

Oracle Analytics Cloud Offering

And what it can do for you

WHITE PAPER



MindStream Analytics

sales@mindstreamanalytics.com



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Introduction

Enterprise offerings of Analytics and Business Intelligence solutions have never been more dynamic and accessible as they are today. Options are available for everyone, be it a small startup or a global Fortune 100 organization with tens of thousands of users.

Oracle Analytics Cloud (OAC) is one of these offerings, but it is hardly an upstart product. While it certainly contains innovations in the space and is a modern toolset well-positioned for evolving into the future, it is also built upon a foundation of technology that has been leveraged successfully by enterprises for nearly two decades.

What can cloud-based solutions like OAC do for me?

In today's world, we are more and more aware of data collection and use in our daily lives. Much more than even a few years ago. Consumers generate data at incredible rates that are still growing exponentially.



Similarly, organizations are collecting data, both from consumers and from internal methods of data generation, just as quickly. Analytics and BI solutions offer ways to analyze this data in order to drive business decisions. This concept is not new, but solutions are becoming more widely available, and more reliable, that allow for degrees of prediction, forecasting, and understanding of the data never achieved before.

Most tools on the market at this point provide the ability to create visualizations to depict customized data sets to provide intuitive, informative dashboards that can enable users from front line workers to CEOs to understand their business and processes. Nearly all tools have removed the need to have any programming skills or know any query languages in order to get the most value out of them, but tools like OAC allow the use of coding and writing custom queries as a way for power users to make even more advanced and customized reporting possible.

In addition to providing easy to consume and digest visualizations, most leading BI tools can now allow for machine learning modules that can drive analytics from looking at what has already happened in the past, to getting clearer and more detailed looks at what is likely to come in the future.

Predictive analytics allows data scientists to leverage statistical programming languages to analyze data in ways that change the landscape of information-driven organizations. This is the next frontier in the analytics space and widely available BI tools are starting to catch up to this need by offering both out of the box machine learning capabilities and also allowing developers to build their own solutions within the framework of the BI solution.

Oracle Analytics Cloud

Oracle Analytics Cloud (OAC) has only been in general release since the Spring of 2017 but it is built upon decades worth of legacy analytics technology. OAC is technically a suite of several tools, but the core of it is the spiritual successor to Oracle Business Intelligence Enterprise Edition (OBIEE). In fact, a cloud-based OBIEE solution is included in most bundles of the suite as “BI Cloud Service (BICS),” but more on that in a moment.



First and foremost, OAC is a completely cloud-based solution, meaning there are no hardware pieces for your organization to buy and no maintenance that your staff will be required to own. Of course, maintenance and patching will still exist, but the client’s role is designed not to babysit the install and troubleshoot any issues (although it can still consume some time once in a while, those who have supported Oracle tools for a long time will acknowledge this process is much cleaner than before.)

Accessibility and Security



Being “in the cloud” also means greater accessibility. OAC includes a mobile app called “Day by Day” which can connect to your OAC-hosted data model and generate simple but informative visualizations from a mobile phone or tablet. This app is free to download and try out but will require a live OAC instance to see its full potential.

For some of our clients, this accessibility is heaven-sent. It allows their sales force to view data in real-time no matter where they are, free of weaving in and out of VPN clients and the common rigors of accessing your corporate network remotely.

To other clients, it’s a logistical anxiety attack. The ‘out of the box’ configuration relies on Oracle’s state of the art security to keep your data safe. So even though you aren’t relying on your traditional

VPN, you are still secured by two-factor authentication and other methods designed to maintain an exceptionally high level of security by Oracle.

We have found that this still may not satisfy all clients. Some clients have opted to hook their corporate VPN into the OAC solution, limiting the wide accessibility but providing peace of mind that they are leveraging the same controllable level of security they have used for on-premise applications for years.

Data Sources



OAC's standard implementation allows it to connect to a wide variety of data sources. This allows you to connect to almost anything capable of connecting via JDBC connection, as well as custom adapters, to specific technologies like Essbase or even storage solutions like Dropbox, Google Drive, and others.

OAC can also host uploaded spreadsheets and can join disparate data sets to one another. This means you can use enterprise data modeled cleanly in an Oracle DB and then join it to some custom data stored in a spreadsheet to analyze together. This provides great flexibility for enterprise customers, particularly large organizations that may have multiple systems serving similar functions, or maybe business areas which have not been brought in line with the mainstream data strategy.

OAC implementations with corporate VPN integration can typically connect to on-premise systems painlessly for querying. This means being able to continue to leverage the work you have invested in existing BI solutions or other internal applications. It also means having the possibility of a hybrid approach to migration where your reporting/analytics tool is in the cloud, but your data or parts of your data, are still on-premise for the time being.

Machine Learning

The machine learning component of OAC provides the most potential for future development. As mentioned earlier, machine learning and predictive modeling is the next evolution in analytics, and OAC's machine learning module is the perfect place for client developers to innovate in that space. OAC supports using R to program statistical analyses using your OAC-hosted data models. This means that any data that OAC is connected to can now inform your models.



Further, OAC comes equipped with Natural Language Generation (NLG) capability to further refine its ability to generate readable insights to provide a secondary level of information delivery. For example, you can use this to generate verbiage on a report or visualization to further expand on what the images mean, or what next steps for a user reading the report should be. This is taking standard automation a step further, allowing analysts to spend less time deciphering, and more time acting.

Additional Tools in the Suite



As noted, OAC is actually a suite of tools. The main tool in the set is Oracle Data Visualization, which features drag and drop visualization building, light data modeling using one or more sources, a wide variety of compatible data sources, and the machine learning module.

Additionally, some flavors of OAC include BI Cloud Services (BICS), which is essentially OBIEE in the cloud. It allows you to build complex logical data models with built-in dimensional hierarchies, well-defined subject areas with data from one or more sources, clean, publishable reports and dashboards, and more traditional enterprise BI features.

It also includes BI Publisher, which is often referred to as Pixel Perfect Reporting. This tool is best suited for narrative style reporting and can also generate statements, invoices, and other financial documents and reports. If your needs are related to financial reports like balance sheets, income statements, etc., BI Publisher is a must-have.

Conclusion and Next Steps

OAC has evolved considerably in the nearly three years since its launch. It has refined its offering by focusing on the power of Data Visualization and Machine Learning in particular. It is poised to continue to evolve into a tool that will serve as a central hub of all analytics and reporting needs within any organization.

But how do you know if it's a fit for you? And, if it is, how do you best position it within your company?

Take the tools out for a spin!

Oracle offers free, no-obligation trials for its cloud products, including OAC. You can have your own trial instance of OAC up and running in just a few hours. Then you can see firsthand what the tool offers and explore proofs of concepts for your particular needs.

Next, reach out to MindStream Analytics for a consultation about your situation. Our consultants have completed many OAC implementations and have firsthand knowledge of the ins and outs of each tool in the suite. We can provide thorough, honest assessments of what would provide the best value for your organization.

MindStream is an Oracle Gold Partner and Cloud Partner with decades of experience in Analytics and Performance Management. MindStream offers services ranging from software selection and implementation to best practices for financial planning and reporting. To learn more, visit our website at www.mindstreamanalytics.com or call us at 1-800-497-0151.

The Oracle logo consists of the word "ORACLE" in white, uppercase letters on a red rectangular background.

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