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Mastering Information Broadcasting with SAP NetWeaver® BW 7.0

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Information Broadcasting allows SAP NetWeaver® Business Warehouse (BW) content to be available to a wide user audience in many distribution types and output formats. Residing within SAP Business Explorer (BEx), Information Broadcasting enables content to be published within the SAP NetWeaver Portal and distributed to the user community via email or a printer. This chapter provides an overview of SAP's solutions and illustrates the integral role Information Broadcasting plays as a part of the SAP NetWeaver BW environment.

1 Introduction

Welcome to Mastering Information Broadcasting with SAP NetWeaver BW 7.0. As you may know, SAP AG is one of the most dominant global software enterprises in the world. Known for its SAP Business Suite solutions, especially its enterprise resource planning solution, SAP's systems are utilized in midsize and large organizations. SAP has experienced overwhelming software penetration in various industries with its core SAP Business Suite, which includes the following applications:

- SAP ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning)
- SAP CRM (Customer Relationship Management)
- SAP SRM (Supplier Relationship Management)
- SAP PLM (Product Lifecycle Management)
- SAP SCM (Supply Chain Management)

SAP provides an integrated platform called SAP NetWeaver that utilizes various technologies, which consists of the runtime and development environment that is used and configured for SAP and custom applications. The term SAP NetWeaver itself refers to the stack of SAP products supporting the base technology layer on which the SAP Business Suite runs. The SAP NetWeaver products are:

- SAP NetWeaver Application Server (AS)
- SAP NetWeaver Business Warehouse (BW)
- SAP NetWeaver Composition Environment (CE)
The following sections provide a high-level view of the widely implemented SAP NetWeaver BW component. SAP NetWeaver BW is SAP’s business intelligence, reporting, analytics, and data warehousing solution and serves as a repository of both SAP and non-SAP-captured data. The BW architecture has been designed to enable data warehousing functionality, an integrated analytic engine, data modeling features, and a suite of tools that provides frontend reporting on the data extracted into the data warehouse. Information Broadcasting resides within the SAP NetWeaver solution layer and is the set of functionality that allows for integration and distribution of BW content into SAP NetWeaver Portal and beyond, via email and printer delivery.

1.1 SAP NetWeaver Business Warehouse Component Overview

As with any useful data warehouse, SAP NetWeaver BW can gather, integrate, transform, and consolidate the data within business intelligence. This is accomplished via numerous sets of components, including:

- An extraction, transformation, and loading (ETL) services layer
- A storage layer, with services for storing and archiving information
- An analysis and access services layer, which provides access to the information stored in SAP NetWeaver BW
- The SAP Business Explorer (BEx) Suite (a presentation services layer), which offers different options for presenting information to end users, including Information Broadcasting
- Administrator Workbench services
- Metadata services

An overview of these components is presented in Figure 1.1.
As we dive further into SAP NetWeaver BW, we see an area known as the Business Explorer (BEx) Suite. The BEx Suite, as seen in Figure 1.2, contains components that enable reporting and analysis of the data received by the SAP NetWeaver Business Warehouse system. In essence, the central core component of the BEx Suite is the BW query, which is the fundamental object for enterprise query, reporting, and analysis. Queries are leveraged across both the SAP BEx web and analyzer layers, which consist of various tools to handle different format and output types. Information Broadcasting is a key layer of functionality that allows the SAP NetWeaver BW content created from the BEx web and analyzer tools to be distributed to an email or as content for usage via SAP NetWeaver Portal.
Figure 1.2  Business Explorer Suite Components

Functionalities offered by the BEx Suite include the following:

- **BEx Analyzer**
  The term *BEx Analyzer* refers to a functional area and to the tool that provides SAP NetWeaver BW content analysis and reporting integrated with Microsoft® Excel® functionality. The BEx Analyzer is based on BW query objects that are created in the BEx Query Designer.

- **BEx Query Designer**
  The primary tool that allows the definition of BW query objects. It is used to define row and column structures based on InfoObjects (characteristics and key figures) that are established in an SAP NetWeaver BW InfoProvider (InfoCube, DataStore Object (DSO), InfoSet, MultiProvider, or InfoObject). It is also used to create conditions or exceptions based on a query result set. Once a BW query has been developed, it can be used as a stand-alone query, filtered and navigated as a query view, embedded within the Excel context as a workbook, or used as a data provider within a report or a web template design.

- **BEx Web** is the functional area that encompasses all web-based tools for design and presentation of SAP NetWeaver BW content:
Overview of Information Broadcasting

1.3

Overview of Information Broadcasting

Information Broadcasting was initially introduced with SAP's release of SAP NetWeaver BW 3.5, and its primary focus was to automate and assist in the distribution of business warehouse objects to its users. Recently, SAP has increased its capabilities with the release of Information Broadcasting in SAP NetWeaver 7.0.

The general concept of Information Broadcasting is to distribute information or data through several key channels from the SAP NetWeaver 7.0 system. These channels are called distribution types. For example, you can use Information Broadcasting to publish BW content to SAP NetWeaver Portal for use as part of knowledge management. This is done through SAP NetWeaver Portal via the BEx broadcaster, in which an interface allows for distribution of information via an enterprise email system or to the printer.

Information Broadcasting configuration is handled within the SAP NetWeaver BW system and in SAP NetWeaver Portal, which is situated on top of the SAP NetWeaver BW presentation layer (Figure 1.3). This placement of Information Broadcasting functionality allows for a seamless interaction with the various BEx tools.

- **BEx Web Analyzer**
  A stand-alone web application that is called via a URL or as an SAP NetWeaver Portal iView. It is used for ad hoc analysis, and the results can be harnessed as data providers for other BW applications.

- **BEx Web Application Designer**
  A tool that is utilized to develop HTML pages as templates containing business intelligence content such as tables, charts, and maps. The web templates are accessed as web applications via a web browser and/or the SAP NetWeaver Portal.

- **BEx Report Designer**
  A design tool used for the creation of formatted reports tailored for presentation and printing. BEx Report Designer reports are also executed in the BEx web area and present information from data providers.

Information Broadcasting is a feature used within the BEx Suite that can make the SAP NetWeaver BW data available to a wide group of users via various methods. The next section describes Information Broadcasting and its integration between the SAP NetWeaver BW and SAP NetWeaver Portal solutions.
We recommend that you use the SAP Customizing Implementation Guide (IMG) (Transaction SPRO) as a first step toward configuring Information Broadcasting. In the IMG is a section designated specifically for Information Broadcasting, which provides key settings transactions and reference documentation (Figure 1.4).
1.4 Summary

Information Broadcasting is now a critical functionality within SAP NetWeaver Business Warehouse that gives you the ability to produce business intelligence content with a directed target audience. It allows BW object types to be available in a wide range of output formats and distribution types. The following chapters go into detail about the steps you need to perform to establish Information Broadcasting from a system readiness perspective; they also show the various output options and functionalities available regarding the execution of BEx broadcaster for BW content. The next chapter touches on the specifics of utilizing Information Broadcasting within an SAP NetWeaver Portal environment.
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