



Economy

4 Reasons You'd Better Have a Desktop Dashboard in a Bear Market.

By Allan Wille, CEO, Klipfolio Inc.

In “Business Intelligence, the Recession-Proof Application,” Dashboard Spy Hubert Lee notes that, in spite of the recession, organizations are moving ahead with performance dashboard projects 1. This despite cuts in other areas of IT.

It’s not surprising when you consider that monitoring performance, important at the best of times, is critical in a challenging economy. Organizations must respond faster to changing indicators. They must hold individuals – possibly fewer individuals – accountable for decisions. And they must hone productivity to razor sharpness.

In tough times, enterprise dashboards provide a competitive edge by organizing data into understandable, actionable information. Dashboards that go a step further and display real-time KPIs on the desktop generate even more advantage. They not only help weather difficult times, they take advantage of them. And they do it in four key ways.

1. Desktop dashboards ensure data visibility for business drivers

It’s always important to know what is happening with key performance indicators – it’s how we align actions with business goals. But in tough times it’s essential.

Desktop dashboards put individually tailored KPIs on the desktops of everyone, from the loading dock to the executive office. They keep key indicators “top of mind” at all times. Individuals never lose sight of what they are accountable for and must act on, and are able to do more with less. Their actions are aligned with goals driven by carefully crafted strategies underlying the indicators in front of them. And that’s especially important in a time of shrinking margins.

2. Desktop dashboards increase real-time awareness for faster decision making

In difficult times, business can be volatile. It’s not enough to make decisions – you must make them quickly, in response to what is happening right now.

Desktop dashboards keep KPIs current and relevant. Decisions are faster, better, and more confident because they are based on what is happening, not on what happened yesterday or hours ago. Better decisions translate into better performance, greater productivity, and a competitive advantage that is critical when the going gets tough. Those who use desktop dashboards can take the quick action needed to stay ahead of those who don’t.

3. People actually use desktop dashboards

No productivity tool works unless it's used. Dashboards are no exception. If they require effort to start and open, if they demand training or are challenging to use, then they might as well not be there. People with long "to do" lists, under pressure in a challenging economy, don't have time to get systems up and running and learn how they work. And the obstacles to adoption are deceptively small – needing to launch a new application, let alone learn how to use it, is often enough.

Business people actually use desktop dashboards. They have to. Despite a small footprint, desktop dashboards remain front and center, in the line of sight, all the time. Tech-savvy users can tweak them for maximum advantage. Indifferent users don't have to do anything except take advantage of the performance metrics they provide. And reluctant users can be forced to pay attention to what matters by locking their dashboards on the desktop. People don't have to decide to use a desktop dashboard – it's just there. And alerts and real-time notification ensure that they never miss critical changes in key indicators.

4. Desktop dashboards leverage existing IT investments

In tough times, organizations strive to make the most of technology they already have. Anything that helps leverage business intelligence and other systems is invaluable.

This puts desktop dashboards in an enviable position. Far from being an alternative to traditional dashboards and other BI software, desktop dashboards augment these systems. The KPIs displayed on a desktop can tap into data from traditional dashboards and other applications, extending the relevance and usefulness of those systems tremendously and increasing application adoption. For a small investment of time and budget, desktop dashboards deliver a sizeable return on an organization's overall technology investment – something especially important in a time of constrained IT budgets.

Is it despite the recession, or because of it?

When times are tough, knowing where to cut – and where not to – is the key to survival. It's also the key to benefiting from inevitable opportunities and coming out the other side well positioned to grow. Desktop dashboards help by keeping the focus on what matters. Given the advantage they offer in difficult times, you have to wonder whether performance dashboard projects are moving ahead despite the recession or because of it? I, for one, predict that those organizations that emerge from this recession on top of their markets will be the ones who make the best use of desktop dashboards.



Allan Wille is President & CEO at Klipfolio Inc., an Ottawa enterprise dashboard software vendor that helps accelerate business decision-making through real-time awareness of key performance metrics. He can be reached at awille@klipfolio.com.

¹ Hubert Lee, *the Dashboard Spy*, 5 Hot Business Intelligence Dashboard Topics in 2009. See Klipfolio Scoreboard, January 2009

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sales@klipfolio.com
+1 877 233 6143 US & Canada
+1 613 233 6149 Worldwide

www.klipfolio.com
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