

Coffee chat with Yellowfin Business Intelligence, CEO Glen Rabie.

By Yellowfin

Dated: Mar 13, 2009

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The aroma of freshly ground coffee beans wafts through a funky coffee shop, in Melbourne Australia. Glen Rabie settles in behind his Long Machiatto singing the praises of Michale, the barista, above the din of the coffee grinder. Melbourne is a town that takes its coffee seriously. "A large Italian migrant population defined the coffee experience here" says Rabie. And according to Rabie, just like its love of coffee, Melbourne is the centre of development for Business Intelligence applications.

Rabie a founder and CEO of Yellowfin, a Business Intelligence software vendor that was recently voted one of the 25 rising stars that CIOs must know about, senses my level of incredulity. Unperturbed he races on with passion educating me on the changes to BI and some of the applications that are helping to drive that change. Not only is Melbourne the home of Yellowfin but also companies such as Space Time Research and the world's fastest ETL solution C-RX. The big change coming is the drive to rapid deployment and ease of use, he tells me.

The problem is that I have heard it all before. Major vendors have been talking about pervasive BI for years now and yet they have not delivered on this. "That's the point! BI needs to be turned on its head" says Rabie. "None of the BI software architectures, or business models, support making BI easy. Think about, traditional vendors have partner eco-systems that are based on services, 30%+ of their own revenue is services income (more if you look at open source). Where is the financial incentive to develop BI solutions that are easy to use and implement? Imagine trying to sell cars the way BI solutions are sold. Sell the whole lot as parts with steering wheels and dashboards as optional, high-end extras. Only a tiny minority of people could buy this way, those with the time, resources and expertise to purchase all the required parts and then put it together. Yet, this is how the BI market is today. Vendors have convinced their customers that this is the way to purchase. So we have a multiplicity of products (at the presentation layer alone) such as dashboards builders, OLAP tools, Report Writers, Schedulers and on the list goes, and the poor customer has to put together. This is the trouble with the vast majority of the BI market right now!"

So why is Yellowfin different? "Fundamentally in two ways", says Rabie. "Firstly we are passionate about developing software that is incredibly easy to use. Ultimately BI is complex stuff but how do you step back from that and ask yourself what parts of the interface get in the way of a business user trying to access and explore their data?" Yellowfin has truly dedicated itself to this task. Rabie is a great believer of the hands on experience and convinces me to trial the product. No demonstration, just a download link. My first impression was that I must have missed something, as the download was unconventionally small for an application that touts so much functionality. Once installed though, my doubts were quashed.

Here was a BI application that was fully integrated and so intuitive, that I finally got the point. The end user deals with a single interface, no file systems, no various applications for specific functions - everything in one application - and a user interface that would make any Italian Designer weep into their latte with joy. After just a few minutes I can see why a recent project at a Utility company took just 8 weeks to roll out 120 reports and related dashboards to 500 users. Yellowfin has been designed from the ground up for rapid deployment.

“The second point of differentiation is the Business model. Yellowfin partners predominately with either software vendors wanting to embed a BI application into their own application, or companies with domain expertise who develop specific analytic applications for rapid deployment. Forrester, recently noted that 60-80 of a BI project spend was implementation – “well sure with old school products this is the case but if you develop a partner base that pre-packages a solution you create scale and reduce the time to market.

Both the OEM and the value-added reseller deliver packaged solutions to their customers” says Rabie. Yellowfin continues to make a splash in the BI market and rightly so. This is one of the best interfaces I have ever used for managing the data to dashboard life cycle. Not to rest on their laurels, Yellowfin have a clear and well articulated product road map which really does stretch the expectations of Business Intelligence capability via the browser. With this sort of product and a great business model Yellowfin has a great future and will really make an impact on its competition.

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