

Sisense reinforces embedded-analysis focus with framework, apps for AI-driven insight

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Introduction

When we checked in with veteran business intelligence provider Sisense in April, the company detailed its strategy to support analytics everywhere. Sisense's strategy essentially involves making analytics more pervasive, intelligent, user-friendly and actionable by delivering AI-based insight directly within the applications users employ frequently, so that they are part of the day-to-day workflow. Sisense has served up fresh offerings to support this strategy with the launch of its Extense Framework developer environment and out-of-the box Infusion Apps, which were built using its Extense Framework. These deliverables cement an existing emphasis on having insight everywhere via embedded analytics, which the vendor has previously noted accounts for 50% of its business.

The 451 Take

When asked which products an organization anticipates senior and departmental/line-of-business decision-makers will use to make decisions based on data two years from now, 43% of respondents cited desktop/SaaS productivity applications and 42% said enterprise applications, according to 451 Research's Voice of the Enterprise: Data & Analytics, Data Management & Analytics 2021 survey. These responses illustrate the high adoption potential for Sisense's latest offerings. However, Sisense is not alone in eyeing this trend. Almost every BI vendor (as well as enterprise app players Oracle and SAP) offers embedded analytics, although not all embedded analytics are equal. Sisense's embedded analytics approach is differentiated – for now. However, this area is a major focus for many vendors, including Google/Looker, Salesforce/Tableau and Microsoft. Furthermore, the fact that Sisense has based its early embedded analytics application strategy on embracing apps from these vendors means the company has a more complex relationship to navigate with these vendors than when they were previously competitors in BI only.

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Details

Sisense has provided embedded analytics since its early days in 2004, and its approach to doing so has evolved over the years. Sisense's Extense Framework and Infusion Apps represent the vendor's latest incarnation of this strategy.

Sisense's Extense Framework is all about enabling the availability of insight in applications users already utilize in their working lives, so they don't need to switch over to the vendor's BI platform and use its dashboards and reports, or code-free and codeless predictive analysis capabilities, for example, to get the analytics they need.

Indeed, Sisense developed its Extense Framework to cater to demand for analytical insight that doesn't require a dashboard, but instead provides a native analytical experience within a business application, so that end users can continue to work in their apps but still ask questions of a BI tool and get answers back, as well as AI-driven insight. Sisense's AI-driven insight includes natural language queries to ask questions of data, search-driven data exploration, alerts and automatically generated recommendations based on who the user is and what they have previously clicked on.

In order to ensure insight and analysis are accurate and can be trusted, Sisense's Extense Framework uses the semantic layer within the vendor's BI platform. Sisense's Extense Framework also draws on other capabilities of the vendor's BI platform, such as its 'live' query capability, microservices architecture and its APIs. It was built on Amazon Web Services.

Furthermore, Sisense has investigated the top applications business users employ in their working day and used that research to inform its out-of-the-box application strategy for embedded analytics delivered through Infusion Apps. Sisense had developed five Infusion Apps so far, and has more to come.

Sisense's Infusion App for Slack is for fans of this collaborative tool that also want to use it for analytics. The app connects to a Sisense instance and enables the user to ask a question or give a command, such as 'Show me accounts that industry = healthcare,' using Slakbot. This action pulls charts and records from Sisense into Slack to answer the question, which the Slack user can share with others.

The vendor's Infusion App for Google Sheets was created for spreadsheet advocates, so it is all about easily enabling them to load data into this spreadsheet with the click of a button. Sisense's Infusion App for Chrome provides 'insight on the go' in a web browser. It essentially connects to different Sisense instances to display business metrics a user is interested in or enables the user to make queries using the firm's Extense Framework.

Bookmarks are another noteworthy feature. The user can bookmark questions and queries for reuse in the same app or for use in one of the other apps, since they all talk to each other. Every time the user goes back into the bookmark, the data is refreshed to keep insight and analysis up to date.

Infusion Apps for Salesforce and Google Slides are the other two apps Sisense has announced. All five apps will be available on the Sisense Marketplace later this year. Moreover, Sisense plans to flesh out its homegrown Infusion Apps portfolio by developing offerings of this ilk for the Microsoft Office Suite, Amazon Alexa and Front. Additionally, the vendor will open its Extense Framework in 2022, so that it can be used by customers and partners to create these offerings.

Report amended at 10:15 a.m. ET on August 4, 2021 to reflect correct product name.