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First Steps in SAP® Crystal Reports for Business Users

- ▶ Basic End-User Navigation
- ▶ Step-by-Step Business Reporting Scenario
- ▶ Creating a Basic Report from Scratch
- ▶ Analyzing Report Data
- ▶ Formatting to Meet Individual User's Presentation Needs
- ▶ Best Practices for Report Distribution

2 Introduction to Crystal Reports

Crystal Reports is a widely used report-writing tool and has been in existence for more than two decades. It is synonymous with formatted reporting and provides users with an intuitive design interface for simulating the layout of a report. It is an open tool and allows users to connect to multiple databases and data sources. Crystal provides a very powerful library of functions that can be added to the report and also allows you to add custom logic using Crystal's language.

2.1 History of Crystal Reports

Initially marketed by Crystal Services, it first caught the public eye in 1994 after Seagate Technology acquired the technology. During the latter half of the nineties, Seagate branded and sold the product as Crystal Decisions. During this timeframe, Seagate continuously enhanced Crystal Decisions and took it from version 4.0 through 9.0. Crystal Decisions gained widespread global adoption during these years and established itself as a preeminent

report-writing tool. BusinessObjects acquired Crystal Decisions in late 2003 and incorporated it as part of its reporting suite and ultimately as part of the XI suite. In late 2007/early 2008, SAP acquired BusinessObjects and Crystal became an SAP offering.

2.2 Versions of Crystal Reports

Broadly speaking, with the release of BI 4.0, there are two versions of Crystal Reports: the legacy version (i.e. Crystal Reports 2011 and the topic of this book) and the enterprise version (known as Crystal Reports for Enterprise).

Crystal Reports 2011 is a successor to Crystal Reports 2008 with a few new features. Crystal Reports 2008 itself is a continuation of the original Crystal report writing application that has evolved over the years. Therefore, for those of you that have used Crystal Reports 2008 as a power-user or end-user, a lot of the functionality in Crystal Reports 2011 will be familiar. For report developers, this version contains more significant enhancements. Developers that program on the .Net platform will find the version for Visual Studio 2010 richer in custom development capabilities and controls. SAP will support and enhance this version in order to ensure that there is minimal (if any) disruption for existing Crystal customers.

Crystal Reports for Enterprise is the version that SAP built as an enterprise reporting tool closely integrated with NetWeaver BW. The primary audience for this application is SAP users who have been using BW reporting tools (such as the BEx Query Analyzer) for analytical reporting. It allows users' easy data connectivity to SAP BW. The Enterprise XI 4.0 version of Crystal has a revamped

user interface consisting of tabs for each major function, a navigation panel, better design approach, multi-language support, tighter integration with Universes and excellent alert-generation capabilities to name a few of the key enhancements.

These two versions are likely to co-exist for several years even as SAP strives towards a single version. It is important to note that currently both versions of Crystal have features that are unique to each of the versions and without overlaps. However, SAP BI roadmaps indicate that as a result of future iterations, a single Crystal Reports version (if there indeed is one) in the future may look more like the Enterprise version with all of the features that are currently in the 2011 version.

2.3 Why Crystal Reports 2011?

With so many reporting applications available worldwide, why should you use Crystal Reports 2011? Here are just a few of the reasons why enterprises around the world rely on Crystal Reports for their reporting requirements:

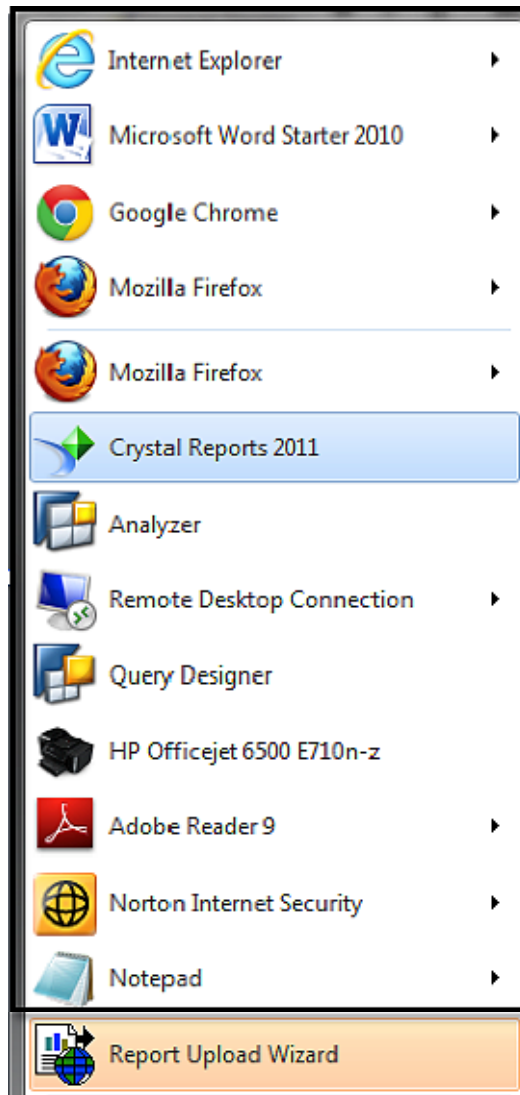
- ▶ It is one of the world's leading reporting writing tools
- ▶ It is the market leader in pixel-perfect formatted reporting
- ▶ It has an intuitive, easy-to-use report designer tool that is also very powerful
- ▶ It provides excellent multi-lingual support

3 User Interface and Basic Navigation

Crystal Reports 2011 has a very friendly user interface with numerous intuitive features. The user interface provides a lot of drag-and-drop functionality and this makes it an enjoyable experience for business users. It also provides you with six toolbars containing a gamut of functions. The user interface is highly customizable and this provides considerable flexibility in how you use it. Let's take a closer look at the user interface.

3.1 Launching Crystal Reports

You can launch Crystal Reports from your machine in a variety of ways. If you are a Windows user, you can either launch Crystal Reports from your Start Menu (as shown in Figure 3.1) or save Crystal Reports as a favorite on your desktop and run it from there.



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Figure 3.1: Launching Crystal Reports 2011 from the start menu

10 Conclusion

Crystal Reports 2011 is a very user-friendly, intuitive, and feature-rich report writing and designing application ideally suited to the business user. It is one of the world's most popular report-writing applications that is likely to become an even more widely used tool with SAP's acquisition of it and the central role it plays in the BusinessObjects BI suite. Although Crystal Reports is generally considered a tool for operational reporting, it can be and is used for analytical reporting.

In this eBook, I have given you an overview of Crystal Reports 2011 and the features that you as a relatively new user of Crystal are most likely to use. I hope you enjoyed reading it as much as I enjoyed writing it.