalogz has surfaced the following forecasts:

As the number of BI platforms continues to grow, **migration to new platforms will continue to be the norm**. As BI programs realize success and growth, leaders will inevitably look to expand capabilities with new platforms. At the same time, platforms will continue to make changes, as seen with the introduction of Microsoft Fabric. Yet a moment of change can expose shortcomings as leaders look under the hood. Without guardrails in place, there is considerable risk that migration will weigh on time and resources, and result in duplicated data during the transition, compounding BI Sprawl.

Even as advances continue to receive considerable attention, **AI could exacerbate BI Sprawl**. For BI, the promise of the ideal world presented in various corporate pitches is an AI agent that can create a report with a simple conversational request. Without proper governance and security controls, a lack of human-in-the-loop to decipher between data will only raise the attendant risks.

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The recent history of BI suggests that the **advance of BI capabilities will continue without pause**. Given this, businesses should treat the safeguarding and forward improvement of data and BI operations as a critical strategic edge. It is not enough to be aware of advances. Organizations must proactively prepare their infrastructure for constant change, enabling them to leverage advances as soon as they are available. The exponential growth curve of data takes time to kick in. Consider the additional time lost that is at risk if an organization is behind from the start.

At Datalogz, we're proud to offer solutions that help businesses address critical data challenges, and improve environments. A decade after the launch of Power BI, we're optimistic that BI will continue to make a massive impact on operations that power our world. We hope that this report helps to inform your roadmap, and that you join us on the journey.

All views expressed by interviewees in this report are solely those of the subject, and do not represent the views or opinions of their employer, or any other party.

About the Report

There are people behind the data.

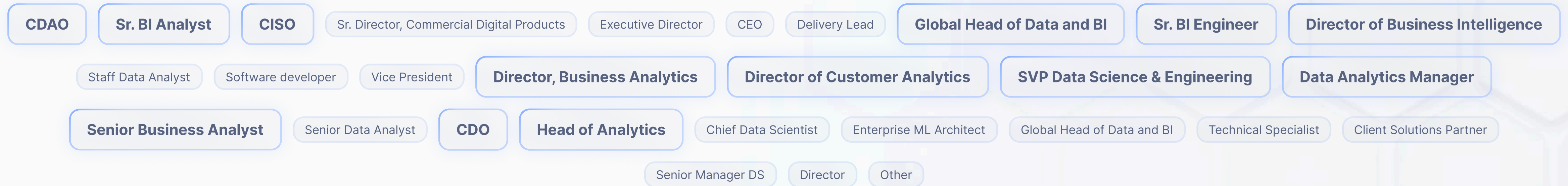
This is just as true in analysis of trends as it is in the administration of business intelligence. The Datalogz team is committed to activating best-in-class analytics and reporting environments. To understand how we get there, we have to understand everything we can about BI, and the leaders who ensure it delivers actionable insights inside some of our economy's most important businesses. We have to understand the makeup of their BI environment today, and what they want it to look like tomorrow. We have to understand their motivations, their challenges, and their big goals. To find this, we partnered with Intake Media to launch the first State of BI report.

Goals

- ✓ Understand how organizations are structuring business intelligence environments today
- ✓ Uncover the challenges organizations are facing in managing business intelligence
- ✓ Highlight priorities in business intelligence for 2025

Methodology

We talked to 50+ data leaders.



From companies in



Introduction

As we present a clear picture of BI, we set out to identify the following:

BI: The Consumption Layer, in which we seek to understand BI Environments today, including its evolution and the present moment

BI Sprawl, where we identify challenges that are commonly shared, as a first step to coming to a solution.

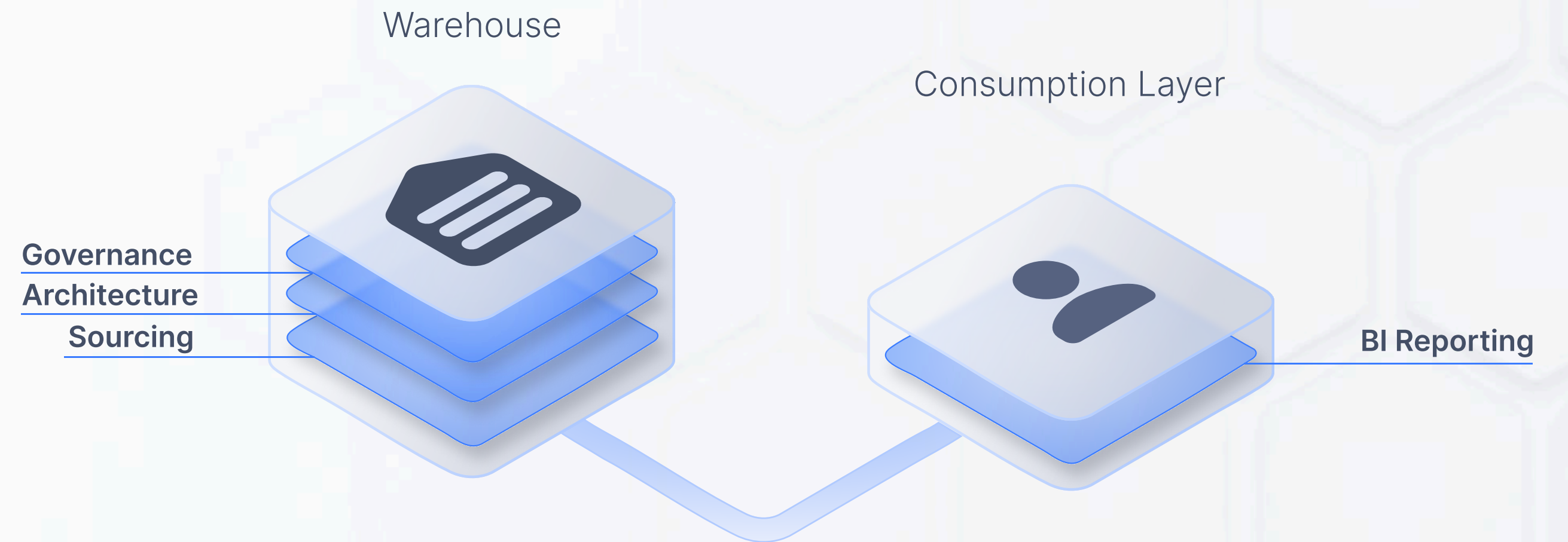
BI in 2025, where we forecast what's next, to prepare now

BI: The Consumption Layer

Business intelligence is where the data meets the business. Data is collected and stored at the warehouse layer. That's where sourcing, architecture, and governance take place. This is the province of engineers and other data specialists. At the consumption layer, data moves to all business users. This is where data analysis and reporting takes place through BI platforms such as Power BI, Tableau, and Looker. BI is where the most business users access the data. **It's where the rubber meets the road for data programs.** As users create reports, they build trust and evaluate whether data is useful.

At the consumption layer, data leaders aim to harness BI platforms to enable self-serve analytics, where users can access data and create reports without the assistance of a specialist. With more access has come more data. **BI now makes up a significant amount of IT spend.**

But as they manage environments where a large number of users access data, admins and leaders must confront a balancing act. On the one-hand, there is significant upside, as more users, who are closest to the details of a business' operations and challenges, accessing more data, has the potential to improve analytics and decisionmaking, but presents potential for rising risk and cost.



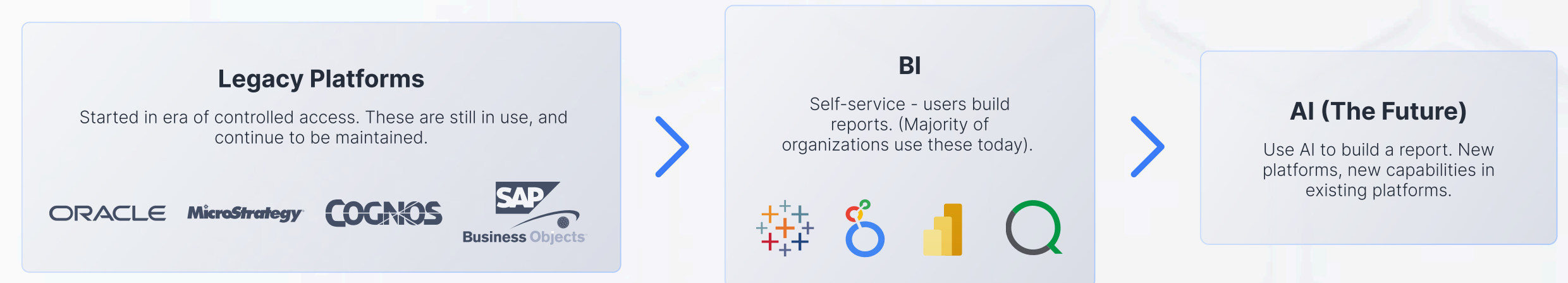
The consumption layer makes up a significant segment of the investment made in IT and data. According to McKinsey, BI & reporting makes up 5-10% of total IT spend.

Evolution of BI Admins and Data Team

At its core, business intelligence describes the use of data to inform decision-making.

That's as true today as it was when the term was coined by Richard Miller Devens in 1865. But as the digital era gave way to the connectivity of the internet, the amount of data collected by businesses and the delivery mechanisms changed. In previous eras, BI was the province of specialist, technical administrators who controlled access. Riding the popularization of data science and cloud adoption, BI is now available to virtually everyone. Through the years, the platforms have evolved in capabilities. So, too, have the roles of admins and developers that create the infrastructure to access them.

Today, many businesses have more than one BI platform, and all three of these eras exist simultaneously. Migrations are frequent. We heard about these scenarios:



Company A had 3 BI platforms: Power BI, Tableau, and Qlik.

Company B migrated from legacy Microsoft platforms to Tableau as reports increased.

Company C is using Power BI and Tableau, with CognOS and Alteryx for specialized use cases.

Power BI is (still) the King

Microsoft's release of Power BI in 2015 was a foundational moment that ushered in the self-serve analytics era, and the platform continues to be popular.

Positioned within the Microsoft ecosystem, it was a natural progression for Excel users looking for more advanced capabilities. A user-friendly interface helped deliver what was previously the purview of data scientists to every day users looking for reports that test their assumptions or support their argument in a meeting. A decade later, Power BI has cemented its role as one of Microsoft's top products, and the platform continues to enjoy high affinity from users. Power BI continues to hold a top market position, including its Leader position on the Gartner quadrant, even as other top tech companies and upstarts have released BI tools. Microsoft has made Power BI a central pillar of its refactored data ecosystem, known as Fabric.

To be sure, Power BI is not the only platform in use. With the growth of self-service analytics, many users develop a preference for particular platforms. Some like the breadth of available resources and community around Power BI. Others find that a specific platform is effective for isolated use cases, such as analyzing GIS data.

"Power BI is an excellent tool. I see it being adopted very heavily."

- Data Executive, NYC

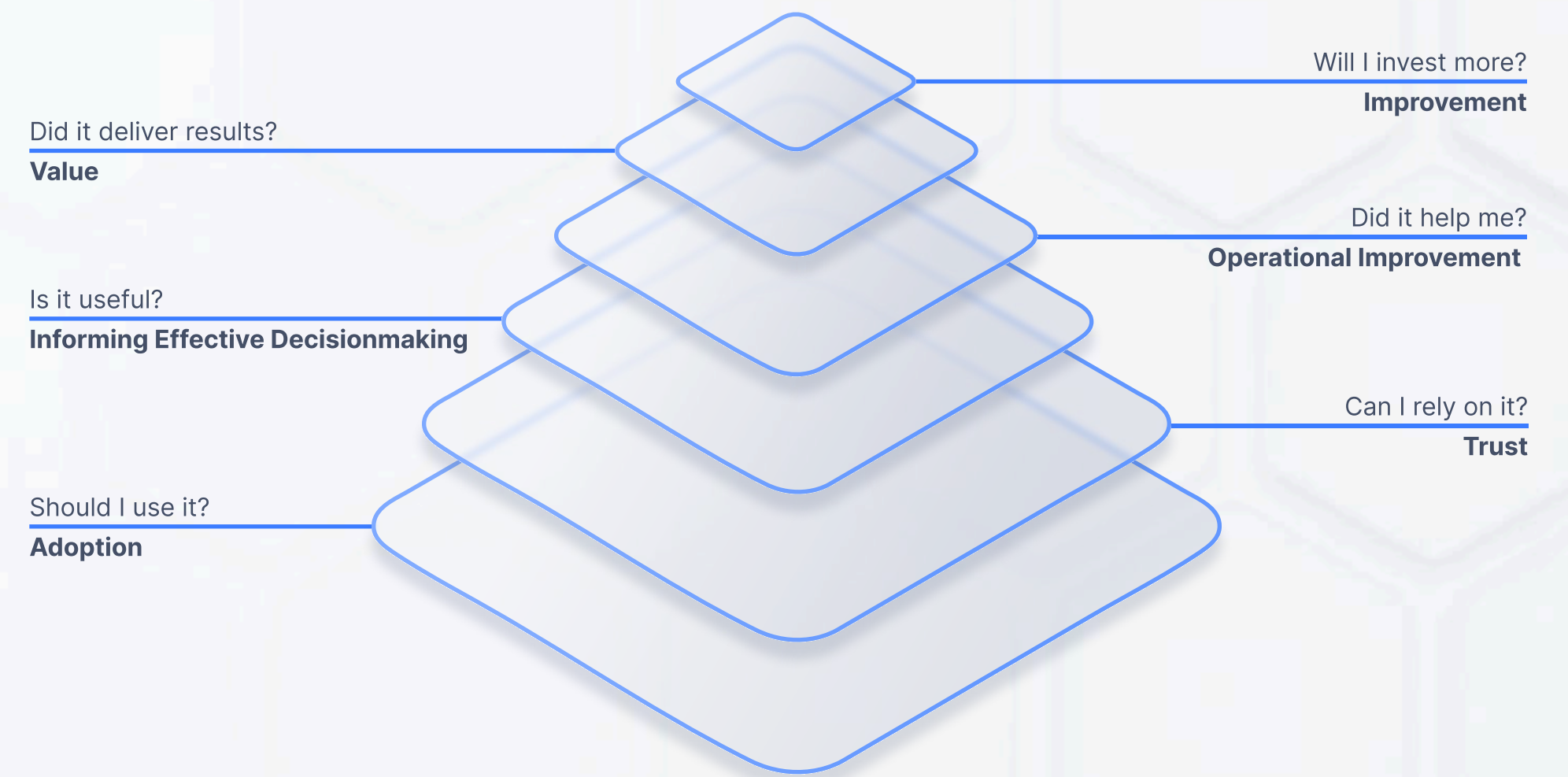
In a sample of our data, it was most mentioned:



The BI Value Chain

Today, BI's growth is supported by a growing number of users, who can freely access a skyrocketing store of data, on a growing ecosystem of platforms.

Yet leaders must weigh their investment in BI. They must monitor usage rates, and whether BI ultimately delivers on the promise of informing decisions that lead to operational efficiency, business growth, and a competitive edge. BI programs need to be well-run to be effective. Operations matter. Leaders must ensure that available data is cataloged and high-quality, compute resources are available, and compliance is maintained. As data programs mature, they present more levels of value. Reach these, and BI can be expanded.



Challenges

BI Sprawl

The growth of BI has ushered in a new era of democratization in data. But a decade into this shift, it's clear that the proliferation of users, reports, and platforms has left challenges in its wake. The result is BI Sprawl.

When environments are in disarray, the issues that result can undermine the goals of data and analytics by eroding trust in data products, leaving security vulnerabilities, degrading performance, and driving up costs.

We asked 30 data leaders, "Would you say your organization has BI or reporting sprawl?" 2/3 said yes.

The challenges cascade through analytics environments, and compound at each phase.

The volume and velocity of data, reports, and platforms is coming too much, too fast for admins to keep pace.

We asked 30 data leaders, "Would you say your organization has BI or reporting sprawl?" 2/3 said yes.



Adding to this, many companies experience fragmentation in data and analytics, where different departments use different platforms, characterize the same data in different ways, and produce their own reports, even when their goals overlap with other departments.

A lack of standardization can also present security risk if access to sensitive and regulated information is not properly controlled and permissioned.

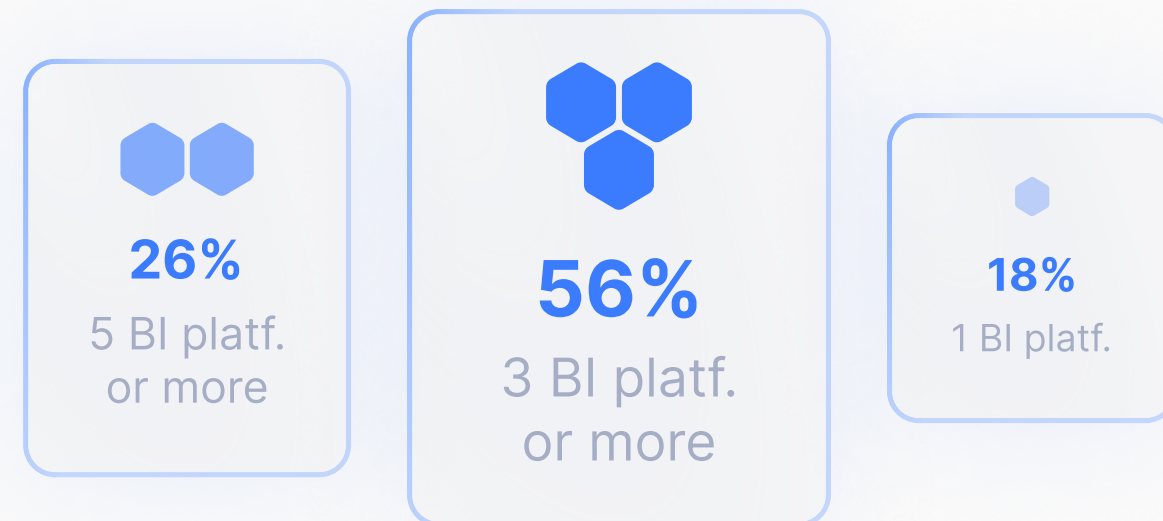
Lacking complete visibility and unable to keep up with the day-to-day, admins are grappling with messy environments, where some reports contain stale or inaccurate data, and others go unused.

Interactions with this unconsumed or redundant data erodes trust in data programs, as users question the validity and usefulness of analytics. For administrators, it gobbles up compute, which in turn drives up costs.

Too Much, Too Fast

With the growth of BI, more data is being delivered faster than ever before. This has created a new paradigm inside companies. Hundreds of users, across many departments, are generating thousands of reports. Many are doing so through multiple platforms.

Our survey findings indicated more than half of organizations are using three or more BI platforms.



BI admins have benefitted from the availability of new tools, as more data is delivered faster. But many struggle to keep up with the day-to-day maintenance and requests. They also face increasing complexity in managing platforms. Not only does data exist in more places, but there is wide variation between platforms in architecture, definitions, and operations. Without a standardized approach, it is difficult to have a clear picture of data, let alone surface issues that may hamper operations and ultimately address them. The controlled environment of the warehouse gives way to an atomized landscape of reporting.

"Data is coming at us faster and faster every day, and the amount of it is growing more and more every day. As a company, if you can't wrap your arms around the data, organize it and wrangle it, you're not really going to get a whole lot of value out of it."

- Christopher Majka, FM

As data programs mature and reports number into the thousands, visibility into the entire environment becomes a challenge. Users could be accessing unendorsed datasets, or performing BI using platforms that are unknown to the organization.

"There are hundreds of new environments, new reports, and new dashboards popping up weekly across the enterprise. Even as a center of excellence, we find ourselves in almost an impossible to manage task of actually overseeing what is there."

- Luke Rouquette, American Bureau of Shipping

Fragmentation

As more users across different roles in disparate departments use BI, teams build their own reports, rather than collaborating. This can create data silos, as departments create their own sources of truth.

“The challenge stems from different people working on similar reports to build similar metrics. Sometimes, there’s a lack of communication. We are not aware of what another team is working on, and there is a duplication of effort. They are using the same tables, building a similar report, when that report could be built using our dataset, and they could add another table or two of their own to extend it. This leads to increasing cost, because we are using up our capacity, whereas we could have used that capacity to do other things.”

— BI Engineer, CPG

Inconsistency in definitions and reporting leads to discrepancies in data. This can have a divisive effect. It leads to disagreement, and questioning. Data should be validated, but the ultimate goal is to offer clarity and streamline efforts, not create new arenas of conflict.

If data divides, what started as doubts about one data point can quickly snowball into distrust about an entire data program.

“They built reports inside of their own department, they would call a metric ‘sales’ on the operations report, and it would not be calculated anywhere near the same way the finance report was. And then both departments would spend six meetings fighting about who’s correct on their sales number,”

— Stephen Miller, Bounteous, former retail data leader



Messy Environment

With new data and reports increasing, it's a challenge to catalog data, define metrics, and conduct proper maintenance. It's the classic data problem: Garbage in, garbage out.

"There is plenty of junk out there. We're about five years into our Power BI journey. Over the last three years, we've done a lot of good optimization and restructuring of reports to make them more useful and user friendly, but we still have some legacy reports out there that haven't been touched in three to four years, and they're still refreshing. Some of those, I'm able to catch and turn them off. Others have one or two people in the business that are still using them."

— **Senior BI Developer, metals giant**

In our survey of 30 data leaders, 60% identified "dealing with BI-governance related issues" as their most important data and analytics initiative.

Key identified issues included: Data Integrity/quality, bad data, Redundant Reports, Updated Dashboards, consistency and scalability.

Common problems include:



Incorrect data that has not been endorsed is being used in a report, resulting in an inaccurate calculation.



Stale data, leaving reports with outdated information, leaving decision makers without a current picture of the business.



Unused reports that are not adding value, but still taking up finite compute resources.

These are isolated problems, but they compound when operating at scale. One piece of inaccurate or old data can be used across dozens of reports. A single unused report has minimal impact in isolation, but as users and platforms multiply, they can add up. Preventing it requires a proactive approach.

"The minute we deploy something, we need to see adoption or usage within the first six weeks. If we don't see it, then it's a conversation with the business stakeholder to say, where did we miss the mark? Is it no longer relevant?"

— **Senior Vice President, Data Science and Engineering, Entertainment Giant**

Security

More people accessing data brings more risk. BI platforms have security regimens, providing a baseline for security and compliance at the consumption layer. But in the management of multiple platforms, there are potential blindspots.



Team Risk: What starts as a well-meaning effort to more deeply understand a company's operations can result in employees viewing salary information that becomes a point of conflict.



Compliance Risk: If BI is not held to the same compliance standards as the rest of the data stack, sensitive personal information could be exposed.

It's a balance: Data leaders want to open up access, but must protect personal and proprietary information.

In our survey of BI leaders, 50% identified security and access challenges in BI as the most important BI or analytics initiative. A further 47% identified dealing with regulatory risk in dat as a top initiative.

Compute & Cost

The compounding impact of new data, fragmentation, and a messy environment drives up compute resources, which in turn challenges performance of BI environments and drives up costs.



"We're hitting some of the limitations in that we're going to have to start thinking about scaling up, but that obviously comes at a financial cost, and going back to the adoption and usage conversation, if we're not seeing the community at large being engaged in leveraging the resources that are being deployed today. It's hard to make that convincing conversation that we should spend more money to do more scaling up if people aren't using what's already there."

— **Director of Business Intelligence, CPG leader**

Compute & Cost II

In particular, data leaders reported challenges in these specific areas:

⊗ **Forecasting costs.** With multiple departments using business intelligence tools and new reports popping up all of the time, it's difficult to identify who is the largest user, and when to pay for reserved capacity vs. pay-as-you-go.

⊗ **Keeping costs and compute aligned.** One of the cloud's great advertised advantages is the ability to scale up and down on demand. Yet in practice, it is difficult to predict when usage will spike. A new report could arise without warning that consumes a large percentage of resources.

⊗ **Reactive measurement.** Capacity is typically communicated after the fact, so once an administrator finds out about an issue, it has already happened. Even if it is only an hour later, that makes a difference. As one data leader put it, "You're always looking back."

⊗ **Resources are finite,** and data leaders must manage capacity. Cost is another proof point for the effectiveness of data programs. If they are not run efficiently, this will lead to questions about the efficacy and ultimate value of a data program.

It comes down to trust

On every front, trust is earned in drops and lost in buckets.

"It's very easy for a BI or analytics initiative to fail. Trust can be won very quickly. It can be lost even faster. The minute the dashboards stop representing what you believe is your reality...the trust and what you've spent so much doing as an organization, trying to change a culture, can go away in an instant."

— Jordan Perkins, Sr. Director of Cloud Platforms, AimPoint Digital

Forecast 2025

Forecast 2025

Change is constant in BI, and each is an opportunity. Yet businesses must be prepared to seize the moment when it comes, and that requires a firm foundation. Without a well-run environment, organizations will be caught behind at the moment when they could gain an advantage.

✓ Migration to new platforms

✓ AI Experiments in BI

✓ Microsoft Fabric and the New Compute Paradigm

✓ Data-Driven Culture

✓ Data as a Strategic Edge

BI migration is now the norm.

Transformation begets change. After an increase in BI usage, a cost adjustment, or a merger, companies are migrating to new BI platforms. Leaders must weigh a number of considerations as they choose platforms, and stand up a new piece of the environment.

Migration patterns aren't limited to eras.

Legacy → **Modern** (*Oracle to Power BI*)

Modern → **Modern** (*Tableau to Power BI*)

"The biggest challenge was data, because at the time of migration, you suddenly look under the hood and you realize data quality is poor at best. The amount of time that we spent nights and weekends trying to clean up the data so that we could move to a new system without hiccups was crazy."
— **BI leader, pharma giant**

What's the tipping point?

Adoption: Will a new platform drive more use?

Ecosystem: Does it align with our overall IT environment?

Integration: Are we a Microsoft or Google shop?

Compute: Is it cost-efficient?

Governance and Security: Can we place controls around it?

At a time of change, a lack of hygiene catches up to an organization. The migration period can expose realities that add complexity. It can also compound issues with BI Sprawl, such as duplicate data.

In our survey, 47% of data leaders identified migration to a new BI or analytics system as a top BI and analytics initiative.

AI could exacerbate BI Sprawl.

AI continues to be at the forefront of every strategic conversation in data, and enterprise technology as a whole. In particular, the advent of agentic systems could provide a new suite of tools that allow professionals to automate the creation and completion of business tasks. In BI, this would usher in a shift. In self-serve, the aim was to expand access to BI tools that made report creation easier for business users. By harnessing AI, the aim will be to provide business users with tools that automate the creation of reports. BI governance will continue to be important so that models are properly trained, and are using accurate and timely data. Then as now, an AI model that uses bad or stale data will produce bad reports.

This is a shift from “user builds report” → “user tells AI agent to build report.”

“The number one customer demand is around how to use AI to analyze data. They want to create reports and share that information, but that is being done more and more on the fly, in meetings, on calls, in planning and strategy sessions, using AI tools that are either built into the product or that they have built around their data.”

— Adam Jorgensen, Senior VP of Data & Analytics, 3Cloud

Guardrails and controls will become more important. AI will have less discretion as it identifies data to include and analyze, and less ability to catch errors. Sound governance will be necessary to ensure that data is accurate and up-to-date. Security permissioning is crucial to prevent improper data exposure. Preparation must begin now.

Former U.S. Chief Data Scientist DJ Patil issued a call at a recent Future Frontiers panel event:

[Get Your Data House in Order!](#) 

In our survey, AI adoption was identified by 10% as a top BI and analytics initiative.

Microsoft Fabric will transform Power BI operations.

Over the last two years, Microsoft ushered in a major change to data environments with the introduction of Microsoft Fabric. Fabric unifies data and analytics tools up and down the stack under one umbrella, bringing Power BI into the same administrative framework as the data warehouse layer, including data lakes and data engineering.

This has important implications for how organizations apportion compute resources and costs. Previously, Power BI had its own compute regime, including capacity metrics and billing. Under Microsoft Fabric, Power BI has the potential to use the same resources as Synapse, Azure Data Factory, and others.

If all plays out as Microsoft lays it out, there is significant upside as it will unite the data environment, unify compute management, and position organizations to leverage Microsoft's rapidly advancing AI capabilities.

However, as with any change, there are challenges that could present new complexity in platform administration. The unified compute environment means that capacity must be apportioned across all data layers. So a plan for Power BI capacity must also take into account the entire compute needs across the data stack.

"Everyone is beginning to fight for resources. You have data scientists coming in within the same environment and trying to run Python workloads or Spark jobs using the same compute that's shared across multiple workloads, including BI."

— Data Leader, global consulting giant

At the same time, the shift to a new Capacity Metrics App under Microsoft Fabric has led to reduced visibility of real-time usage trends, and billing. [\[Read a full breakdown of changes in the new Fabric Capacity Metrics app\]](#) 

In our survey, 30% identified adoption of Microsoft Fabric as the top BI and analytics initiative.

Data-Driven Culture Will Be Just as Important as Data Tools.

To make data programs successful, people are just as crucial as technology. As BI has gained popularity and data leaders seek to drive adoption, many have prioritized the expansion of data-driven culture.

While there are plenty of challenges associated with managing a BI environment, undoubtedly there are wins along the way. It takes good news much longer to travel than bad news. Provide information about the successes, show examples, and do so repeatedly.

Three data leaders interviewed for this report raised the example of appointing a data steward. Consider: Who are the evangelists for data-driven decisionmaking and good data hygiene in your organization?

“There’s a human element to it. Yes, you’ve built the thing. Yes, you’ve checked the box. Are you telling people about it, outside of the people who just requested it? Are you keeping track of conversations where people bring up a specific need they have. Are you remembering that someone on your team just made something that could help that person?”

— Johnnie Weathersby III, BI Manager, National Funding

BI Ops Will be a Strategic Edge

Process. Governance. Performance. Invest under the hood, and results will show up. It improves operations today, and prepares for what's ahead tomorrow.

Data capabilities and AI will continue to advance. Those who can hit the ground running when change comes have a huge advantage.

Consider the innovation debt that could accumulate. It's the time businesses lose because they weren't prepared, and must catch up to.

"What businesses end up scaling? It is those who create standardized, repeatable processes to scale into, while creating consistency and quality. The same thing needs to happen for any organization that truly wants to leverage the power of BI at scale. Data governance truly gives you a competitive edge."

**— Ron Synakowski, former Director of Data Capabilities,
Department of Air Force Chief Data Office**

A Letter from Logan Havern, CEO, Datalogz



Preparation collapses the time between the future and today. If we don't get ready now, the future will continue to be far away. In business intelligence, we won't realize the promise of self-serve analytics and AI without confronting BI Sprawl today.

At Datalogz, we believe engaging in constant dialogue and building community with practitioners will help make data and analytics environments stronger. This report is just one of the ways we're developing a shared understanding of challenges, and using them as a springboard to solutions.

My Co-Founders and I started Datalogz to solve problems with managing BI environments that we experienced firsthand. Today, we're proud to be a growing team that serves enterprises through Datalogz Control Tower, our BI Ops platform that offers monitoring in the consumption layer.

Sincerely,

Logan Havern
CEO, Datalogz