

Introduction

Oracle Business Intelligence Discoverer has seen significant improvements in capabilities and deployment architecture since its inception in the early 90's. Many thousands of customers have successfully utilized the easy-to-use ad-hoc query and reporting tool to make better decisions. This paper summarizes Oracle's development strategy for Oracle BI Discoverer within the context of the larger strategy for Oracle Business Intelligence. This document covers:

- Oracle BI Discoverer Product Strategy
- Oracle Business Intelligence Product strategy
- Oracle BI Discoverer Support Policies
- Recommendations for Oracle BI Discoverer customers

1. Oracle BI Discoverer Product Strategy

Discoverer has evolved into a fully internet-enabled application using a proven 3-tier architecture to scale to thousands of users and is integrated with other value added services within the Oracle Database and Application Server to deliver robust BI functionality. The development focus has been to:

- Enhance usability of the product at every opportunity to lower the bar on who can access and use the business reporting and insight that Discoverer makes available.
- Expose and take advantage of powerful technologies within the Oracle Database and Application Server. For example, the latest 10.1.2 release of Discoverer provides database OLAP reporting capabilities, as well as easy deployment of reports to Oracle Portal.

Oracle continues to invest in new technologies within the Oracle Database and Fusion Middleware, and Discoverer will continue to be integrated and released with future releases of Oracle Application Server to leverage that investment. The product's charter remains unchanged since its inception: to make the powerful server technology accessible to non-technical users who require business information and analysis.

1.1 Oracle BI Discoverer 10.1.2

The currently shipping release of Oracle BI Discoverer represents a major step forward in the evolution of the product. It is packed with many highly anticipated features. Here are some of the highlights.

- Direct Access to Oracle OLAP
- Reporting Enhancements
- Improved Ease of Use

- Portal Enhancements
- Infrastructure Enhancements

1.1.1 Direct Access to Oracle OLAP

Discoverer fully leverages the OLAP option in the database, which provides multi-dimensional views to data in relational tables and analytic workspaces.

The Oracle Database has integrated OLAP and relational analytics into a single engine. It is no longer necessary to extract, migrate, and transform your data into a separate multi-dimensional engine for analysis. This means lowered administrative and maintenance costs. Best of all this power is now easily accessible through Discoverer.

With this new direct OLAP access, users can perform their own multi-dimensional analysis, create reports, and share them to make better decisions. Reports created with Discoverer Plus OLAP may be opened and analyzed in Viewer or incorporated into Portal pages just like reports against relational data. Anyone at any business or technical skill level across the company can explore large volumes of summarized data with fast response times.

1.1.2 Reporting Enhancements

High Fidelity Printing. You can control how reports will look by generating high quality PDF instead of relying on the web browser for printing. Users can do a print preview and change a wide array of settings in print layout and print options. This support is available in common for Discoverer Plus and Viewer. In addition, export to PDF is now available.

Email distribution. With Discoverer Viewer, users are now able to email their worksheet content in any of the export formats such as Excel, PDF, HTML, CSV, text, etc. as an attachment. For users more comfortable with Excel worksheets, Discoverer not only exports data but also exports as Excel pivot tables and provides export to web query (IQY) format.

Parameter enhancements:

- *Cascading List Of Values (LOVs).* As you pick parameter values, subsequent parameter value choices are filtered by your previous selection. Example, you pick Region = East. Now the City parameter values are filtered to just the cities in the Eastern region.
- *Descriptive LOVs.* You can populate an LOV from a descriptive column (for example, part description) but run the query with the corresponding value in a numerical column (for example, part number). This enhances performance, as it is typical for a numeric column to be indexed.
- *Optional and mandatory parameters.* You may choose to leave a parameter blank and the query will run as though all values have been selected. For example, you leave the Region parameter blank, so the query will execute for all regions: East, West and Central.
- *Support for keywords/tokens such as SYSDATE, USER & NULL.* For example, the default parameter value is always populated with Today's date.

Exception highlighting. You can specify conditions to highlight data in reports that exceeded the threshold values set. This includes specific values or ranges of values. This is an excellent way to construct dashboard reports especially when used in conjunction with Discoverer portlets.

Text Area for annotation. You can annotate your report in the text area (like a report footer) and all users viewing the report will see the information.

Save in Viewer. You can save your workbooks changes to the database using Discoverer Viewer if your administrator has granted you the Save Workbooks privilege.

Customization. You can customize the look-and-feel and layout of Discoverer such as logos and color scheme to match your company's brand image without any programming.

1.1.3 Improved Ease of Use

In Discoverer 10g 10.1.2, direct manipulation to perform most tasks is now available as well as the ability to traverse through the data easily in multiple ways such as drilling to detail, drilling out and drilling in graphs.

Drag and drop. You can drag and drop items from the item navigator to quickly select the data you want to see in the report. The following ease of use improvements simplifies the tasks of creating reports:

- Point and click simplicity
- Drag and drop layout
- Interactive hints
- Right-click for useful options
- Wizard for multi-step tasks
- Interactive hints

Improved Drilling. You can perform interactive analysis easily through new support for drill to detail, drill out to external applications, and drill on graphs.

Share Scheduled Results. You can easily disseminate information to a large number of users on a recurring schedule by granting others access to the results of a scheduled workbook.

Improved Workbook Management. You can now easily manage the growing number of workbooks and users in your organization with the following improvements.

- Filtering of users by type (roles, users or both) and by name (contains, matches)
- User and workbook lists are fetched incrementally
- New views to organize your workbook list displays (list, table, tree, and user)

Interactive Pivoting. You can interactively pivot items in a worksheet, directly on the result set. No need to go the layout dialog.

Easily selecting date values. You can easily select dates and date ranges using a calendar style date picker in entering parameter values, creating conditions, and scheduling workbooks.

1.1.4 Portlet Enhancements

Portal is important for enterprise wide dissemination of business intelligence. Especially exciting enhancements for Discoverer include personalization of reports and the ability to wire reports to Portal parameters.

Personalization. You can personalize your portlet view of a published worksheet by changing parameter values, formats, layout, graph types and so on. These preferences are associated with each user and do not change the original worksheet. In this way you can support hundreds of users' specific needs with a handful of worksheets.

Gauges portlet. A new visualization in Discoverer used for presenting data within a range of values.

- The needle indicates the present value in relation to low, acceptable, and high thresholds.
- The value ranges reflect key performance indicators (KPIs) for a business.
- Gauges are commonly used in dashboard type applications.

Portal parameters. You can change the results in all or some of your portlets on a Portal page via a Portal parameter. Portlets may be wired to Portal parameters and they will be refreshed automatically whenever the parameter is changed.

1.1.5 Infrastructure Enhancements

SSO User Propagation. The Single Sign On (SSO) identity of the user is available at the database level allowing enterprises to implement their own security mechanisms based on SSO user identity.

Oracle Advanced Security Option Encryption Support. Discoverer is certified with the database Advanced Security Option. This ensures that data is safe and secure with the use of RC4 Encryption, DES Encryption, Triple-DES Encryption, and AES Encryption.

E-Business Suite SSO support. Users connect via Discoverer to an Oracle E-Business Suite installation that has been configured to work with SSO. This allows Discoverer portlets based on E-Business Suite content to be published to Oracle Portal.

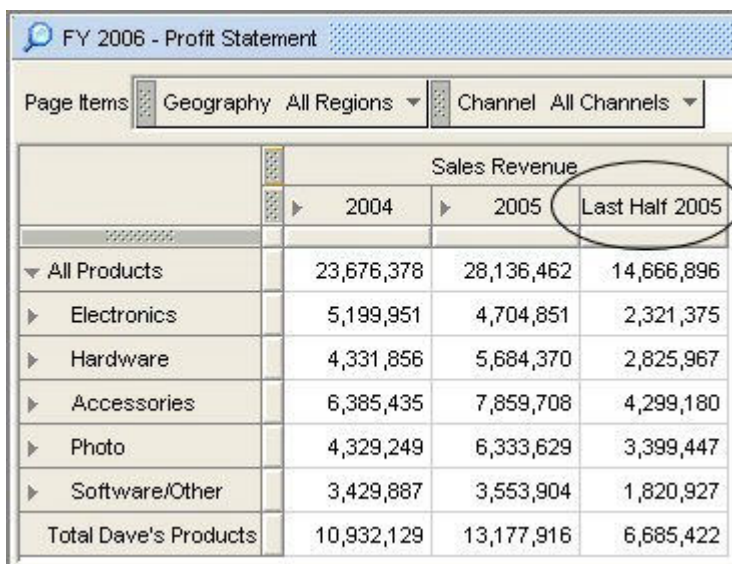
1.2 Oracle BI Discoverer 10.1.2.2

In keeping with the overall goals stated above, the next release of the Oracle BI Discoverer will include the following enhancements:

- Custom member support for OLAP reporting
- Share Discoverer content with the OLAP Spreadsheet Add-in
- Six new graph styles

1.2.1 Custom Members

Custom members is a new type of calculation available to users working against the Oracle OLAP option. Users can create groups of members from multiple levels in a dimension as a single 'named' member. These groupings of dimension members appear as one value in Discoverer reports and queries. Custom members can be created as simple addition or subtraction of selected dimension members or can aggregate members using the powerful and flexible OLAP aggregation functions. For example, a user may wish to create a custom time period. The database may show Months, Quarters and Years, but a user may need to see half-year time values. In this case the user would select two quarters from the time dimension hierarchy and choose these to be labeled as "Last Half 2005". This new custom member would appear with other time dimensions on the dimension edge and the associated data values for that grouping would be calculated and displayed in the report.



	Sales Revenue		
	2004	2005	Last Half 2005
▼ All Products	23,676,378	28,136,462	14,666,896
▶ Electronics	5,199,951	4,704,851	2,321,375
▶ Hardware	4,331,856	5,684,370	2,825,967
▶ Accessories	6,385,435	7,859,708	4,299,180
▶ Photo	4,329,249	6,333,629	3,399,447
▶ Software/Other	3,429,887	3,553,904	1,820,927
Total Dave's Products	10,932,129	13,177,916	6,685,422

Users could then create custom members from other custom members, making it possible to create arbitrarily nested reporting entities. In keeping with Discoverer's easy to use theme, a simple wizard guides users through creating custom members.

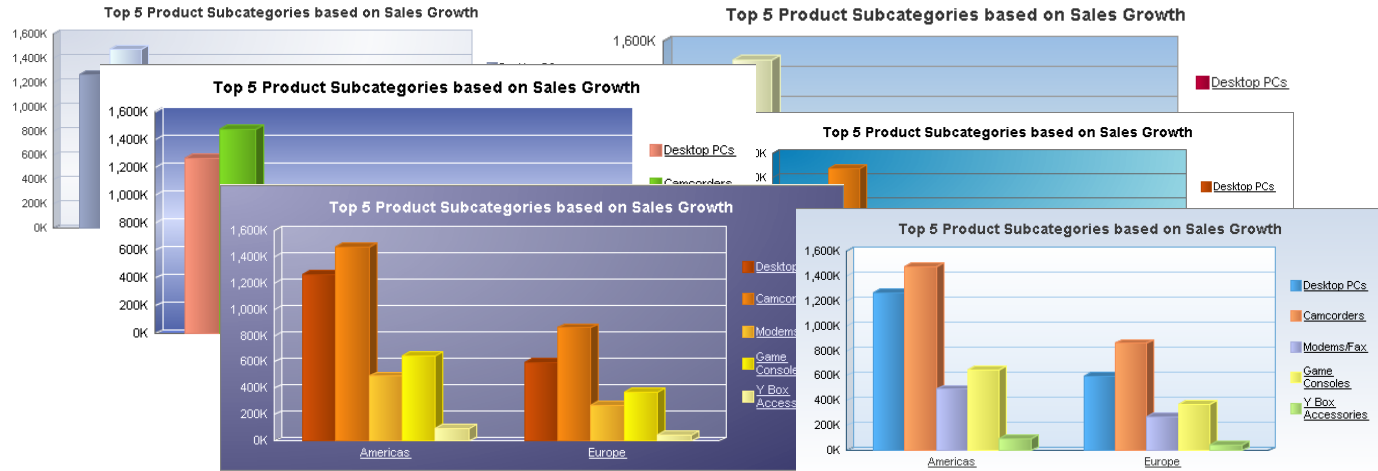
1.2.2 Share content with Oracle BI Spreadsheet Add-In

The custom members defined within Discoverer Plus OLAP are also available for use within the Oracle BI Spreadsheet Add-in, Discoverer Portlet Provider and Discoverer Viewer. This ensures consistent reporting across components, regardless of interface (Microsoft Excel, Oracle Portal Dashboards, Discoverer Viewer or Discoverer Plus) that your users prefer.

Furthermore OLAP saved selections, calculations, and queries created in Discoverer Plus OLAP can now also be re-used within the Spreadsheet Add-In.

1.2.3 New Graph Styles

Six new graph styles will be available in the next release of Discoverer, applied as templates, which offer new possibilities for dramatic presentation impact.



The styles are applied as chart templates, which makes it a snap to turn any visual representation of tabular or cross-tabular data into an eye-catching presentation.

1.3 Oracle Business Intelligence Add-In for Microsoft® Word

Oracle BI Add-In for Microsoft Word joins Oracle BI Spreadsheet Add-in as a new component in the Oracle Business Intelligence suite, advancing Oracle BI integration with Microsoft Office.

Oracle BI Add-in for Microsoft Word enables users to create highly formatted reports in a familiar Word environment while leveraging BI presentations and conditional formatting created in Oracle BI Discoverer, and taking full advantage of the analytic power of Oracle BI. Oracle BI Add-in for Microsoft Word leverages capabilities of the Oracle XML Publisher engine as well as Word's formatting capabilities to create richly formatted reports in PDF, RTF, XLS, and HTML.



1.4 Oracle BI Discoverer 11g

Beyond the 10.1.2.2 release, Discoverer will continue to be integrated and released with the Application Server. Some of the planned features in Discoverer 11g are:

- Supporting JSR-168 for integrating Discoverer portlets into JSR-168 compliant portals.
- Integration with Application Server 11g identity management and security.
- Integration with Application Server 11g enhanced clustering.
- Integration with the Oracle Database Server 11g to exploit new OLAP analytic functions being built into the Oracle Database such as enhancements in Analytic Workspaces, statistical and mathematical functions, extensions to the SQL Model Clause, simplified metadata creation and management using Oracle Warehouse Builder, and other enhancements.

Details concerning these and additional features will be released within the next 2 months as the technical designs for the development projects are finalized.

2. Oracle Business Intelligence Product Strategy

Oracle's overriding product strategy for business intelligence to meet customers' critical Business Intelligence needs. To that end we plan to deliver a robust BI platform that provides:

- *Semantic Unification.* Going beyond aggregating data from disparate data sources customers have expressed the desire to be able to present a single unified business view of all their enterprise information systems. From OLAP to relational, from Oracle sources to non-Oracle sources, including enterprise application suites (such as Siebel, Peoplesoft, JD Edwards, Oracle e-Business Suite, SAP BW), custom data warehouses, XML, business processes and more. We want to deliver an industry first -- a BI platform that spans the gamut of all enterprise data sources and presents a coherent view to business users.
- *Up to the minute Insight.* Customers would like to track and present business metrics in real time, within a context provided by analysis of historical data. Technologies such as Business Activity Monitoring (BAM), Business Process Execution Language (BPEL) and Business Intelligence will come into play together to allow this full picture.
- *Insight driven action.* Customers increasingly want to close the gap between analysis of BI data to insight driven action. It is not enough to understand the cause or effect of a given business objective, the tools needed to take should also be presented side by side. In this regard customers want in-context recommendations for action alongside their analytic information, tools to compare present performance with the past as well as tools to forecast the future ramifications of an action, for example in analytic planning and budgeting and automatic alerting notifications and processes to take place based on key metric thresholds.
- *Information access at all levels.* To decentralized decision making and speed up an organizations market reaction time customers want to move BI from the domain of the power analyst to readily accessible tools that operations personnel at all levels can readily use, delivering relevant information within the context of their daily activities and environments that they are already familiar with.
- *Faster time to value.* Primarily by providing pre-packaged analytic content based on the Oracle BI platform to support important business functions or lines of business.

- *Best of breed BI platform.* Offering an integrated, feature rich BI platform that is not only the basis for the next generation Oracle Fusion Applications, but also a powerful standalone offering.

The recent acquisition of Siebel Systems permits us to blend the best aspects of Oracle BI and Siebel Business Analytics into a new next generation BI platform designed to meet these customer needs.

3. Oracle BI Discoverer Support Policies

Oracle BI Discoverer has a large and very active install base, with customers using Discoverer worksheets as the cornerstone of their reporting and decision-making systems including Oracle's own E-Business Suite. Oracle recognizes this considerable investment and remains committed to the long-term support of Oracle BI Discoverer.

Oracle has no plan to desupport Discoverer. Furthermore, new versions of Discoverer will continue to be released and integrated with future versions of Oracle Application Server and Oracle Developer Suite.

As a component of Oracle Application Server, Oracle's support policy for Discoverer is covered under the support policy for Oracle Fusion Middleware. For example, the Oracle BI Discoverer 10gR2 10.1.2 will be supported for the same time periods that Oracle supports Oracle Application Server 10gR2 10.1.2.

Listed below are the timelines for Lifetime Support for Oracle Fusion Middleware (which includes Oracle BI Discoverer)

<i>Existing Oracle Fusion Middleware Releases</i>				
Release	GA Date	Premiere Support Ends	Extended Support Ends	Sustaining Support Ends
9iAS R2 9.0.2	Apr 2002	Jul 2005	Not Offered	Jul 2008
9iAS R2 9.0.3	Oct 2002	Jul 2005	Not Offered	Jul 2008
10G 9.0.4	Dec 2003	Dec 2006	Dec 2008	Dec 2009
10GR2 10.1.2	Jan-Oct 2005	Dec 2008	Dec 2010	Indefinite

Note that support retirement dates have already been announced for 9iAS R2 9.0.2, 9iAS R2 9.0.3, 10G 9.0.4 and 10GR2 10.1.2. Fusion Middleware releases beyond 10G will adopt the Lifetime Support Policy. Also note that if you are using Discoverer as part of the Oracle e-Business Suite, you are covered by the e-Business Suite Lifetime Support Policy.

For more information on Oracle's Lifetime Support Policy, please refer to the Lifetime Support Policy FAQ located at:

<http://www.oracle.com/support/library/oracle-lifetime-support-policy-faq.pdf>

4. Recommendations for Oracle BI Discoverer customers

Existing Oracle Business Intelligence Discoverer customers can continue to use Discoverer with the assurance of Oracle's Lifetime Support Policy, as well as continued planned enhancements and integration with future releases of Oracle Application Server.

This document is for informational purposes only and may not be incorporated into a contract.

Existing customers are strongly encouraged to upgrade to Oracle BI Discoverer 10gR2 10.1.2 and to migrate to web deployment to take advantage of the many new exciting and powerful enhancements in this version and to get the best support benefits available.

Discoverer customers who choose to migrate to the next generation BI offering will be able to take advantage of a platform that is planned to offer:

- Support for multiple, simultaneous heterogeneous data sources. Customers will be able to leverage Oracle BI against the Oracle database (relational as well as the OLAP option), Teradata, IBM DB/2, Microsoft SQL Server, Microsoft OLAP Services, Oracle e-Business Suite (including Peoplesoft and Siebel Analytic Applications) and SAP B/W.
- A unified semantic business view of all the above data sources. Your enterprise can now present a single definition for “customer” or “product” that applies to and is mapped from all the above disparate data sources, meaning business users will have access to a single coherent view of the business. Metadata can also be translated, so this single semantic view supports multiple presentation languages.
- Powerful metadata design tool offers a visual layout tool of your data source schemas as well as support for multiple administrators. Utility wizards simplify creation of common standards, such as time series, item renaming and other data quality tasks. Multiple levels of folders will also be supported.
- A full feature ad-hoc query and reporting tool that is 100% thin client and provides multiple views of the same data. For example you could have two different versions of a pivot table, a funnel graph and filter definitions to create a compound view for complete analysis.
- A built in integrated dashboard for quickly publishing and sharing reports.

ORACLE FUSION MIDDLEWARE

Oracle Business Intelligence Discoverer

March 2006

Authors: Alvin Daniel, Mike Donohue

Oracle Corporation

World Headquarters

500 Oracle Parkway

Redwood Shores, CA 94065

Worldwide Inquiries:

+1.650.506.7000

Fax +1.650.506.7200

<http://www.oracle.com/>

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