

# BI: Deployment and change management

The biggest challenge in implementing a business intelligence (BI) system is not the technology, technical team or project management. The majority of failures reside in the end-users' adoption of the solution.

This is the view of Lee Saaiman, business developer at Business Connexion's Western Cape regional office. "Countless information systems work but are not used, even if change management is successfully carried out," he says.

So why do BI systems fail to be effectively adopted? According to Saaiman, in most cases it is because we fail to understand human psychology. He points out that people can be unpredictable when engaging with BI systems.

"There is only one radio station that end-users listen to - 'WII-FM' or 'what's in it for me?'. In addition, BI systems are not always essential, as there are alternative ways of getting to the information, however tedious. This means that end-users can, and do, avoid using the system," he says.

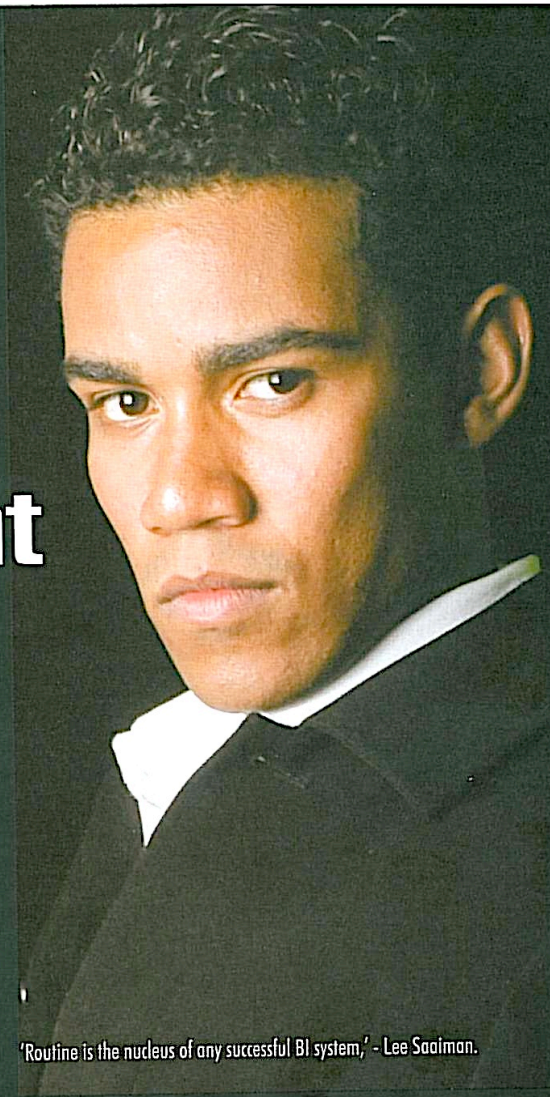
These aspects of user behaviour can impede the smooth adoption of a system, but Saaiman says that there are a few simple but effective actions that can facilitate the deployment and adoption of a BI system.

Firstly, the implemented system should work perfectly before it goes into production, and the desired results should be no more than four clicks away. Query results should also be fast enough to prevent distraction.

Secondly, deployment of the system should be seamless and should preferably be conducted through a Web-based system or built into the login script of the end-users.

In addition, an end-user should be responsible for end-user training. As Saaiman points out, it is not ideal to have technicians and consultants training end-users.

"IT technicians and consultants make the simple complicated and the complicated simple. It is best to identify



'Routine is the nucleus of any successful BI system,' - Lee Saaiman.

an influential end-user and sponsor him or her to get the others to buy in," he says.

Saaiman advises that a solution (not product) support desk helpline be available from day one. If the support call cannot be solved, a change control should immediately be logged and, if approved, delivered within the same calendar month. If there are no calls being made to the help desk, the chances are that the BI solution is not being used.

Given the sometimes fickle nature of end-users, Saaiman adds that the communications department has a large role to play in the implementation process, and should be involved from at least a month before it begins.

"Its role is to get the end-users excited about the solution. End-users need motivation to change. Any action, even in IT, is inspired by thought. A thought becomes an idea, an idea becomes an action, and actions become routines. Routine is the nucleus of any successful BI system," he says.

Saaiman emphasises that winning the hearts and minds of the end-users is central to a BI deployment, and should be taken seriously by all involved.

"Track usage from day one. Praise good performers in public and reprimand non-usage in private. Have a budget line item for change management, and provide incentives to reward people using the system," he concludes. ☺