

Design Tip #125 Balancing Requirements and Realities

By Margy Ross

If you're a long time reader of the Kimball articles, *Design Tips* and books, you know we feel strongly about the importance of understanding the business's data and analytic requirements.

Suffice it to say that we expect more than merely inventorying the existing reports and data files; we encourage you to immerse yourself in the business community to fully appreciate what business people do and why, and what kind of decisions they make today and hope to make in the future. However, as with many things in life, moderation is prudent. You need to temper the business requirements with numerous realities: the available source data realities, the existing architecture realities, the available resource realities, the political landscape and funding realities, and the list goes on.

Balancing the organization's requirements and realities is a never ending exercise for DW/BI practitioners. It takes practice and vigilance to maintain the necessary equilibrium. Some project teams err on the side of becoming overly focused on the technical realities and create over-engineered solutions that fail to deliver what the business needs. At the other end of the spectrum, teams focus exclusively on the business's needs in a vacuum. Taken to an extreme, these requirements-centric teams fail to deliver because what the business wants is unattainable; more often, the result is a silo point solution to address isolated requirements which perpetuates a potentially inconsistent view of the organization's performance results.



Throughout the key design, development and deployment tasks outlined in our Kimball Lifecycle approach, it's a recurring theme to be constantly mindful of this requisite balancing act. You want to keep the pendulum from swinging too far in one direction where you're exposed to significant delivery

and/or business adoption risks.

Most would agree that balance is critical for long-term DW/BI sustainability. However, there's a trump card for this highwire act. If you can't unequivocally declare that your DW/BI deliverable has improved the business's decision-making capabilities, then straddling the requirements and realities is a moot point. Providing an environment that positively impacts the business's ability to make better decisions must be an overarching, non-negotiable target; delivering anything less is a technical exercise in futility for the organization.