

Pyramid Analytics plants a stake in the decision intelligence ground

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Publication date: Monday, January 31 2022

Introduction

Pyramid Analytics is a business intelligence veteran that has evolved its technology expertise and go-to-market strategy significantly since entering the BI space more than a decade ago with an analytics platform designed to fill a gap in the market for enterprise BI atop Microsoft's SQL Server database. It is now a decision intelligence platform provider. The vendor has set out to address decision intelligence using a platform that essentially blends business analytics and data science with data preparation in a single, no-code application, to enable individuals with divergent skillsets in enterprises to perform various types of analytics on data in structured and unstructured formats, and make decisions more swiftly, easily and efficiently. Data-driven decision-making is a growing priority, as demonstrated by 90% of respondents to 451 Research's [Voice of the Enterprise: Data & Analytics, Data Management & Analytics 2021](#) survey saying that data will be more important to their organization one year from now.

The Take

Pyramid Analytics has chosen the right time to enter the decision intelligence fray. It is still a nascent market that only has a handful of players, which gives the company the chance to cement its name as a go-to provider with a comprehensive set of capabilities to support it. However, Pyramid Analytics will need to evangelize its differentiation, as this discipline isn't yet fully understood or clearly defined, so market education will play a key role in its future success as a decision intelligence platform provider.

Context

The vendor has entered the evolving decision intelligence category, which is broadly all about making the data-driven decision-making process more effective by making it faster, smarter and more inclusive. Decision intelligence is an evolution in strategy for Pyramid Analytics, which was

founded in 2009 – well before the launch of Microsoft's own Power BI offering – to plug a hole in the market for enterprise-oriented BI for Microsoft shops.

Indeed, when we initially checked in with Pyramid Analytics in early 2016, it was addressing the dual – and often conflicting – requirements of delivering self-service analytics to nontechnical business users, while simultaneously meeting the need from IT for analytics on governed data for organizations that had standardized on Microsoft's SQL Server database. The vendor ditched its Microsoft dependency in 2018, in favor of a more heterogeneous BI platform. At the time, Pyramid Analytics characterized its rewritten and extended BI platform as a stepping-stone to the delivery of a more comprehensive data analytics platform, which it has built, and is now priming for decision intelligence.

The company has US offices in New York City and Boise, Idaho, as well as operations – including executive management, R&D, and engineering – in Tel Aviv and London.

Products

Pyramid Analytics' Decision Intelligence Platform essentially blends BI for business users (aka business analytics) with data science – in the form of advanced analytics – and data prep in one modular stack. This enables enterprises with business users – as well as expert data scientists and nonexpert business personnel – to employ it for trusted data-driven decision-making by large groups of users on big-data volumes of data in various formats and states, according to the company. The firm notes that a deployment to 800-1,000 users is typical – and customers frequently rely on its platform to query 100 billion rows of data.

Machine learning is a core technical linchpin behind decision intelligence. Why? It is used to enhance the user experience for nontechnical end users by delivering augmented analytics via automation using ML. Pyramid Analytics' capabilities here are designed to enable business users to ask questions of data – without knowledge of SQL or other technical expertise – deploying natural language queries. Additional augmented analytics tools available in the vendor's platform include auto discovery to automatically analyze data to generate pertinent insights, such as interesting correlations and visualizations, and natural language generation for narrating context to illuminate insights further. Moreover, Pyramid Analytics expanded its offering's augmented analysis functionality in the latest release with the debut of an Explain feature, which automatically surfaces key drivers and influencers.

The firm's advanced analytics – such as its predictive analysis functionality and ability to leverage data science at the data prep stage – are designed to free up data scientists so they can employ their expertise for the more sophisticated aspects of data science projects. The offering also supports data scientists by hooking up to popular languages used to code these projects, including R and Python. Additionally, advanced analysis use cases are enabled through the Pyramid Query Language (PQL). PQL is built into the PYRANA engine inside the platform so users can script queries in situ for more sophisticated insights, including those involving mathematical and hierarchical queries.

Furthermore, Pyramid Analytics' data prep capabilities are designed for business users as they essentially offer point-and-click data modeling to create a semantic layer from structured data – SAP's BW warehouse and HANA data platform, AWS's RedShift data warehouse and Snowflake's cloud warehouse are popular environments it supports. The company's platform also enables data prep on unstructured data in text and other formats as part of a strategy to provide decision intelligence on all of an enterprise's data – not just structured data sets.

Moreover, Pyramid Analytics regards decision intelligence as only ever as good as the query engine that enables it because that engine is at the heart of its insights, as it essentially carries out the queries, calculations and analytics automation that enable 'intelligent' decisions to be made. The

vendor's PYRANA query, calculation and automation engine is therefore a core piece of intellectual property. Additionally, PYRANA processes and queries data in situ, without the need to move or copy data, which is a performance drain and cost burden.

PYRANA also supports decision intelligence on data in a variety of formats courtesy of direct query functionality supporting multiple SQL and MDX-based data platforms. Plus it supports write-back to the environment in which data is stored as well as security and workflow for write-back, so can be used for decision intelligence involving budgeting, planning, or other use cases where the capture of end-user data is required. Dashboards, reports and alerts exemplify business analysis capabilities for business users.

Pyramid Analytics' Decision Intelligence Platform supports decision intelligence on-premises, in a private and public cloud, or in a hybrid environment using a high-performance Pulse Server for remote data access to support private cloud and hybrid rollouts. Multi-node clustering, load balancing and failover enable it to run on an elastic cloud architecture, while cloud-native capabilities draw on a Kubernetes-based container orchestration system. The vendor's offering is also designed to provide desktop capabilities in a web browser by tapping into JavaScript and React on the front end and Java on the back end.

Business momentum

Pyramid Analytics' business model has evolved over the years – even though the company has remained true to a sales strategy that involves courting partners (SIs and ISVs) as well as direct deals. The company now employs a land-and-expand strategy in a bid to eventually go 'wall to wall' in enterprises employing annual subscription-based pricing. This strategy has resulted in it amassing over 2,500 customers in various verticals such as financial services, retail, healthcare and manufacturing, as well as government, education and healthcare. Pyramid Analytics notes that some of these clients are already using it for decision intelligence, while others plan to in future.

Additionally, it's worth noting that the vendor raised additional funding in 2020 to support future growth. Its \$25m series D round in March 2020 was led by Jerusalem Venture Partners, with participation from return backers Sequoia Capital, Viola Growth and Maor Investments, taking its total financing to \$85m. The firm currently is on a recruitment drive to support further growth.

Competition

As is the case with any emerging market, Pyramid Analytics is not alone in courting opportunities within it. [Peak AI](#), [Tellius](#), [Quantexa](#), [diwo](#) and [Sisu Data](#) are also priming for decision intelligence use cases, albeit with different approaches to Pyramid Analytics' as well as each other's. Its PYRANA engine is a differentiator. Moreover, the vendor's ability to bring traditional business intelligence into the decision intelligence mix also distinguishes its approach from Peak's and Quantexa's. Quantexa's decision intelligence platform is built around the firm's entity resolution and graph analysis smarts, while [Sisu Data's](#) play is based on automatic surfacing of factors that impact business metrics, illustrating that all decision intelligence approaches are different.

Furthermore, we expect other players to join the decision intelligence arena using inroads into ML-driven augmented analytics – one aspect of this discipline, albeit by no means its only one. The likes of Domo, Qlik, Salesforce-owned Tableau, Microsoft (Power BI), Sisense and ThoughtSpot could use this strategy. [SAP Analytics Cloud](#) and Oracle Analytics Cloud could also be repositioned to support decision intelligence, which would provide another layer of competition for Pyramid Analytics.

Finally, data science platforms represent the other group of rivals because Pyramid Analytics is courting expert and nonexpert data scientists that want to deploy its platform for advanced analytics, including data science. AWS, Google and Microsoft – while providing the cloud platforms

on which Pyramid Analytics’ Decision Intelligence Platform runs – are big names in data science, so are partners and competitors too. The likes of SAS Institute, Dataiku, Domino Data, DataRobot, IBM (RedHat) and CognitiveScale are also targeting enterprise-wide data science opportunities, as are other potential rivals.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
Pyramid Analytics has developed a cohesive and comprehensive platform to support decision intelligence, priming it for this new frontier in data-driven decision-making as an early market entrant.	Pyramid Analytics – who? The company struggles with visibility and its market profile belies its years in business.
Opportunities	Threats
Rather than enter decision intelligence on mere buzz alone, Pyramid Analytics cites customers already deploying it for this use case, which validates it, as well as provides a launch pad for further account wins.	The decision intelligence market is likely to heat up this year as more vendors enter it, providing a tougher competitive environment for Pyramid Analytics to navigate in the future.

Source: 451 Research