Drive Adoption and Performance from the Desktop
Innate awareness of performance hinges on unavoidable KPI reporting

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Real estate agents say the three most important factors in a property purchase decision are location, location, and location. Location also determines whether or not your key performance metrics have any bearing on your enterprise performance.

IT departments have learned the hard way that deploying business intelligence software, a dashboard, or a scorecard to business users is no guarantee that they'll use it. This kind of project is expensive and difficult because of all the ways it can fail. A short list of the technical problems that can kill a business intelligence deployment includes:

- blending heterogeneous data sources
- agreeing on common definitions for different metrics
- scaling reporting capabilities to the entire workforce
- assimilating maverick performance management initiatives
- overcoming reporting bottlenecks in the IT department

Imagine the frustration of a CIO whose team overcomes all this only to learn that the business users the system is meant to help just aren't interested in using it. The final obstacle to any metrics-based performance management software deployment is user adoption.

According to one research report by AMR Research, low user adoption is the main reason that 30% of CRM deployments fail. This number may be similar for ERP or business intelligence systems.

Blatant performance indicators
Change is hard. Even changes we embrace have a way of sliding by the wayside if they aren't accompanied by behavior modification. The new process, system, or thinking needs to become habitual or you risk it not being used at all.

Have you ever taken an inspirational training course that has had zero impact on your performance at work? How many planning sessions result in strategies that sit on a shelf until the next planning session? Is that gym membership getting much use? Even changes we embrace are difficult to follow through on.

IT managers tend to see a web-based application that's available in a few clicks after logging in as pretty simple. And they're right to do so. But if you're in other departments like marketing, operations, or sales those additional clicks in new places along with

another annoying login are enough to prevent you from using it. There's lots of work to do without having to learn some new software package. It doesn't matter how much the enterprise paid for it.

For performance management software to a have a lasting affect on organizational behavior its performance indicators must be blatant. The language is full of clichés that echo this idea. Out of sight, out of mind. Keep your eye on the ball. Seeing is believing. To make better business decisions more often you must first be aware of how that performance is measured. Innate awareness of business performance hinges on obvious and unavoidable KPI reporting.

KPIs are common ground
The CIO who is desperate for a successful ERP deployment shares common cause with other managers who are trying to nurture a culture of management based on key performance indicators (KPIs). For the VP of Operations or the Marketing Director, the best way to trigger this kind of cultural change is to make performance metrics pervasive. Some financial services firms with KPI religion promote real-time metrics in every meeting room on liquid crystal displays. Many publically-traded organizations made a similar move years ago by displaying a live feed of the corporate stock price in the lobby, in the hall ways, or in the board room.

The happy ending to this story is that both the IT agenda and the business agenda are satisfied the same way. The tough part is defining the problem. And the problem is that people won't think about or act on metrics that aren't blatantly obvious. With the problem identified the solution is simple. Regardless of which data sources or business intelligence system you use, you need a desktop dashboard on every employee monitor and maybe on their smart phones as well. But you can't take over the desktop with a full-size dashboard or scorecard. It would just get hidden behind all of the windows employees need to do their jobs each day.

KPIs you can influence
Instead, your desktop dashboard has to be small enough to sit above or alongside other applications and just big enough to display the KPIs that employees can actually influence.

Promoting your stock price on a big screen in the lobby is a step in the right direction but it's less than ideal because so few employees can make an immediate impact on it. Outside of the public relations team and a few senior executives, most workers don't feel like the stock price is a KPI that they can influence in the short term even if it would benefit their compensation package.

But giving a team a shared goal along with the ability to monitor that goal at-a-glance can make a big difference. Seeing your progress in real time is a powerful, psychological one-two punch. It's one of the reasons charities use giant thermometers to depict progress towards their fund-raising goals. All that's missing to turn that one-two punch into a knock out is the ability for every team member to believe they can really influence their KPIs. The reason a shared, measurable, and responsive KPI works is simple. It encourages groups of people to individually decide to work on task X instead of tasks A,

B, or C whenever they have a choice. When the performance metric attached to task X responds to the additional attention it acts as positive reinforcement to repeat the behavior.

Desktop real estate
As momentum for metrics-based performance management builds in departments like marketing, sales, and operations it will collide with and complement the adoption agenda in the IT department. Ideally, the intersection for this collision is the end-user's desktop. To succeed, both business users and IT staff need to recognize the human factors that make the location of an organization's performance indicators so important. You'll know this transformation is underway the first time you hear your VP of marketing your CIO, and your real estate agent all chanting their new group mantra, "location, location, location."
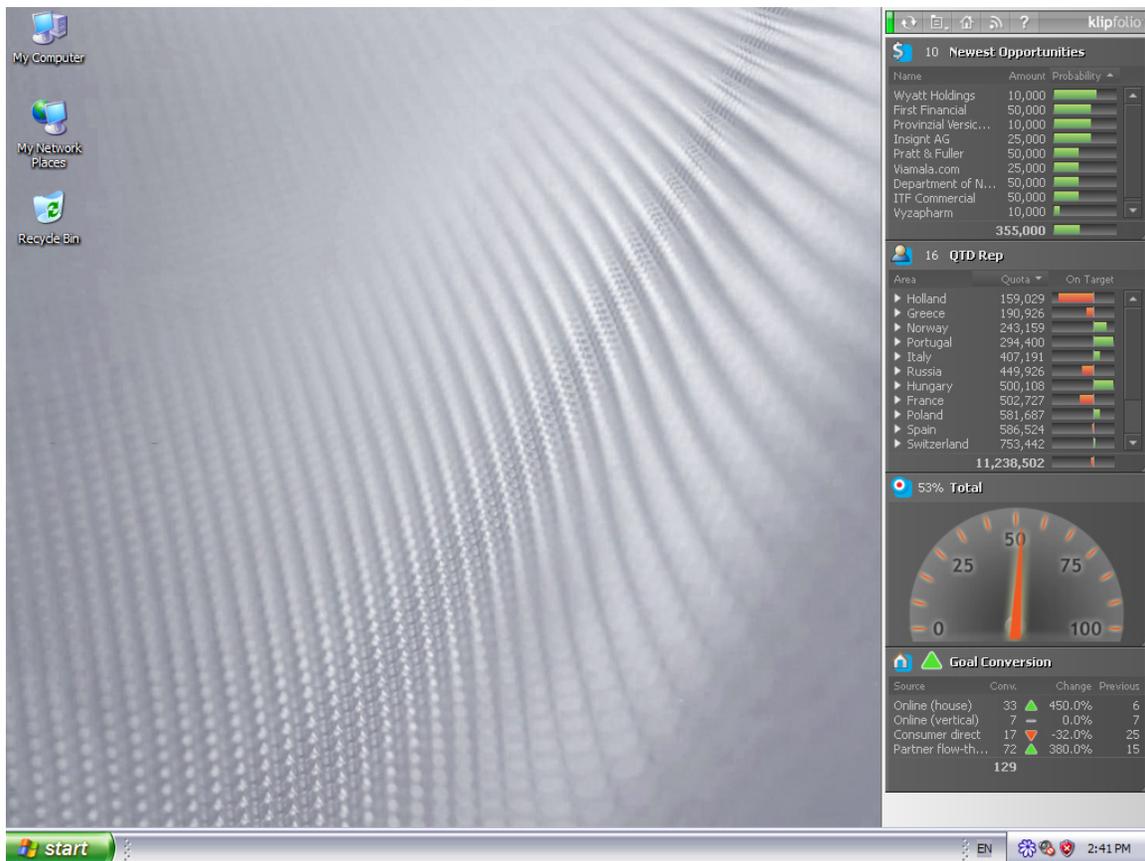
A desktop dashboard as a sidebar ensures key metrics and goals are visible throughout the day.

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