

Corda Quoted in Inc. Magazine Article

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Mark Christensen of Corda and Michael Duke, a Corda customer and strategic partner are quoted in an article on dashboards in Inc. Magazine's online technology resource section. To read the article, click on the title above.

Mission Control: The Software Dashboard

By Renee Oricchio

A centralized window into your business, the dashboard is surging in popularity because it provides businesses with real-time operational data.

A car dashboard is a panel of quick visual cues representing critical information in real-time for an operator who is actively engaged elsewhere. At a glance, a driver knows their cruising speed, whether it's time to gas up, if the transmission is straining, not to mention warnings of dislodged doors, low oil or unbuckled seats.

A software dashboard is basically the same thing.

Only instead of providing real-time data on the fly for a driver focused on the road, dashboard software works best for harried business owner who needs to keep at least one eye fixed on the ebb and flow of inventory, the financial executive constantly monitoring the health of an organization or the sales person keeping a running account of client orders, pricing changes and product availability.

Michael Duke, a managing partner with The Crito Group, a healthcare consulting firm based in Clemmons, N.C., swears by his dashboard. "The real power of the dashboard is it allows me to have insight into performance that I never had before," Duke says. "I'm able to spot negative trends before they become detrimental to my company."

Duke describes life before and after his start-up company implemented dashboard technology. "We would put a bunch of data in a database, spend a bunch of time compiling it and then present monthly reports. Now, we actually have all that information day to day at our fingertips," he says. "How critical is it to our business? If we don't improve our client's financials, we don't get paid. This is the tool that enables us to do that."

Dashboards: a technology whose time has come

Dashboards have actually been around for many years. In the past, however, it's been more of a recurring fad than a potential core technology for businesses. "What we've been seeing with the resurgence of dashboards over the past 18 months is the second coming of dashboards for the fourth time," says Hung LeHong, vice president of research at Gartner, the Stamford, Conn. research firm.

LeHong, however, sees dashboards as more than a fad this time around and points out the following reasons why it just may be coming soon to a desktop or mobile device near you:

Web-based. Dashboards are increasingly offered as a Web-based application and that translates to easier access for

more employees. Itâ€™s not just a slick tool for the boss wanting a birdâ€™s eye view of the company. Dashboards are now more readily available at the field level.

Better data crunching. â€œThis generation of dashboards does a better job of making granular data more easily accessible. That means the data that pertains to a specific person is more easily parceled out,â€• says LeHong.

Real-time operational data. This latest generation of software tends to be more adept at aggregating multiple streams of data from multiple sources in real-time, creating more functionality at the operational level. â€œNo matter where the data is, we can access it and pull it into the dashboard,â€• says Mark Christensen, vice president of marketing for Corda, a Lindon, Utah software company that develops dashboards for small and mid-size businesses.

Improved visual displays. This time around, LeHong praises designers for visual layouts that are easier to take in at a glance, more intuitive and more user friendly.

And while the technology itself appears to be maturing, even more critical to its growing popularity is demand. â€œThe reason that dashboards are catching on is because people are overwhelmed with information and they need tools like dashboards to tame that information,â€• says Stephen Few, author of Information Dashboard Design: The Effective Visual Communication of Data (O'Reilly Media).

Yellow is for caution

While Few acknowledges that the technology is getting better -- and more popular, he also warns business owners to not be blinded by the "bling" when exploring dashboard technology.

â€œResist the gimmicks and educate yourself before you look at the products," Few says. "The problem is most dashboards are still primarily designed by engineers and driven by sales. Whatâ€™s lost is a design orientation that best displays and organizes the data, offers immediate visual context and can highlight the most important information.â€•

Sticker shock

There are many companies offering dashboard solutions, in addition to Corda, including iDashboard,Â Celequest and Netsuite, to name a few. The price of admission is still pretty steep for the small and mid-size business, however, since these are customized products. For example, Cordaâ€™s entry level package for two to five users is about \$14,000 -- a figure that may mean putting the brakes on dashboards for some businesses.

To visit the Inc.om site: <http://technology.inc.com/software/articles/200704/dashboard.html>