

Advizor

An evaluation by Bloor Research

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Fast facts

Advizor Solutions provides business intelligence solutions. However, it doesn't provide BI solutions of the sort that you might associate with, say, Business Objects. Indeed, the product aims to meet business requirements that are not normally available from traditional solutions, so that, in many instances, Advizor should be seen as complementary to conventional approaches. In order to understand Advizor's market positioning we therefore need to briefly describe the two major issues that typical BI solutions do not fulfil and which differentiate Advizor from other products in the market.

The first thing that business users would like to do is to make enquiries against any set of relevant data. We might call this the requirement to "query anything". Users do not wish to be circumscribed or limited as to the queries they may pose because of restrictions that may have been imposed because of architectural or IT limitations. However, it is almost invariably the case that that is precisely what does happen, certainly in any organisation of any size. While we will discuss the reasons for this, and how Advizor overcomes this, in due course, suffice it to say for the time being that Advizor does do this and, moreover, will do so even if the data is stored in heterogeneous environments.

The second thing that business users want is to be able to view and manipulate data in a way that is most effective for them in enabling them to do their particular job. This varies by user. For example, the casual or occasional user simply wants to be able to view information in a way that makes the data easy to understand and, therefore, act upon. This mandates a wide selection of charting types and visualisation techniques so that the most suitable can be chosen.

Business analysts, on the other hand, have more complex requirements. For example, they will often want to view the data in more than one way. They may want to select a subset of the data to analyse in more depth; they may want to alter range values, apply filters, change thresholds and so on; and they will want to be able to do this one chart and have this automatically and dynamically applied to all the other charts that they be using to view this data. Unfortunately, this sort of functionality is not typically available. Most conventional business intelligence products cannot do this or only by coding specific solutions. Again, we will discuss the reasons behind this, and how it is that Advizor can do precisely this, in due course.

To summarise then, Advizor is a business intelligence product that has been designed specifically to overcome the major failings of the current generation of business intelligence products.

Key findings

In the opinion of Bloor Research the following represent the key facts of which prospective users should be aware:

- Advizor was historically a specialist in visualisation and the product supports 15 different chart types, from the commonplace to more esoteric options. Where relevant, both 2D and 3D versions of these charts are available. Individual chart types may be licensed separately for OEM purposes.
- Advizor provides a mechanism known as Visual Discovery, which allows you to change or select from one chart or table and have that amendment or selection automatically reflected in all other charts that currently reflect (in a dashboard, which you can build using very easy to use drag-and-drop capabilities) the same data.

- Visual discovery applies to transaction level details as well as aggregated data. Thus, for example, you could generate a scatterplot showing revenue by margin for every customer, then select higher margin customers from the scatterplot, and then see their total contribution to revenue in the east region in a bar chart.
- An additional option is Predictive Analytics, which extends visual discovery into the analytics area where, for example, as a first step you might need to decide which of various is the most important for you to investigate.
- We think it would be useful if Advizor was to extend its visualisation capabilities to report finding. For casual users of business intelligence the typical tree hierarchies that you have to navigate are not particularly intuitive and a more visual approach could make the process of locating stored reports and queries much simpler.
- Advizor uses memory-based processing, whereby data is loaded from relevant data sources (which may be multiple cubes of the same type or may be from different databases) – the software preserves the dimensions from these sources but otherwise ignores the original format of the data and is able to determine relationships that exist between elements from different data sources – thus enabling “query anything”.
- Advizor is limited to 32-bit support for this in-memory processing. In order to extend the scalability of its solution we would like to see the company introduce 64-bit support. Sampling and filtering (by, say, time) is currently supported when large datasets (for example, from Teradata) need to be processed.
- Advizor works with a number of third party business intelligence tools. In particular, it is integrated with BusinessObjects and should be viewed as complementary to it, rather than as competitive.

The bottom line

There are a few other companies in the market that specialise in visualisation though there is an even smaller number that support interactive visualisation. However, as far as we know, none of these suppliers have the ability to “query anything”. On the other hand, there are one or two other companies that do have this capability but they do not have advanced visualisation capabilities. In other words, Advizor, to our knowledge, is the only vendor to have addressed both of these issues in a single product.

We need to be clear about this: these are BIG failings in conventional business intelligence technology and they are why, in our view, so much business intelligence software is shelfware. In turn, this means that Advizor should be of interest to almost any company that uses business intelligence.

Typically, Advizor will be implemented directly with existing business intelligence tools though it can be deployed simply in conjunction with Microsoft Excel. In particular, the company has partnerships with Teradata, Information Builders and Business Objects, amongst others. The integration with Business Objects is especially significant since it extends beyond BI per se to include integration with Set Analyzer. Moreover, both companies are also partners of KXEN. In our opinion it should therefore be a no-brainer for any significant user of Business Objects to implement Advizor as well.

Vendor information

Background information

Advizor Solutions specialises in visualisation solutions and was spun off from Bell Labs in 1999, initially focusing on web analytics. However, following the dot bomb this market dropped off significantly and the company refocused on its core strength of visualisation, specifically for the business intelligence market. However, as we shall see, Advizor is not just about visualisation.

When it came to market with its current range of products the company was very focused on the third party market, OEMing its solutions to a number of companies, including Avaya, Alterian, and IBM (Intelligent Miner) through a software development kit that supported integration. However, in 2005, the company wrapped its environment in .NET, with extensive wizard-based integration to enable automated integration. As a result the company is now targeting direct sales as well as third parties.

As a product, Advizor effectively addresses two markets: either working stand-alone or in conjunction with partner products. In particular, the company has partnerships with Teradata, Business Objects and Information Builders. In the case of Business Objects, the product works in conjunction both with that company's eponymous business intelligence product and with Set Analyzer. In addition, it is worth noting that both Business Objects and Advizor have partnerships with KXEN, with the former reselling that company's software and the latter embedding it. In the case of Information Builders, the integration is with WebFocus.

A new marketing thrust has recently been adopted by the company, with the introduction in July 2006 of a downloadable version of the product available to run with Microsoft Excel and Microsoft Access. While the company does not expect to make lots of money from this product it hopes to seed the market and create a greater awareness of its capabilities that it can leverage with its enterprise product.

Product availability

Advizor runs on Microsoft platforms with end-users employing browser-based environments. The product has specific interfaces to Microsoft SQL Server and Analysis Services, Teradata, Oracle, Business Objects, Microsoft Excel and Access. Otherwise it depends on ODBC, though the company is willing to develop native interfaces to other data sources depending on customer demand. Write-back facilities to the databases mentioned, is supported.

The current release of Advizor is 5.0.3, which was released in March of 2006. The next version (5.1) will be released in September 2006 and some details of that release are included in this paper.

Financial details

Advizor Solutions is a privately owned company that was self-funding up until recently, when it raised venture capital monies in May 2006. It has approximately 20 employees and is recruiting.

The company's primary markets are in Chicago (where head office is), New York and London. However, the company also has a number of partners around the world, including Australia and New Zealand, Germany, Russia, Japan, Mexico and Brazil. Typically, these

partners are also Business Objects and/or KXEN partners as well. In the UK, Advzor has a partnership with CACI.

Product information

There are various elements within the Advzor product set and, depending on the type of client you are, you may want one, several or all of these. Specifically, the available options include:

- Charts – there are 15 of these as follows: bar charts, pie charts, line charts, histograms, data sheets (including count, summary tables and text filters – this last being added in the 5.1 release), scatterplots, multiscapes, maps, heatmaps, paraboxes, time tables and data constellations. Where appropriate both 2D and 3D versions of these charts are available. Note that OEM partners can license individual chart types if desired.
- Analytics – this is made of two separate elements: Visual Discovery, which provides interactive analysis using the chart types mentioned; and Predictive Analytics, which embeds the KXEN data mining engine so that you can discover, for example, which are the most significant parameters to report against when you have a large number of such parameters. Predictive Analytics is an optional module.
- Data Pool Architecture – this is the technology that allows Advzor to run as a stand-alone business intelligence capability or you can use it as a front-end that will span multiple, heterogeneous business intelligence tools. You can also use this technology to, for example, integrate data from multiple Business Objects Universes.

We will discuss each of these in turn. In addition, as mentioned previously, there is now an Advzor option that runs directly with Microsoft Office. This functionality is included within the general-purpose product.

Charting and visualisation

There is little point in talking about visualisation: it makes more sense to show it. We will therefore talk through a short set of screenshots. To begin with, Figure 1 shows a typical report table.

For most people, such a report is difficult to interpret. Even if you add such things as colour coding against relevant parameters there is too much detail to see the wood for the trees. So, you really need a more intuitive way to present the data.

Fund Name	1-Year	Per 5-Year	Per 10-Year	Pct20-Week	P-Year-To-D	Data	3-Year	Volatility	Total	Total	Return	Expense	Fund	Type	Sub-Type	Fund	Fam	
17M FUNDSASSET ALLOC	22	12.1	11.1	14.5	0.97	17.9	2.09	37.5	965.90	1.20	Balanced	Balanced	17M4					
59 WALL ST EUROPEAN	19.3	14.4	8.9	9.1	0.89	13.7	2.53	161.3	\$112.70	1.33	Equity	International	59					
59 WALL ST PAC BDRN	0	12.1	9.9	6.4	1.12	-1.9	4	150.4	\$68.90	1.33	Equity	International	59					
59 WALL ST SMALL CO	26.7	14	14.8	11.4	0.87	16.7	4.18	35.8	\$96.90	1.23	Equity	Small Cap	59					
59 WALL ST US EQUITY	36.9	18.3	20	23.6	0.96	25.5	3.21	85.7	\$186.30	1.23	Equity	Growth	59					
AAL FUNDS CAPITAL BRD	36	15.7	13.4	20.9	0.93	25.3	3.09	2011	\$232.60	1.08	Equity	Growth	AAL					
AARP BAL STOCK & BOND	25	25	11.7	15.2	0.89	17.3	1.79	570.5	\$60.30	0.88	Balanced	AARP						
AARP CAPITAL GROWTH	46.4	18.5	13.1	21.4	0.9	25.4	3.59	1096.1	\$64.90	1.13	Equity	Growth	AARP					
AARP GNMA & US TREAS	7.5	5.4	7.6	3.5	4.5	0.74	7.3	0.75	4993.4	\$175.40	0.64	Bond	Mortgage	AARP				
ACCESSOR GROWTH	38.3	6.3	15.9	25	0.93	27.1	3.1	84.3	\$164.00	1.17	Equity	Small Cap	ACCESSOR					
ACCESSOR MORTGAGE SEC	9.3	6.3	3.5	5.5	0.97	8.6	1.02	99.9	\$40.90	0.96	Bond	Mortgage	ACCESSOR					
ACCESSOR SMALL CAP	37	6.3	19.3	21	0.78	25.7	3.97	126.5	\$147.60	1.17	Equity	Small Cap	ACCESSOR					
ACORN FUND	25	19.6	14.8	12.4	16.4	0.64	17.9	3.04	3221.2	\$6373.70	0.57	Equity	Small Cap	ACORN				
ACORN INTERNATIONAL	13.2	2.9	2.9	6.4	0.83	9.3	2.6	1071.7	\$147.40	1.06	Balanced	International	ACORN					
ADVANCE CAP I BALANCED	23.4	14.8	11.4	12.5	1.12	19.3	2.23	89	\$150.30	1.06	Balanced	Balanced	ADVANCE					
ADVANTUS HORIZONAL	29.3	14.8	11.4	12.5	1.12	19.3	2.23	89	\$150.30	1.06	Balanced	Balanced	ADVANTUS					
ADVANTUS MORTGAGE A	9.2	6.4	8.6	4.5	5.5	1.09	8.7	1.12	23	\$186.70	1.26	Bond	Mortgage	ADVANTUS				
ADVANTUS SPECTRUM A	17.9	10.7	8.4	11.3	1	15.6	2.12	61.4	\$197.40	1.26	Balanced	Balanced	ADVANTUS					
AETNA AETNA FUND ADV R	22.6	12.8	10.8	13.8	1.03	17.2	2.16	5.3	\$63.50	2.07	Balanced	Balanced	AETNA					
AETNA SMALL CO FUND SEL	32.8	12.8	11.2	14.4	1.4	18.2	2.16	99.7	\$91.60	1.31	Balanced	Balanced	AETNA					
AETNA GROWTH SEL	36.8	14.8	17.8	24.4	1.1	26.5	3.6	68.2	\$115.40	1.28	Equity	Growth	AETNA					
AETNA SMALL CO FUND SEL	32.8	14.8	13	16	1.02	20.2	2.11	52.1	\$196.20	1.48	Equity	Small Cap	AETNA					
AHA INV/DVSD EQUITY	40.4	20.3	18.4	23.9	0.91	27.2	2.92	70.6	\$200.10	0.18	Equity	Small Cap	AHA					
AHM EDWARDS GROW X	15	29.6	17.8	13.7	10.4	1.37	26.3	6.2	341.1	\$120.70	1.13	Equity	Small Cap	AHM				
AHM EDWINGARTEN RTH A	32.9	15.7	13.1	17	20.9	1.15	24	3.88	5930.8	\$6201.40	1.12	Equity	Growth	AHM				
AHM INTL EQUITY A	20.9	17.1	11.6	10.4	1.08	17.9	2.83	1574.4	\$702.10	1.25	Equity	International	AHM					
AHM SUMMIT FUND	35.1	18.1	12.9	18.8	22.3	1.29	25.5	4.24	1499.9	\$996.70	0.7	Equity	Growth	AHM				
AHM BALANCED FUND B	28.5	17.7	11.6	13.5	18.3	1.24	22.2	2.65	512.2	\$709.50	1.15	Balanced	Balanced	AHM				
AHM GROWTH A	31.4	15.1	10.1	12.9	15.7	1.24	21.2	2.64	345.5	\$66.20	1.97	Balanced	Balanced	AHM				
AHM GROWTH B	30.2	15.4	19.1	1.24	23.3	4.06	32.2	2.74	20.3	\$74.20	2.03	Equity	Growth	AHM				
AHM VALUE R	31.7	20.6	17.2	15	18.6	0.94	22.2	2.17	6106	\$841.60	1.13	Equity	Growth	AHM				
AHM VALUE B R	30.7	20.6	17.2	15.4	18	1.94	21.2	3.17	6024.8	\$82.20	1.94	Equity	Growth	AHM				
ALGER BALANCED R	22.8	14.3	17.5	1.28	18.4	2.96	12.5	87.20	\$73.20	2.17	Balanced	Balanced	ALGER					
ALGER CAPITAL APPREC B R	29	19.6	23	1.59	41.3	6.31	176.4	\$174.90	2.46	Equity	Capital App	ALGER						
ALGER GROWTH B	35.5	22	14.7	17.1	22.9	1.28	24.9	4.3	286	\$415.00	2.88	Equity	Growth	ALGER				
ALGER SMALL CAPITAL B R	15.1	17.8	16.3	12.5	9.8	1.25	22.2	5.95	406	\$486.20	2.13	Equity	Small Cap	ALGER				
ALLIANCE BALANCED A	26	11.5	9	13.6	16.4	1.16	16.5	2.42	107.5	\$3189.20	1.38	Balanced	Balanced	ALLIANCE				
ALLIANCE EDUS GOVTR R	7	5.2	7.5	3.9	4.1	1.08	6.4	1.32	393.3	\$131.20	1.01	Bond	Treasuries	ALLIANCE				
ALLIANCE EDUS GOVTR B R	6.2	4.5	2.9	3.6	1.08	5.6	1.31	473.7	\$36.10	1.72	Bond	Treasuries	ALLIANCE					
ALLIANCE EDUS GOVTR C R	6.2	4.5	2.9	3.6	1.08	5.7	1.32	116.6	\$16.30	1.71	Bond	Treasuries	ALLIANCE					
ALLIANCE FUNDA	39.7	19.3	12.9	15.6	21.6	1.15	23.8	3.85	1062.2	\$4792.10	1.04	Equity	Growth	ALLIANCE				
ALLIANCE FUNDS R	36.7	19.3	12.9	15.6	21.1	1.15	22.7	3.83	82.9	\$165.90	1.87	Equity	Growth	ALLIANCE				
ALLIANCE GBL DOLLAR B R	30.2	12.1	6.3	11.3	6.4	1.03	6.7	2.79	191.2	\$621.10	1.75	Equity	International	ALLIANCE				
ALLIANCE INTL B	10.8	11.2	10.9	7.9	1.03	5.9	2.79	77.9	\$53.20	2.55	Equity	International	ALLIANCE					
ALLIANCE INTL R	10.8	10.9	7.9	1.04	5.9	2.19	83.8	\$24.10	3.04	Bond	International	ALLIANCE						
ALLIANCE INTL STRA	10.8	3.3	2.1	4	0.1	5.9	2.19	83.8	\$24.10	1.64	Bond	International	ALLIANCE					
ALLIANCE INTL STRA R	9.8	2.5	1.6	3.4	0.1	5	2.19	83.8	\$18.10	2.53	Bond	International	ALLIANCE					
ALLIANCE INTL STRA R	8.5	5.8	8.3	4.1	5.2	0.92	7.9	0.96	380.4	\$322.20	1.68	Bond	Mortgage	ALLIANCE				
ALLIANCE INTL STRA R	7.6	5	3.6	4.7	0.93	7.1	0.97	31.1	\$86.30	2.38	Bond	Mortgage	ALLIANCE					
ALLIANCE INTL STRA R	7.6	5	3.6	4.7	0.93	7.1	0.97	31.1	\$86.30	2.38	Bond	Mortgage	ALLIANCE					
ALLIANCE INTL STRA R	7.6	5	3.6	4.7	0.93	7.1	0.97	31.1	\$86.30	2.38	Bond	Mortgage	ALLIANCE					
ALLIANCE INTL STRA R	7.6	5	3.6	4.7	0.93	7.1	0.97	31.1	\$86.30	2.38	Bond	Mortgage	ALLIANCE					
ALLIANCE INTL STRA R	7.6	5	3.6	4.7	0.93	7.1	0.97	31.1	\$86.30	2.38	Bond	Mortgage	ALLIANCE					
ALLIANCE INTL STRA R	7.6	5	3.6	4.7	0.93	7.1	0.97	31.1	\$86.30	2.38	Bond	Mortgage	ALLIANCE					
ALLIANCE INTL STRA R	7.6	5	3.6	4.7	0.93	7.1	0.97	31.1	\$86.30	2.38	Bond	Mortgage	ALLIANCE					
ALLIANCE INTL STRA R	7.6	5	3.6	4.7	0.93	7.1	0.97	31.1	\$86.30	2.38	Bond	Mortgage	ALLIANCE					
ALLIANCE INTL STRA R	7.6	5	3.6	4.7	0.93	7.1	0.97	31.1	\$86.30	2.38	Bond	Mortgage	ALLIANCE					
ALLIANCE INTL STRA R	7.6	5	3.6	4.7	0.93	7.1	0.97	31.1	\$86.30	2.38	Bond	Mortgage	ALLIANCE					
ALLIANCE INTL STRA R	7.6	5	3.6	4.7	0.93	7.1	0.97	31.1	\$86.30	2.38	Bond	Mortgage	ALLIANCE					
ALLIANCE INTL STRA R	7.6	5	3.6	4.7	0.93	7.1	0.97	31.1	\$86.30	2.38	Bond	Mortgage	ALLIANCE					
ALLIANCE INTL STRA R	7.6	5	3.6	4.7	0.93	7.1	0.97	31.1	\$86.30	2.38	Bond	Mortgage	ALLIANCE					
ALLIANCE INTL STRA R	7.6	5	3.6	4.7	0.93	7.1	0.97	31.1	\$86.30	2.38	Bond	Mortgage	ALLIANCE					
ALLIANCE INTL STRA R	7.6	5	3.6	4.7	0.93	7.1	0.97	31.1	\$86.30	2.38	Bond	Mortgage	ALLIANCE					
ALLIANCE INTL STRA R	7.6	5	3.6	4.7	0.93	7.1	0.97	31.1	\$86.30	2.38	Bond	Mortgage	ALLIANCE					
ALLIANCE INTL STRA R	7.6	5	3.6	4.7	0.93	7.1	0.97	31.1	\$86.30	2.38	Bond	Mortgage	ALLIANCE					
ALLIANCE INTL STRA R	7.6	5	3.6	4.7	0.93	7.1	0.97	31.1	\$86.30	2.38	Bond	Mortgage	ALLIANCE					
ALLIANCE INTL STRA R	7.6	5	3.6	4.7	0.93	7.1	0.97	31.1	\$86.30	2.38	Bond	Mortgage	ALLIANCE					
ALLIANCE INTL STRA R	7.6	5	3.6	4.7	0.93	7.1	0.97	31.1	\$86.30	2.38	Bond	Mortgage	ALLIANCE					
ALLIANCE INTL STRA R	7.6	5	3.6	4.7	0.93	7.1	0.97	31.1	\$86.30	2.38	Bond	Mortgage	ALLIANCE					
ALLIANCE INTL STRA R	7.6	5	3.6	4.7	0.93	7.1	0.97	31.1	\$86.30	2.38	Bond	Mortgage	ALLIANCE					
ALLIANCE INTL STRA R	7.6	5	3.6	4.7	0.93	7.1	0.97	31.1	\$86.30	2.38	Bond	Mortgage	ALLIANCE					
ALLIANCE INTL STRA R	7.6	5	3.6	4.7</														

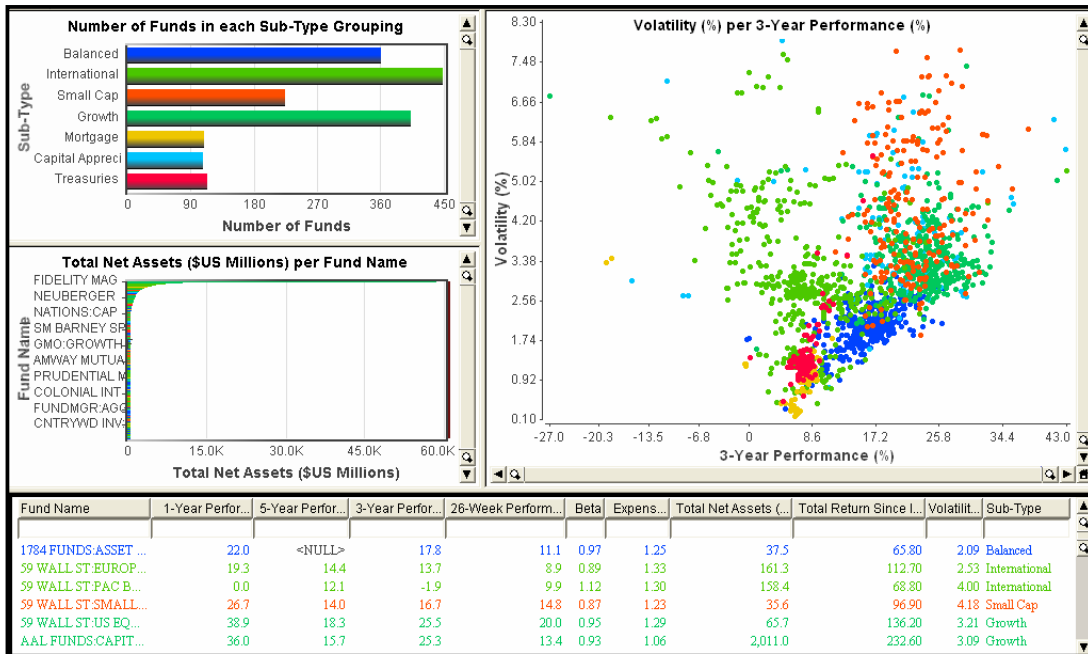


Figure 2: Scatterplot showing results from Figure 1 within a dashboard

In this dashboard, all the results from the table in Figure 1 have been re-presented in the scatterplot on the right. The x and y axes of performance versus volatility are simply selected from drop-down lists that allow you to choose from any of the heading column headings in the original report, or you can use calculated columns based on the original data. In addition, the scatterplot has been colour-coded according to the sub-type groupings shown at the top left, which are selected in a similar way. More details in the other two charts. As mentioned previously, the sizes and positions of the various charts are determined by dragging and dropping as required.

Now let us consider the interactive capabilities of Advizor, as previously mentioned. Figure 3, illustrates an example of this, where a subset of the data has been selected from Figure 2. Here, the user has simply selected two of the sub-type groups from the chart at top left and this selection has been automatically reflected in the other windows. You could, if you wished, then select further metrics to filter the data further, for example, by selecting from the Total Net Assets chart. You can also select directly on the scatterplot. Either by lassoing a selection or you can drill down on any individual piece of information by clicking on it. There are also zoom facilities provided.

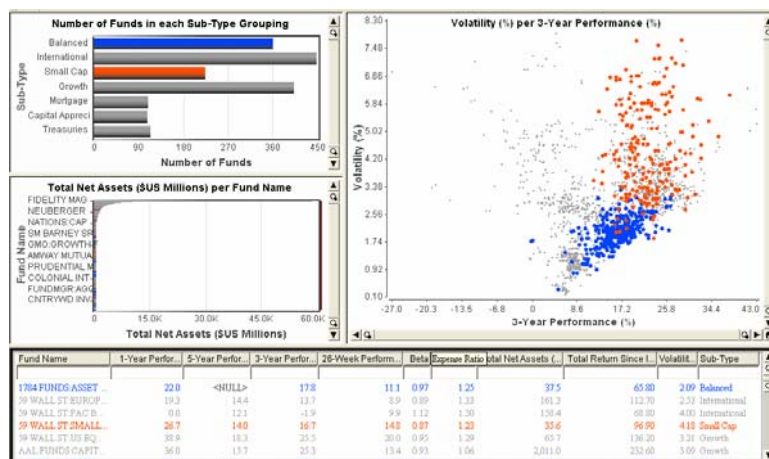


Figure 3: selected data from Figure 2

As we have mentioned, traditional business intelligence tools do not offer this sort of interactivity. The reason why is because, in browser-based environments (which Advizor is), conventional tools use flash-based mechanisms, and these treat each chart as an individual entity that does not have relationships to other such entities.

Finally, while we have listed the different types of charts that Advizor can provide, again it is better to see these, and a number of examples follow without comment.

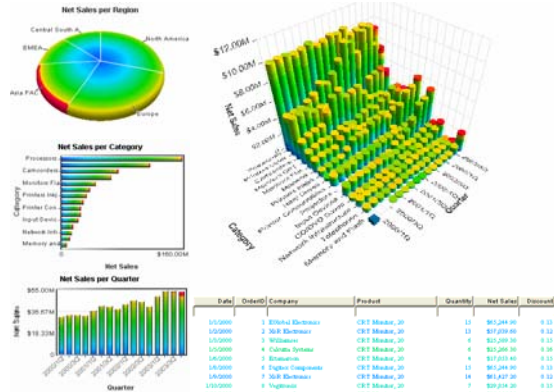


Figure 4: Dashboard illustrating multiscope

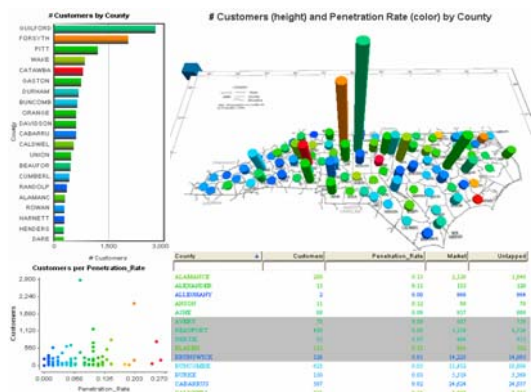


Figure 5: Dashboard illustrating map

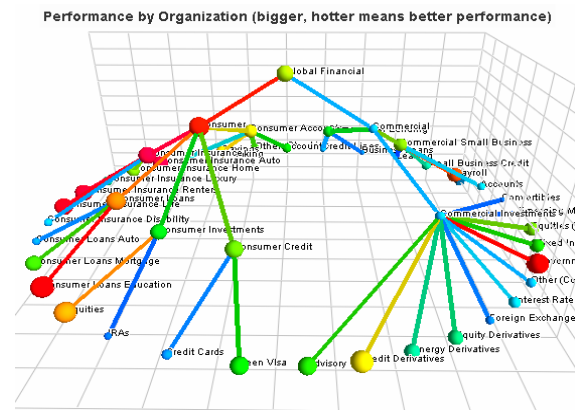


Figure 6: Data constellation chart

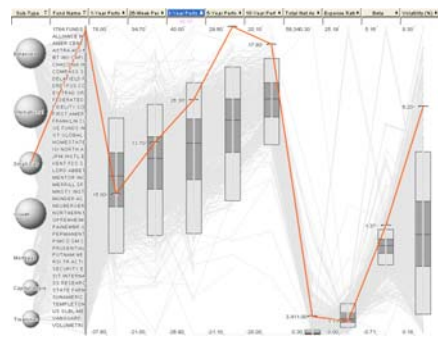


Figure 7: Paradox

Data Pool architecture

While visualisation and charting techniques are significant advantages for Advizor, so too is its Data Pool architecture. What this does is to allow you to consolidate multiple data cubes or other sources and allows you to run queries against this consolidated data set. The reason why this is an issue is that for performance and other reasons it is typical that large enterprises have multiple cubes in which aggregated data is held. Thus there might be 20 or 30 different Business Objects Universes, for example; and there is no easy way to query information that may span more than one Universe. In fact, Advizor allows you to enquire against data that spans heterogeneous data sources as well, so that you might have some Business Objects Universes and additional data stored in SQL Server or Oracle databases, for example.

The way that Advizor does this is by loading all the relevant data into memory. However, it does not preserve the cubes themselves but smashes them, only preserving the dimension

and hierarchy data that defines the relationships that exist within the data. Relationships that exist between data from multiple sources are first identified, which may require either existing knowledge of the data or the use of third party tools for discovery purposes, and then tables are linked or joined via a data workshop wizard that makes this part of the process a relatively simple one. The resultant effect is one large data table for display and analysis within ADVIZOR.

One issue we do have here is that Advizor only supports 32-bit processing. While adequate for many purposes this will not provide the scalability that a 64-bit solution would do, and we would like to see Advizor move to this environment. In the interim, the company does provide sampling capabilities (or you can filter against relevant criteria, such as time) when working with very large datasets, such as in its partnership with Teradata.

Predictive Analytics

Visualization empowers people to discover patterns and anomalies in data, either by noticing unexpected relationships or by actively searching. Predictive analytics (sometimes called 'data mining') provides a powerful adjunct to this: algorithms are used to find relationships within the data, and these relationships can be used with new data to predict values, such as whether a customer is likely to default on a loan or change service provider.

ADVIZOR's philosophy is to combine these two technologies into an easy-to-use point-and-click product so that business users can reap the benefits. The intended result is that people can better understand their business information and thereby make better, and faster, fact-based decisions.

The predictive analytics included in *ADVIZOR Analyst/X* are the KXEN (*Knowledge eXtraction ENgines*) system [KXEN]. KXEN is an advanced data mining tool that has been separately reviewed by Bloor Research. As such we do not intend to discuss it here. Suffice it to say, however, that in that review we concluded that "*The KXEN Analytic Framework offers substantial advantages over traditional techniques. It is easier to use, faster to produce results and, often, easier to maintain.*"

Tasks you can do with the predictive analytics in *ADVIZOR/X* are:

- **Build** a model of your data that describes what fields and groups within fields influence the value of a target.
- **Evaluate** the **quality** of models you build using quality metrics.
- **Examine the model** to understand the relationships between the target field and the explanatory fields.
- **Model** your *ADVIZOR* selection state set via Visual Discovery to get a concise description of that set of selected items. This gives a concise description of a visually identified subpopulation.
- **Predict missing values** from a field in your data.
- **Predict** the value of a **target** field based on a model that you have previously built.

Conclusion

Advizor's strengths are clearly on the visualisation side (especially with its interactive capabilities) and it is probably one of the two leading providers in this area in the market. In addition, its Data Pool architecture is also a significant advantage, though we like to see additional (easy-to-use) facilities for discovering and defining relationships across datasets. Nevertheless, the two sets of capabilities offer compelling functionality that cannot be found anywhere else. Any company (and particularly users of Advizor partner products) that has any sort of sophisticated interest in business intelligence should be looking seriously at Advizor Solutions.