



Why you need to build analytics into your product roadmap

Introduction

Creating a strong and effective product roadmap is no easy task. Product teams continuously evaluate new solutions and features, balancing effort and opportunity-cost against the evolving needs and priorities of their market.



Suffice it to say, it's a tall order – and very little guidance that applies across industries, or even products in the same industry.

However, there's a macro trend that is driving significant gains across many products in most industries: Integrating embedded analytics into your product roadmap.

Analytics, once considered a 'nice-to-have' product capability relegated to usage reporting or fluffy, high-level KPI dashboarding, **have become indispensable.**

From modest origins, lifting and shifting BI dashboards wholesale into corners of a product's UI, embedded analytics are now infused throughout product workflows. Providing decision support to users, increasing the impact of performance reporting through predictive insights, and enabling drill-downs into anomalous behavior allows the ability to identify and take action on root causes.

Now that these capabilities have been proven as a critical differentiator by a handful of innovative ISVs, they are showing up as 'must-have' requirements for virtually every buyer – and driving higher engagement, larger user populations, and stronger earnings for products.

Analytics and insights are now at the very top of most users' wish lists, and embedding analytics with AI throughout is a ready-made solution for building compelling roadmaps.

So are you ready to take advantage of embedded analytics to help bolster a product roadmap that can truly accelerate growth?

PMs have a massive opportunity to increase user satisfaction, usage, and overall revenue by recognizing there is a huge revenue and retention upside to integrating embedded analytics into their workflows.

In the following pages, we'll cover why integrating embedded analytics into your product roadmap is something that should be on every product builder's radar, how it can enhance your product experience, why this is something you buy not build, and more...



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Section one:

An intro into embedded analytics

What is it exactly?

It's got to the stage where basic data visualizations and repurposed BI dashboards are no longer hitting the mark when it comes to users searching for insights or seeking to make better-informed decisions.

Today, end-users have more choices - and are better informed about what's possible with data and analytics. Simply put... they expect much, much more.

All applications are assumed to use data to out-perform competing solutions. And an application's analytics must provide in-context insights and decision support within product workflows in order to stand out and maintain that competitive advantage. It's vital to stay up-to-date - yet it is tremendously expensive to develop analytics technology from scratch. And **this is where embedded analytics come in.**

Embedded analytics works to pull together different analytics tools and offers:

- Visualizations for the end-user of the unique, relevant data held within your application.
- A way to empower users to explore data themselves through the integration of analytical capabilities and data visualizations with native product workflows.
- Real-time oversight and feedback that allow for decisions to be supported with contextual data, problems to be identified early, and trends to be differentiated from anomalies.

Standardized, preset dashboards and reports only answer a set, predetermined list of questions - often relegated to admins. But embedded analytics are capable of far more than their desktop BI predecessors - empowering a wide range of users to ask their own questions, explore data to the most granular level and take action on any insights.

Embedded analytics make it straightforward to incorporate data and insights into core parts of the applications users want and need, ensuring they can derive all the value they need and make decisions with confidence, without going elsewhere for supporting evidence.

The value of embedded analytics is clear and the integration of its capabilities into the product roadmap has become a no-brainer for those looking to improve their user experience, and truly stand out from the competition.

"Main goal for having embedded analytics is to provide self-serve users the ability to explore the data in their preferred way. Every B2B customer wants to use data to make smarter business decisions, embedded analytics is a fast way to empower that user."

Product Manager

The benefits of embedded analytics

Embedded analytics can offer you a key point of differentiation in the market, increase user stickiness, and ensure they derive more value. It is critical to recognize that the trend towards incorporating data and analytics into end-user products is not new, and simply embedding a dashboard from a BI tool is no longer differentiating.

Thus, there's no time like the present to recognize the value and opportunities embedded analytics can bring, including:

Access to info when needed - Your users expect real-time access to the accurate information they want, exactly when they need it. Embedded analytics makes this possible.

A better product experience - You can deliver a better user experience and overall customer service delivering consumable insights and context into the hands of your users. They'll also be able to better quantify the value of your product thanks to the embedded data.

Timely access to the right data - New data will stay connected and refresh when required, allowing users to proactively access the analytics they need on their own timeline, with the confidence the info will be current.

Increased data literacy - Your users will be able to answer their own questions and satisfy their data curiosity at their own pace. Taking the pressure off any customer support.

Flexibility with any tools - Embedded dashboards can be built straight into any tool that's already a part of the CX. No need to learn new logins, or navigate a new site to see metrics.

Increased stickiness - Users that rely on the data your product delivers are more dependent on your specific workflows and are less likely to consider replacing you with a competing solution.

Analytics is now a critical capability and the bottom line is that analytics has truly become essential for products to truly bring value to users. End-user expectations are too expansive to justify building the required capabilities in-house. Users are increasingly demanding insights integrated in context into product workflows, not segregated into dashboard-style reporting.

Section two:

Using embedded analytics to enhance the product experience for users

Developing a standalone business intelligence function can be effective if an organization has the dedicated time and resources to convert data into actionable insights. For many users, however - those without the organizational pull to command scarce analytics team time - this simply produces a disjointed experience, where they'll need to wait in line for specialists, or master arcane and complex data tools, in order to actually transform data into relevant insights.

But embedded analytics can offer a better path for line-of-business users who lack a robust in-house analytics team. Data and insights, seamlessly integrated within the applications, processes, and software in your product workflows, can be made accessible to every one of your users, supporting not only better in-product decisions, but the larger strategic business decisions your users must make. Your product value is augmented when you offer faster access to analysis, more personalized analytics experiences, clearer visualization of data, up-to-date insights, and more...

Personalizing analytics

Personalizing analytics to the user means giving them access to the data they need, exactly when they need it, and empowering them to analyze and make clearer decisions. Essentially, you'll be giving users the ability to visualize data in the way that best suits their needs, and helping them to identify strengths and weaknesses and increase operational efficiency.

By infusing analytics into your workflows you can easily deliver a seamless and personalized analytics solution that works as an extension of your user's preferences - meaning you'll deliver a stickier analytics user experience.

Personalization is critical when it comes to driving product adoption and usage, and the same is true when providing a more personalized analytics experience. Without the flexibility to customize and personalize your analytics, you're left with a fragmented experience that could cost you when it comes to your users.

Infusing analytics into workflows

You can transform your product workflows by embedding insights into them. Allowing for greater customization and giving users access to more digestible intelligence and actions exactly where they need them in your existing workflows and applications. All of which will drive user satisfaction and stickiness.

By embedding analytics capabilities into product experiences for users and infusing data and analytics throughout your product workflows, you'll deliver more value and drive more revenue from your data by simplifying your analytics deployment.

Essentially, you'll make analytics an integral and seamless part of daily workflows for your users, guiding them to the insights and actions they need at the ideal time. In doing so, you'll drive stronger adoption of analytics and your users will make better decisions, and arrive at better business outcomes. They'll be able to make informed decisions based on real-time data analytics and uncover insights otherwise not easily available.

Integrating advanced analytics and insight capabilities into your product can dramatically increase the perceived value to organizations and increases average selling price by 25%:

"ISVs say embedded analytics increases the value of their apps by 43% and enables them to charge 25% more on average."

Eckerson Group

Embedded analytics allows users to make crucial data-driven decisions. Of course, not every product needs the most sophisticated analytics features to reach success, but to stay competitive, increase revenue and keep future-proof - you need to be up-to-date! Now is the best time to realize the value and opportunities embedded analytics offers to push you past the new baseline.

Prioritizing new analytics capabilities in your product roadmap can have a myriad of positive effects, including boosting revenue, increasing engagement, and improving retention, acquisition and activation - and embedded analytics are the fastest and most effective path to delivering those capabilities.

"Benefit of utilizing analytics in product roadmap is that - by solving for ease of finding that insight, embedded analytics can cover several use cases with the same solution - thus acting like a swiss knife feature of the product. At its core, any analytics in the product roadmap is based on the intention to make a smarter business decision."

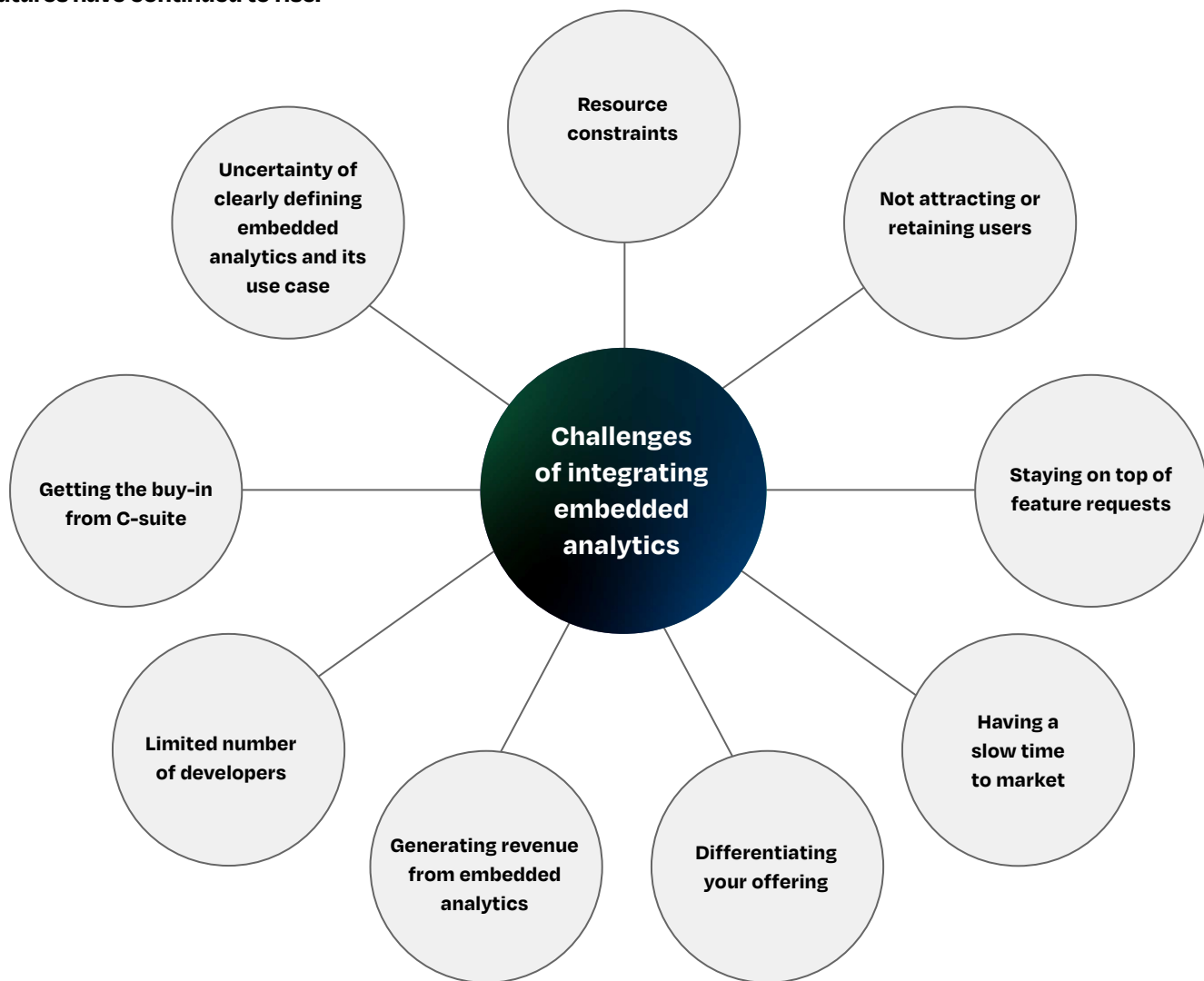
Product Manager

Section three:

What are the biggest challenges in integrating embedded analytics into your product roadmap?

But, this advancement in embedded analytics has led to new challenges, mainly that users expect so much more. As users search for greater insights, the increased accessibility and demand for sophisticated analytics features have continued to rise.

So what approach do you take when it comes to integrating an embedded analytics solution? And what are the challenges stopping orgs from building their own?



In-house resource constraints

One of the biggest roadblocks preventing orgs from successfully incorporating analytics into their product roadmap is in-house resource and budget constraints. No development team has the resources to build satisfactory modern analytics from scratch - and end users have high expectations from decades of experience with business intelligence.

With a range of sophisticated analytics and visualization tools available on the market, integrating a well-established platform into your product is a much faster route to market, delivering rich capabilities at a tiny fraction of the cost of in-house development.

Choosing to go with a provider will offer greater ROI, reduce maintenance costs, and vastly improved innovation. Plus, you can start small and look for the exact tools that fit your architecture and development process.

Not attracting or retaining users

Many organizations have doubts when it comes to attracting and retaining users through integrating embedded analytics. But an embedded solution can deliver new capabilities and functions to your product roadmap and workflows, all of which will help users to discover the insights they need and keep coming back for more thanks to an improved UI and flexible design.

Differentiating your offering

Through integrating embedded analytics, you'll be able to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage, differentiate your offering and stand out in the market. By using the unique insights your product and business has developed, you can offer your customers valuable predictions, insightful performance analysis, detailed insights, and a better understanding of their business, all tied directly to the use of your product.

Getting the buy-in

It's an understandable concern that not all members of a team will see the value in investing in embedded analytics for the product roadmap. But once you understand their priorities and challenges, you can demonstrate how it can address all their concerns. By aligning the solution to the strategic initiatives of your org, and highlighting how it can solve high-value problems, you'll easily gain internal support, positively impact your users, and boost your bottom line.

Develop a business case that addresses the challenges of each stakeholder, and create a quantitative analysis that shows how embedded analytics can help. Ask the right questions to understand what they're striving to achieve. Then show them how the solution can meet those objectives effectively. Have a plan and use real-life case studies to support your position.

So, should you add embedded analytics to your product roadmap?

"By 2025, 60% of analytics activities will be initiated, and 30% will be completed, entirely within digital workspace applications."

Gartner

Clearly the application of data and insights is moving away from dedicated BI tooling and towards line-of-business product workflows, and products that make use of data and analytics to deliver better insights to their users are stickier, more valuable, and outcompete those that don't. Plus, vendors command 25% higher prices for such products.

But in order to really see the game-changing outcomes you need, it's critical to integrate your analytics as early as possible into your product roadmap. By integrating early you'll be able to increase revenue, achieve faster user acquisition, drive stickiness, improve satisfaction, gain a competitive edge and meet user data demand.

It's clearly time to start capitalizing on your users' demands for embedded analytics to catapult your product roadmap, but how exactly do you get started?

Here, we've got **5 crucial steps** you can take to hit the road running...

1

Understand where you're starting from

Before you even begin your journey to integrating embedding analytics into your roadmap, reach out to your users and gain insight into the problems that enhanced analytics can tackle. Pay particular attention to problems you can uniquely address with the data created through the use of your product, and how insights about this data could be integrated into your current workflows and translated into product requirements.

2

Carefully consider your launch phases

The fast product launch tactic can be exciting but when it comes to analytics, especially predictive capabilities, planning a more methodical phases approach can give you more time to test, establish credibility, monitor, and track usage trends, all while you guide users through your analytics offering.

3

Plan to continually adapt

Successfully integrating embedded analytics into your roadmap should be a part of the journey, not the final destination. User needs will inevitably change and so will the market requirements, so use this time to plan for adaption. Get a plan in place to track and respond to user feedback even after your product launch, and don't engineer yourself into a corner with costly-to-modify visualizations and integrations.

4

Consider how you can monetize data

Use this stage to think about how to monetize your data, and how you can build a multi-level revenue stream around tiered analytical and product value. Perhaps you can charge the integration of third-party info for example.

5

Pick the right partner

Remember, it's critical that you choose the right embedded analytics provider who can truly deliver the integrated analytics you need to enhance your product roadmap, bolster your UX and support you toward a successful launch.

But... before you can take advantage of all an integrated embedded analytics solution has to offer you have to tackle the biggest challenge, which is associated with step 5 - do you build or do you buy?

Build vs. buy

Many orgs will opt to go in-house when it comes to integrating embedded analytics, either because they believe it will be a more seamless integration or that they will maintain more control.

However, these orgs often overlook the practicalities of going down the build route. Namely, the high costs of upgrading and maintaining your in-house solution as your user base grows, and the data source you'll need as the data grows.

Ask yourself:

- Are data experiences and analytics development the core competency of your team?
- Do you have the resources to deliver an MVP solution? Could those resources be better spent on another project if you used an established analytics solution?
- Can you also put together what's required to improve and nurture it over time?
- Do your development resources have the deep understanding of business intelligence capabilities required to build a credible system from scratch? Will you need to hire?
- What's your timeline for rolling out an embedded analytics solution?
- Will a basic in-house analytics solution allow you quickly adapt to changing user demands for data?

While building seems initially attractive - and development teams are often eager to try - take a moment to consider the decades of engineering that have gone into the modern BI experience. Not to mention, the deep functionality that users expect.

Some of the other biggest challenges for choosing to build your own embedded analytics solution include:

Higher costs - Data and analytics infrastructure is specialized work, and it's unlikely your current engineering team has the expertise to be successful developing in-house. Experienced BI engineers are expensive and difficult to attract, so plan for higher headcount costs and material ramp-up times.

Support and Maintenance - Your in-house developers will be expected to handle all maintenance and support for the embedded BI features they've built, giving them less time to dedicate to the core product and to new features, including any areas that can speed up the time-to-market.

Competitor pressure - When choosing to build your own analytics, you'll need to match the constantly evolving features and capabilities of competitors who leverage commercially-available analytics platforms. Continually adding new features to keep up with a mature technology market while attracting users with your unique data insights is a very tough task. Your developers will require a lot of technical integration skills to keep up.

Capturing the right consistency - If you opt to go down the build route, you'll need to be able to replicate the right feel and ensure your platform matches the vision, aesthetic and feel of your product to ensure the UX remains consistent.

In reality, building your own analytics platform can be a costly, time-consuming, and pressured process. And there's no guarantee it will effectively match what more specialized analytics solutions offer. Plus, it could actually hinder your workflows and increase time-to-market delays.

Your users' needs will grow and they'll demand better reporting and deeper insights, which means your product has to keep up. With all these reasons in mind, you'll realize that there's no reason to try and build when it can be purchased commercially for less than the cost of a single developer's annual salary. You'll soon see that buying and embedding is the way to go, instead of building from scratch.

By using a commercially-available embedded analytics platform, in most cases for less than the cost of a single engineer, you can:

- Unlock huge growth potential by landing new, larger clients and expanding into new markets.
- Allocate more resources to your core competencies and save the effort of building features that are already readily available
- Get to market faster and with a much higher level of quality than an in-house, MVP release can offer.

Given the considerable value boost and supported price and retention bumps, the decision to **add analytics is clear.**

It's important for any product manager to understand one key insight, though - an embedded analytics platform (or your own development team) isn't going to be able to tell you what data, and what insights are valuable to your users.

Think deeply about what data you have, and what insights you'd like to provide, then **ask an embedded analytics provider to help you with the delivery - do that, and your time to market will be breathtakingly short.**

There are specific key capabilities to look for in an embedded analytics platform, primarily focused on how easily a software developer can integrate the use of the platform into their development methodology, and how well the embedded platform supports deep integration via API...

Section four:

Key capabilities to look for in an embedded analytics platform

Any embedded analytics platform must integrate with your software development team, their CI/CD methodology, and the DevOps processes they use. For most engineering teams, this means ensuring all analytics technology works seamlessly with Git source control so that new analytics and improvements can be managed like any other product feature.

However, it's important to know that not all BI tools support Git, and not every Git integration is suitable for DevOps methodologies.

For example, a popular BI tool () doesn't represent its models or dashboards as code, so changes have to be committed blind, and merge conflicts cannot be resolved easily (a major hassle for developers!).

Others may only support Git for data models, not visualizations, and impose their own branch strategy for Git (which may not match how your software development team does it). So it's important to carefully evaluate how easily the embedded analytics platform can support separate development, staging, and production environments. Ask yourself:

- Is it simple to get a live system running against a feature branch?
- How easy is it to revert a staging environment to the version of the analytics and the product code that was in use yesterday?

These are details that will impact your development velocity - and time to market! - long after your evaluations are completed.

Seek out platforms that have granular APIs that allow manipulation of all parts of the platform, check that:

- You make changes to data models dynamically.
- Visualizations can be customized in code.
- Administrative tasks like user management and permissions can be automated via API.

Don't get stuck with a platform that assumes all material changes are done in a BI IDE.

Finally, make sure your embedded analytics platform supports the deployment model you prefer. Some solutions are fully SaaS - which is great if you're also SaaS.

If you have some financial services users or healthcare providers, you may need to run the embedded platform in Azure, or in your own (or your customer's!) VPC, or even physically in-datacenter or on-premise.

And remember, 'can be run in the cloud' isn't the same as 'takes advantage of the scalability of the modern cloud' - look for microservices and native Kubernetes support (EKS, AKS, GKE) among other things, especially if you plan to self-host on one of the major public clouds.

Top considerations to make

Here are some of the critical considerations you need to keep in mind for choosing the right vendor for embedded analytics:

You may need both traditional and modern data capabilities

Users expect more and their needs are evolving, for some baseline capabilities may be enough, but for many advanced analytical features will be the way to go. Therefore, it's important to consider a vendor that can cater to a broad spectrum of self-service BI requirements, both traditional and more complex.

A combination of expected traditional embedded BI offerings with advanced capabilities can offer highly unique analytical experiences and opportunities to explore critical metrics and discover insights that encourage user adoption.

It needs to easily integrate analytics with your product's UX

You need an analytics solution that can seamlessly blend advanced features and automated insights to your core product so that your users derive the most value from it. The UX experience is just as critical as your product's capabilities, and you need a vendor who can give control over how each analytics component actually looks and feels, to better align with your product vision. This will help to evaluate any potential third-party concerns from users.

It needs to accelerate your product's time-to-market

As mentioned, the time and cost it takes to build your own analytics solution and get it up and running is a major roadblock. Therefore it's important to seek an embedded BI tool that can help you get your product to market faster thanks to having an efficient integration process. This will help to reduce the time it takes to get your in-built analytics accessible for users and allow you to focus on improving other critical elements of the product.

The critical criteria

Deciding on an embedded analytics platform isn't just about features, it's about forming a strategic partnership with an experienced specialist.

You know the key capabilities to look out for, but before you choose a solution, take the time to consider these essential criteria:

They're recognized as an analytics leader - Analytics is getting more and more sophisticated, and it's important you evaluate if the vendor is recognized for offering the latest and most advanced capabilities.

They offer data integration and security - You'll need to be able to consolidate and curate a high volume of data with varying technical requirements, which means choosing a vendor with

comprehensive integration technology is essential.

Not only so that the process of integrating your product roadmap with analytics is quicker, but also so that it's secure.

They can help with technical architecture design -

The architecture design of your embedded analytics solution must be flexible enough to accommodate varying infrastructure models. This makes finding an analytics vendor that supports a large range of architectures and is highly customizable hugely important.

They need to provide long-term support for your product -

Integrated embedded analytics into your product roadmap is only the beginning. There needs to be ongoing proactive support to ensure the implementation of embedded analytics into your product is always optimized.

They have to be the best fit for a strategic partnership

- Embedded analytics can allow you to bring an exceptional user experience to your users and give them all the tools they need to extract value from your product. The right analytics vendor will become a long-term partner who'll help you continually support your product needs.

Section five:

Analytics are a 'must-have' requirement for buyers

Analytics have become a 'must-have' requirement, and there are clearly huge revenue and retention upsides to integrating analytics into your product. But this is something you buy, not build.

End-user expectations are too expansive to justify building the required capabilities in-house.

Users are increasingly demanding insights integrated in context into product workflows, not segregated into dashboard-style reporting. And embedding analytics is the key to improving the product experience for your users, helping you to stand out from the get-go in a crowded marketplace.

It can create opportunities for new revenue streams and provide you with opportunities to upsell and set premium pricing, and by partnering with the right BI analytics vendor, you can stay ahead of user demands to create products and services that will bring real value and truly delight your users.

More than 2,000 global companies rely on Sisense to innovate, disrupt markets, and drive meaningful change in the world.

You need to look for the key capabilities in an embedded analytics platform, primarily focused on how easily a software developer can integrate the use of the platform into their development methodology, and how well the embedded platform supports deep integration via API.

This is where Sisense comes in.

You can take advantage of the No. 1 business intelligence company in terms of customer success, named one of the Forbes Cloud 100, the world's best cloud companies, five years in a row. By partnering with us you'll have access to the following key benefits:

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Magic Quadrant

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experience the power of Sisense, and infuse analytics everywhere.**

