



“Business Intelligence is becoming omnipresent in corporate life”

Marco Kiernan
ifb group

Ten questions put to Marco Kiernan, head of the new ifb group service line ‘BI Technology’

■ What is actually meant by Business Intelligence?

In short, the term Business Intelligence (BI) refers to the procedures and processes that facilitate systematic collection, analysis and presentation of company data in electronic form. This provides an insight allowing better operative or strategic decisions to be effected in line with corporate objectives.

■ Why has the ifb group created an additional service line with ‘BI Technology’?

The area of Business Intelligence is a rapidly growing market segment. In addition to professional consulting, our clients are increasingly requesting technical BI solutions and their implementation. Establishing the BI Technology service line represents a practical expansion of the value-added chain; we are able to advise our customers on BI issues more comprehensively, and now also from a technical perspective. To this end, we have a team of highly experienced specialists who, for the most part, have previously worked for the relevant software manufacturers or renowned consulting firms.

■ What lies behind this increased demand on the part of the customer?

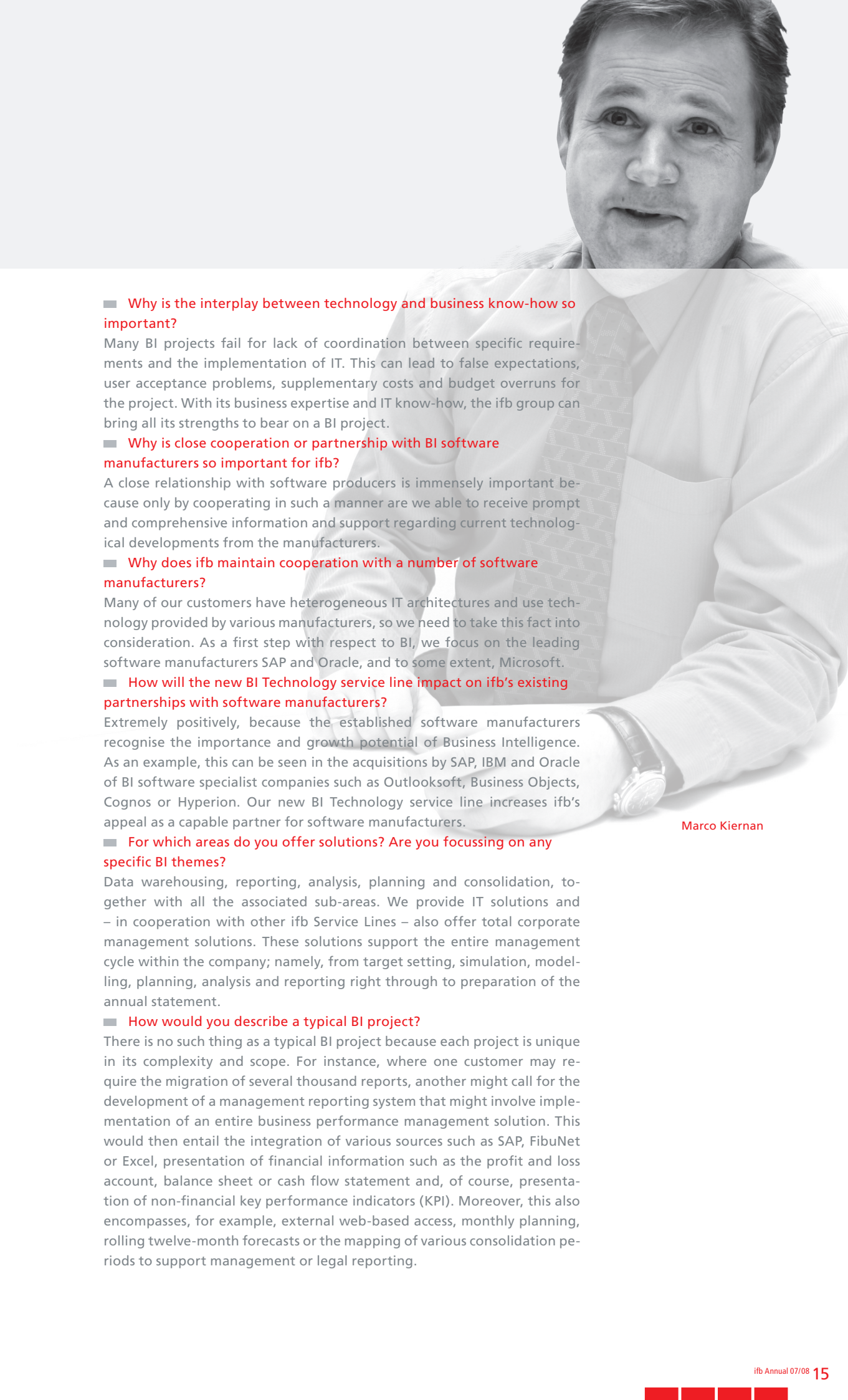
Today’s corporate decisions demand consideration of an ever-increasing quantity of information and number of requirements. Fifteen years ago, having a consolidated view of company data for tactical and strategic decisions was a unique characteristic; now practically all companies are expanding their IT systems to include BI Technology. In future, it will be hard to imagine corporate management without such instruments.

■ Which corporate areas are of relevance in this respect?

BI is becoming omnipresent. Previously, only selected staff in controlling and accounting departments employed the corresponding reporting and analytical tools. In future, these tools will not only be called into play by authorised decision-makers, but also by operatively active personnel in sales, marketing and production departments.



Range of services provided by the new BI Technology service line



■ **Why is the interplay between technology and business know-how so important?**

Many BI projects fail for lack of coordination between specific requirements and the implementation of IT. This can lead to false expectations, user acceptance problems, supplementary costs and budget overruns for the project. With its business expertise and IT know-how, the ifb group can bring all its strengths to bear on a BI project.

■ **Why is close cooperation or partnership with BI software manufacturers so important for ifb?**

A close relationship with software producers is immensely important because only by cooperating in such a manner are we able to receive prompt and comprehensive information and support regarding current technological developments from the manufacturers.

■ **Why does ifb maintain cooperation with a number of software manufacturers?**

Many of our customers have heterogeneous IT architectures and use technology provided by various manufacturers, so we need to take this fact into consideration. As a first step with respect to BI, we focus on the leading software manufacturers SAP and Oracle, and to some extent, Microsoft.

■ **How will the new BI Technology service line impact on ifb's existing partnerships with software manufacturers?**

Extremely positively, because the established software manufacturers recognise the importance and growth potential of Business Intelligence. As an example, this can be seen in the acquisitions by SAP, IBM and Oracle of BI software specialist companies such as Outlooksoft, Business Objects, Cognos or Hyperion. Our new BI Technology service line increases ifb's appeal as a capable partner for software manufacturers.

Marco Kiernan

■ **For which areas do you offer solutions? Are you focussing on any specific BI themes?**

Data warehousing, reporting, analysis, planning and consolidation, together with all the associated sub-areas. We provide IT solutions and – in cooperation with other ifb Service Lines – also offer total corporate management solutions. These solutions support the entire management cycle within the company; namely, from target setting, simulation, modelling, planning, analysis and reporting right through to preparation of the annual statement.

■ **How would you describe a typical BI project?**

There is no such thing as a typical BI project because each project is unique in its complexity and scope. For instance, where one customer may require the migration of several thousand reports, another might call for the development of a management reporting system that might involve implementation of an entire business performance management solution. This would then entail the integration of various sources such as SAP, FibuNet or Excel, presentation of financial information such as the profit and loss account, balance sheet or cash flow statement and, of course, presentation of non-financial key performance indicators (KPI). Moreover, this also encompasses, for example, external web-based access, monthly planning, rolling twelve-month forecasts or the mapping of various consolidation periods to support management or legal reporting.