



Actuate Forges Ahead in the Race to Visualize Big Data: Here Comes BIRT Analytics

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Enterprise reporting and open source BI software vendor Actuate has announced the release of its new visual data mining and predictive analytics product, [BIRT Analytics](#). The product is based on the latest version of Quiterian, the Spanish analytics vendor acquired by Actuate in October 2012.

The Quiterian solution provided Actuate with advanced analytics and visual data mining capabilities that are targeted at end users rather than data scientists. Quiterian also incorporates a proprietary columnar data store and engine (the Quiterian product name was FastDB, not to be confused with the open source database FastDB).

BIRT Analytics Evolves from Quiterian

BIRT Analytics is based on the 4.1 version of the flagship acquired product: Quiterian Analytics. BIRT Analytics is a rebranding, in addition to one significant change from the previous version of Quiterian; all the algorithms and business rules have been pushed down to the columnar data engine, to allow in-database analytics. As a result, the interface layer doesn't include business rules or algorithms and becomes a lightweight visualization layer. This has two effects: by running the calculations directly in the database, BIRT Analytics can leverage the power of the database engine and increase calculation speed, and it also lends the product quite strongly to mobile deployments. In the new version, Actuate claims that the new version of its columnar database engine is between 30% and 50% more performant at data loading than the previous version of the engine.

From a market presence perspective, Quiterian has around 120 public and private customers across EMEA, APAC and the Americas (with a strong focus on the Spanish-speaking nations) that have obtained important benefits from the software: customers are saving time, reducing costs, improving productivity and using their data to effectively drive business strategy.

IDC Analysis: Actuate Has The Opportunity to Become a Compelling Player in the Big Data Arena

Actuate Has Made a Very Strong Acquisition

Corporate decision making needs have evolved significantly beyond standard reporting and BI capabilities. Some vendors made the choice some years ago to extend their platforms through a range of Business Analytics capabilities including dashboarding, predictive analytics, performance management among others. Many vendors are in long-term competition as they complete their product portfolios to be able to provide solutions in the Business Analytics and Big Data arena. In the case of Actuate, despite having an excellent enterprise reporting tool (BIRT), a performance management application (BIRT Performance Analytics, based on the 2006 acquisition of PerformanceSoft) and a unified development environment and platform ActuateOne onto which tools are gradually being migrated, it is somewhat late to the BI platform approach.

The acquisition of Quiterian allows Actuate to fill the gap in the Actuate platform related to visual discovery and analytics. More importantly, it provides an offering that is at the cutting edge of visualization of Big

Data, which firstly provides an exploratory access capability to big data and, secondly, incorporates predictive capabilities.

BIRT Analytics itself is very impressive when demonstrated – it manages to effectively make predictive analytics available to an end user in a consumable form. Many vendors are trying to do this but in our view BIRT Analytics comes closest to getting it right, by surfacing the results of a predictive routine but not requiring the user to select algorithms.

The Quiterian Integration: A Long Way to Go but Moving Fast

Since the acquisition, Quiterian has undergone profound organizational changes as it tries to deliver on a strategy to leverage Actuate's capabilities in order to reach new targets in sales, product development and market awareness. In particular, the former Quiterian office is becoming the new Worldwide Analytics Excellence Center for Actuate based in Barcelona. The Excellence Center will take care of BIRT Analytics product development, along with vertical- and process-specific solutions creation (such as churn analysis). Moreover, the company has expansion plans for product development and will hire new analytics and programming experts.

Josep Arroyo, previously CEO of Quiterian, becomes VP of Analytics, reporting directly to Actuate CEO Pete Cittadini. He will be responsible for product development and planning, and will provide support to Actuate worldwide sales force and partner to understand BIRT Analytics capabilities and engage new customers.

Quiterian finance, sales, marketing, support and maintenance departments have been integrated into the corresponding Actuate departments at international level. 2nd support level will be maintained in Spain.

Full product integration is following a slower but steady pace. The integration is planned to be complete by the end of 2013 and will transform the way ActuateOne, the flagship Business Intelligence platform from Actuate, provides insights. The proprietary columnar data store and engine will become the backbone for ActuateOne for its data-handling capabilities.

On top of that, Actuate is retaining all technical Quiterian employees so Actuate is gaining a deep pool of experts in analytics and vertical applications.

BIRT Analytics is becoming the major focus of Actuate and will provide more resources to develop the product beyond its current features and to reach new markets and customers.

Conclusion: Can Actuate Deliver on the Promise of BIRT Analytics?

The timing is exactly right for this expansion by Actuate, with the increasing focus of the market on Big Data initiatives and the largest, most advanced European organizations starting to look at moving from pilot and proof-of-value into some form of production system.

It is still early days for the Big Data market. However, data visualization for big data can play a part in early stages of data exploration as well as the later stages of implementation to end users. This means there is an opportunity for BIRT Analytics at all levels of maturity with Big Data, starting when organizations are looking to get an understanding of what data they have available, its quality and where the valuable insights may be found. The columnar database engine also opens the door to a new world of information-related apps on tablets and smartphones through web services to transform daily decision-making processes.

This is the most significant acquisition Actuate has ever made from a product perspective, taking it from a platform to a stack now it has a database. Actuate's current portfolio is under transformation due to the integration of the columnar database engine. The goals of Quiterian under the new scenario are more ambitious than just product integration. Their goal is to transform the decision making process of any organization based the democratization of their columnar data engine.

From a European Perspective, Actuate has never really had a critical mass in Europe; it has an international HQ in Switzerland, and local presence in the UK, France and Germany, with Denmark and the Netherlands covered by partners. Compared to other business analytics pure-players such as SAS and MicroStrategy, this is thin coverage.

Actuate has worked with the Centre of Excellence model before; its 2006 acquisition of Canadian performance management PerformanceSoft led to the creation of its Performance Management Center of Excellence headquartered in Toronto. However the BIRT Performance Analytics product has not achieved particularly strong market awareness or traction, particularly in Europe.

The biggest question from IDC is: will Actuate be able to fully deliver on the promise of Quitarian? Although we believe making BIRT Analytics the focus of an Analytic Centre of Excellence is a good move from the Actuate corporate perspective, we hope awareness and traction will be forthcoming. The challenge for both organizations will be to develop internal relationships, and build on the Quitarian product and installed base to leverage the right market conditions surrounding Big Data analytics and visualization.

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