

# CIO

## APPLICATIONS

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# Solve



The annual listing of 10 companies that are at the forefront of providing business intelligence solutions and transforming businesses



# Turning Data into Actionable Insights

In today's data driven business landscape, having the ability to convert raw data into actionable insights is imperative for success. However, with organizations generating increasing amounts of data, an obvious challenge is enabling them to extract insights and act on them quickly.

Solve, a data analytics consultancy, leverages its deep data analytics and application development expertise to design and develop solutions that enable data-driven decisions.

In an interview with CIO Applications, David Fields, Principal at Solve, sheds light on the company's data analytics capabilities and how they help organizations make data-driven decisions. Fields has extensive experience working closely with clients to identify, scope, and manage engagements that improve outcomes through data analytics and app and custom solutions.

## How did Solve enter the BI landscape?

Before co-founding Solve, I was a Math teacher. I like to joke that "Every teacher has a part time job" – and during that time, I used to provide part-time IT consulting services for small businesses. Eventually, consulting became my full-time job.

The focus of my consulting was in helping my clients manage their data for reporting and analytics. Later, Greg Woodard, my partner, and I launched Solve, with an aim to help organizations turn data into

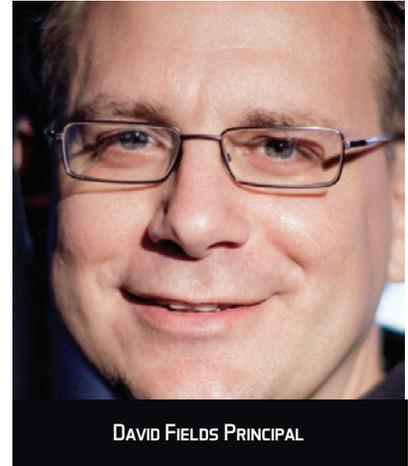
actionable insights. Solve participate in dozens of BI deployments every year and we leverage various technologies to help our clients harness the power of data and translate it into actionable insights.

## What are some of the trends you see in the industry that can have an impact on BI?

When we started Solve, report-driven BI was one of the significant trends. Companies used a variety of solutions containing dozens or even hundreds of reports – often siloed by system and with similar sounding titles. This proliferation of reports became very confusing for both IT organizations and end users.

Although report-centric BI still exists, most organizations are pivoting to modern BI where data is typically deployed and consumed through self-service, data-driven dashboards. This pivot to modern BI also has significant benefits for an organization. In first generation BI, often only senior leaders of the organization had access to BI content. With modern BI, organizations are now empowering their entire team with data analytics.

In addition, companies are leveraging BI in both a tactical and strategic manner to empower their organizations. Not only are the end-user tools are evolving, but also the way data is stored and managed. Companies are replacing on-premise data centers and moving their data to the cloud. This trend is driven by the goal to unify data from many



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disparate systems, some of which are on-premise and others that are cloud based.

Where reporting used to be more siloed by system, modern BI adds more value when it can be placed over a consolidated data store that includes data from multiple systems.

## What are the challenges Solve is trying to address with its solutions?

As companies make data analytics available to more users within their companies, one key challenge is implementing governed self-service. The goal of governed self-service is involving power users within business departments to create analytics. IT has a vital role in providing clean and actionable data. Once IT provides access to data the business needs to be empowered to use that data to create a wide range of analytical content.

Today, the people who manage companies need to be data literate. Data literacy is the ability to read, work with, analyze, and argue with

data. Business users with that skill are then increasingly enabled to make critical business decisions. We are helping enable companies with best practices to implement a governed self-service approach.

A second challenge that organizations face is migrating much of their on-premise infrastructure to the cloud. Solve is assisting many of our clients with migrating their on-premise BI infrastructure to cloud services or just cloud hosting. This process is not just flipping a switch, but is a journey. With today's available solutions, a cloud-based analytics environment can be secure and seamlessly integrated. A common approach is leveraging data tools that replicate data or using Change Data Capture (CDC) platforms to efficiently stream transactions to cloud based data repositories for use in Dashboards and Analytics.

**Solve provides on-going analytics services to our clients and participates in dozens of new implementations every year. We help our clients harness the power of data and translate it into actionable insights**

### **Could you brief us on Solve's capabilities in the BI landscape?**

Solve helps companies with their data analytics journeys. Our key capabilities involve consulting, mentoring, training and on-going support of data analytics solutions. Solve has a history of working with solutions that are in the Gartner Magic Quadrant. For the last several years, that has included Qlik, Power BI and Tableau.

We often work with our clients to analyze, identify and prioritize their analytics needs across their organization. Key needs become use cases that help us make recommendations for the appropriate technologies that would be the best fit for an organization.

### **Could you narrate an instance that highlights the benefits brought to one of your clients after implementing Solve's solutions?**

We had a client approach us to address their data challenges. This client's business focuses on the brand loyalty and consumer recommendation space and involves recommending high-end appliances and infrastructure to potential buyers.

A significant portion of this client's data comes from outside of their organization and contains consumers buying patterns. Our client was trying to use a query-driven legacy approach to analyze the data; which turned out to be cumbersome. The client has since migrated to the AWS platform and is hosting their data in an Amazon Redshift data warehouse. We helped them deploy Qlik Sense Enterprise and integrate an identity provider (aka. SSO solution). Watching how their business departments adopt the technology and embrace data analytics is always very rewarding. The business users have been able to leverage the solution to provide data that helps both our client and their customers.

In another instance, a client of Solve needed to get up and running very quickly with a cloud-based SaaS analytics solution. After working with the client, Solve recommended that they adopt Qlik's SaaS solution. This recommendation was due to its integrated data management capabilities and the ability to deploy rapidly. During the deployment, we assisted with integrating their active directory for security and making their on-premise data available to the SaaS solution. Every workday, several hundred people are accessing analytics in the cloud as though it was just another on-premise solution which has provided a significant savings to the organization.

### **What does the future hold for Solve?**

Solve's future is extending and expanding our services along the data analytics journey of our clients. We are doing this in 2 keywords: data warehousing and analytics managed services.

In relation to data warehousing, the trend is that many organizations have multiple core systems. The need for data analytics across these systems and enabling more self-service data analytics requires more centralized data stores. These data stores are sometimes called data warehouses, data lakes, data marts, but the purpose is the same; to centralize, organize and provide access to validated data.

Solve is expanding our capabilities to assist with the creation of centralized, validated data. While we've always helped with on-premise data warehouses, we have expanded our focus to include cloud-based solutions.

In relation to our analytics managed services, Solve is expanding our focus to long-term support of data analytics environments. Solve believes that a long-term strategy of on-going support, enhancements, monitoring adoption and taking advantage of new software features helps analytics thrive for our clients. Solve is adapting our business so that people can also subscribe to our services, just as they do software. Our goal is to partner with our clients for success. **CA**