

# SAS Enterprise BI Server Answers Complex Questions Throughout APEX

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Review of: [SAS Enterprise BI Server](#) from **SAS Institute Inc**

## SAS Enterprise BI Server

**REVIEWER:** Jody Porrazzo, Ph.D., director of econometric risk strategy for APEX Management Group.

**BACKGROUND:** APEX Management Group, a division of Gallagher Benefits Services Inc., is a leading healthcare, insurance services and actuarial consultancy, primarily serving reinsurers, health plans and employer groups. Customers include organizations in the accident, health, property and casualty insurance industries; employers; governmental entities; and other risk assumption vehicles.

**PLATFORMS:** The solution runs in a 64-bit Microsoft Windows 2003 Enterprise Server environment on a Hewlett-Packard rx5670 with a 1.30 GHz Intel Itanium 2 processor, 64GB memory 36GB Ultra 320 SCSI 15,000 RPM hard drive.

**PROBLEM SOLVED:** APEX's success depends on fast, easy access to information for reporting and analysis. With it, APEX analysts can design rich healthcare plans that focus on patient outcomes and patient needs. They use SAS Enterprise BI Server to gain a deep understanding of the ramifications of any potential change in healthcare systems and to access to a wide variety of accurate methods for forecasting the effects of plan modifications.

**PRODUCT FUNCTIONALITY:** Our new BI solution from SAS employs advanced forecasting capabilities, puts knowledge in the hands of business users and moves daily actuarial calculations beyond the realm of basic pivot tables and trends. As a result, our reports are richer and more accurate than ever. While other analytic packages ignore the fluctuations in data caused by seasonality, SAS allows business users to dig into those patterns and gain a true understanding of the data. Everyone in our organization has access to information at their fingertips. With very little training, users can query the data, develop insights and get to the heart of the problems they research much more quickly than ever before. Sophisticated analyses can be performed in a fraction of the time. Tasks that used to take weeks - collecting data, cleansing data, generating insights and presenting the results - now only take a day or two. Additionally, the solution automatically documents the data flow every step of the way.

**STRENGTHS:** With SAS, we can transform historical data into accurate forecasts. That move from hindsight to insight is the most important benefit that SAS provides. It allows us to make better decisions - and that ability is powerful.

**WEAKNESSES:** We've encountered some inconsistencies between the SAS graphical user interface and Windows. Also, there have been some instances when we've customized user options, only to have them return to previous settings.

**SELECTION CRITERIA:** As a SAS user for more than 20 years, I'm convinced SAS has the strongest analytic package available. We investigated six platforms, including Business Objects, Information Builders and Cognos, before selecting SAS. No other vendor offered cutting-edge analytics and easy-to-use BI reporting in a single, integrated platform. Now, we have an integrated platform with the power of SAS behind it so that we can reach many different audiences within our organization.

**DELIVERABLES:** Our actuaries use SAS' auto regression models to run true forecasting of time series data. Before, they were somewhat overwhelmed by the overabundance of Microsoft Access tables that had numerous joins. Now, they're performing process flows and forecasts, modeling data and sharing their results throughout the organization. With SAS Enterprise BI Server, actuaries can share the results of correlations, regressions, forecasts and GARCH models. Most importantly, the product offers many ways to share and present results easily - either online, via e-mail or through a favorite Microsoft Office application. As a result, more and more people are acting on critical business information.

**VENDOR SUPPORT:** The best part of working with SAS is just that - working with SAS. BI deployment is hard work. You need to know and trust that your vendor will stand by you through thick and thin, and we found that to be the case with SAS.

**DOCUMENTATION:** The online documentation is quite thorough. However, the installation documentation is only available via hard copy and is not as easy to navigate. It could be simplified with the addition of simple cues such as "start here" as well as better labels such as Book 1, 2, 3, etc.