Taking A Look At Looker

There has always been a pressing need for BI. Even back in the day when all it delivered was reams of reports and a pie chart or two; people called it Decision Support. It was sensible from the get go. Business processes that required the human touch also required the delivery of relevant data to the humans doing the touching.

Like everything else in IT, BI has evolved since then. It has progressed from its graphical origins, through OLAP and portals to dashboards and visualizations. It accelerated from being days out of date, to hours out of date to near real-time. And it changed from being prescriptive to interactive.

At the moment, it is heading in the direction of offering improved business process integration, and Looker is one of the players pushing it in that direction.

Looker

Put simply; Looker is a BI platform. What makes it distinctive is its versatility. Like other products, it sports a data definition layer that integrates with various data catalogs and provides users with a navigable map of data. Its data modeling capability is exemplary, naturally separating the logical from the physical, the data model from the data sources. Thus it injects an element of future-proofing into the BI data strategy.

Looker provides a well-balanced array of data visualizations, and it can serve up attractive real-time dashboards—an example is illustrated in the next column. The technical underpinning of its data architecture are impressive. It accesses data in situ wherever possible and provides coherent support for data-driven workflows.

Four BI Contexts

Looker sees the world in terms of four distinct BI contexts:

1. **Modern BI and Analytics**. This is what most people think of as BI, with interactive dashboards and self-service data exploration.
2. **Integrated Insights.** Looker delivers practical and robust integration capabilities to many of the tools that people work with, from G Suite and Slack to Salesforce
3. **Data-driven Workflows.** Looker comes with a host of easy-to-use capabilities for scheduling and automating the distribution of alerts, reports, query results, insights, and data sets, which can be triggered by data changes as well as time.
4. **Custom Analytics.** This is where Looker is at its most powerful—the custom-built embedding of BI capability within applications. It is delivered through iterative rapid prototyping. This has enabled some Looker customers to monetize their software solutions.

BI Modernization

Many large organizations that value BI are currently in the throes of BI modernization programs. Typically they have aging BI implementations that serve their purpose to some degree, but can also prove to be an obstacle rather than an enabling factor.

This is the sweet spot for Looker, with its integration capabilities, its data-driven workflows and its versatile customization capabilities. And at the moment it is where Looker seems to be attracting attention.

Looker believes that BI capabilities, no matter what the technical requirements involve, are best designed with the participation of the eventual user. It has thus developed its platform to emphasize this approach. If you're in the business of rethinking BI you might want to take a look at Looker.