## Business Intelligence Goes Mobile

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**Mobilize data to improve customer service**

Samir Sakpal, an analyst at Frost & Sullivan, predicts that mobile analytics will move beyond niche markets, like the financial sector, into mainstream use because, he says, it helps businesses do two things: "Make faster decisions and drive a higher quality of customer service."

The desire for better customer service drove the adoption of mobile BI at Johnson Controls Inc., according to Robert C. Weisman, a senior manager at the Milwaukee-based technology and industrial conglomerate.

Johnson Controls has been piloting a BlackBerry-based BI tool that's designed to help its district and regional supervisors audit and manage custodial services for a major U.S. retailer, Weisman says.

Johnson has a series of benchmarks it uses for monthly audits that track things like the cleanliness of the retailer's store lobbies, floors and windows, says Weisman, who declined to identify the retailer.

Previously, Johnson's 72 district supervisors and six regional operations managers did that auditing with pencil and paper, writing down scores as they walked through stores and then later entering the data on their laptops using Open Text Corp.'s enterprise content-management system, formerly known as Livelink.

If a store failed to meet certain standards, the managers had to go back and pull previous audits to look at discrepancies in scores. They would then perform a follow-up audit to see if the problems had been fixed, again recording their findings on paper, entering data into their laptops and then checking the score.

Under a pilot program launched in April, six district supervisors can enter data directly on their BlackBerries while visiting stores. The data is entered into Open Text's content manager via Actuate Corp.'s open-source Eclipse BIRT (Business Intelligence and Reporting Tools) system, and it is displayed through Webalo Inc.'s Mobile Dashboard.

Data that a supervisor enters for a particular store is automatically sent into Open Text and can then be compared to that store's previous audit scores and to the scores of other stores in that chain nationwide.

"We can look at it from a single-store, district, regional and national perspective," says Weisman.

Managers at the retailer can also parse the scores to see if the custodial services provider is doing only the minimum necessary to achieve a base score necessary to pass the audit. For instance, store entryways are difficult to clean, but poor scores in that area can't sink an entire audit by themselves -- and that could mean custodial firms might be tempted to be less careful about cleaning entryways if they know it won't have a big impact on their overall scores. Now, Johnson's supervisors can instantly see whether entryways consistently score poorly and then take steps to address such shirking.

Weisman says the system being piloted has performed exactly as he'd hoped, and Johnson Controls intends to roll it out this August to, among others, all district supervisors, regional operations managers and area managers at the custodial services companies.

After the rollout, his goal is to expand what the mobile app can do, turning it into a "super dashboard" to give supervisors reports not just on custodial work, but also on merchandise displays and appearance, and ultimately the condition of the entire store environment, including HVAC systems, plumbing and so on.

Weisman says that Johnson didn't have to spend a lot of money to make the application work -- the field managers already had BlackBerries for e-mail, and the company was already using Open Text. Only the Webalo dashboard was new, and Weisman says a 100-seat-plus-server license cost "a fraction" of what he spends on Open Text development.

Weisman says that the managers can't do as much data manipulation on their mobile phones as they can on their laptops, but he thinks that will change over time. "I don't think laptops will be around in five to ten years, at least in the form they are today," he says. While he notes that the BlackBerry has limitations as an application platform, he says "these aren't phones, they're handheld computers."