



# Dispelling the Myths of IBM i Data Access

Ironically, many IBM Power Systems™ users are sitting on top of a “gold mine” of data that they could use to make their lives easier, their jobs more productive, and their companies more profitable—if they only knew how to harvest it. Yet, they don’t have the first idea about how to do that. They might even be considered “power users” on their computer systems and not know how to transform the data stored in their databases into a meaningful and useful format. A format that they and others can use for analysis, troubleshooting, reporting, forecasting, and other business needs.

This concept of meaningfully accessing data in a format that is usable for each type of user is often referred to as Business Intelligence, or BI. When done correctly, BI can be a powerful force in an organization. Unfortunately, that’s not often the case. Part of the problem is the many myths surrounding BI and its basic concepts. Take a look at five of these myths.

## **Myth 1: Data Access Has To Be Complex and Expensive**

BI has many concepts, such as data warehouses, metadata, data cubes, extraction, mining, and data access, that often are not well understood. Users often are confused about what they really need to do to harvest the data from their own databases, quickly, efficiently, and inexpensively. For example, according to Wikipedia, a data warehouse is “...a repository of an organization’s electronically stored data to facilitate reporting and analysis...the means to retrieve, analyze, extract, transform, and load data...including business intelligence tools to load, extract, transform, manage, and retrieve data.” But, to many people, the term data warehouse is just a buzzword, something they vaguely understand as a requirement for BI. The reality is that a truly user-friendly data access solution doesn’t require learning a thesaurus of new terms or data concepts—you should be able to use it immediately without a lot of complex setup and training.

The expense myth got started because when you talk about BI, many people think only of a full-blown, enterprise-wide solution. And, that can mean big costs. Power Systems customers are used to reliable, consistent, secure, and fast technology. But, most traditional BI solutions run on a different platform, which presents multiple management challenges to implement and maintain—new staff, new vendors, and new operational and training requirements. Yet, many times, these expensive and complex BI “solutions” completely miss the point of delivering data quickly to the end user in the format they want, making the real costs of extra time, labor, expense, and complexity, overwhelming.



## Myth 2: You Don't Need To Plan

Too many people rush into a BI implementation without thinking it through and then are frustrated when their implementation doesn't meet their needs. Ideally, you want to take a phased approach and to understand each step. That includes taking the time up front to think about your needs and ask the important questions—*What type of information do we need? How often do we need it? How valuable is this information to the company? What will our future data needs be?*

Early planning also can mean enlisting the help of your IT department, working with them to clarify their degree of involvement in the project—before, during, and after. Whether it's coaching, mentoring, help desk support, or something else, it's important to be certain that everyone is “on the same page.” And, with their cooperation and support, any BI implementation will go more smoothly.

## Myth 3: All Users Are The Same

This is a critical area that bogs down many implementations. If your company is like many, you have a wide range of users, everyone from very non-technical high-level executives who just want to see critical analytics at a desktop dashboard, to hardcore power users who enjoy writing detailed queries to harvest specific information. Everyone's needs and abilities are different, so you must determine who your primary audiences are and how each audience intends to use your new tools.

And, if training is an issue, remember to train the right people for the right job—don't just “fill seats.” Done right, it's a win-win: you end up with a core group of trained users to help everyone gather the information they need and to maximize your investment in the product. Obviously, this includes getting the buy-in of each business area to train the right people in the ways they'll be using the product by asking questions, such as: *Which users will use the tool? What do they intend to do with it? How many are non-technical and how many are “power users?”*

## Myth 4: Your Business Needs Will Take Care Of Themselves

This is the probably the most critical and least understood point, because many people assume that once they select a tool, their business needs will take care of themselves. As a result, they implement a “solution” that doesn't really fit their business model and are surprised and discouraged when it doesn't deliver as promised. The moral is to look for tools that meet your business needs—and to do that you need to understand your needs. You need to think about them ahead of time and answer questions like, *How quickly and how often do we need information?* and *How secure must it be?* When you can answer these questions with a reasonable amount of confidence, you are on your way to understanding the type of data access solution that will work well for you.



## Myth 5: Power Systems and Data Access Don't Go Together Well

As a result of the frustrations and difficulties many users experience trying to implement complex BI solutions, they often feel that it's just not easy to access data from Power Systems servers. Nothing could be further from the truth. A data access solution built around the Power platform is a powerful alternative to a traditional BI solution. First, the information is waiting to be extracted directly from your transaction database without needing data warehouse files or extra hardware. With the right tool, within minutes you can create an inquiry and perform drill-down analysis of a transaction database containing millions of records. There's no need to define "drill paths," create multi-dimension databases, or perform complicated setup. Users can quickly view data at a summary level and then drill down into the details.

Second, if you need to modify any results, you can make changes in minutes. A tool written specifically for IBM i and using the newest APIs plus IBM's enhanced SQL query processor can retrieve database information quickly and efficiently. So, instead of investing in more staff and training, try using a solution for accessing the database where the data lives—on your Power Systems servers.

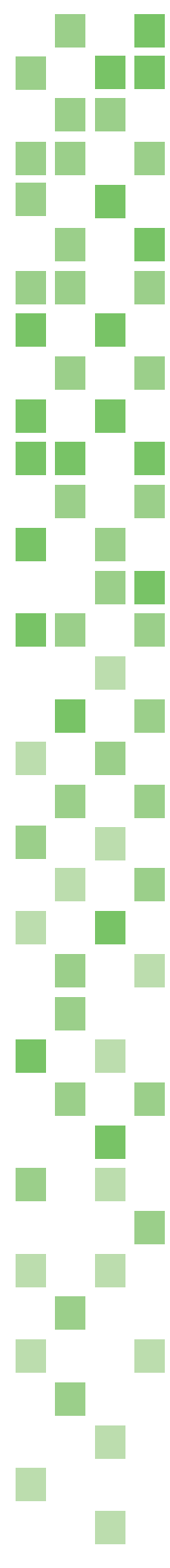
## The Truth: There Is A Simple, Fast, Easy Data Access Solution

SEQUEL ViewPoint® is the solution you can use to access data quickly from your DB2 database, and other databases across your enterprise. With SEQUEL, you can create desktop dashboards and pivot tables faster and more easily than with any other approach. When you leave your data on the Power Systems server and access it in real time, the benefits are enormous, including no delays waiting to synchronize databases and no concerns from end users about the validity of the data.

Does this sound too good to be true? It's not. With Power Systems-based tools like SEQUEL, you avoid the time-consuming and costly process of defining a new universe of data. Using IBM's enhanced query processor, you can run requests directly over transaction files and eliminate the need to create separate systems to manage. And, if database files are extremely large, you can refine access paths, indexes, and JOIN relationships to fine-tune and improve performance. When, or if, you need summary files, it's easy to create them directly on the current system.

If you have old queries you still want to use, it's easy to convert them with SEQUEL. SEQUEL reads the existing query definitions and converts them to SEQUEL objects. In minutes, your old Query/400 object can be displayed on a multi-panel dashboard, or as a summary table, ready for management to drill into dynamically against live data.

Because it's native to the IBM i server, SEQUEL can access host file definitions and descriptions directly, unlike the ODBC connections used by more generic solutions. That means that all field definitions, file layouts, and relationships are available within seconds. There's no need to hire an army of analysts to redefine your database on another platform.



What about reporting on the critical data sources in your network? If you have other databases in your enterprise, like SQL Server, My SQL, or Oracle, SEQUEL and your system can connect and access the data. You can create executive dashboards or key performance indicators that contain data from any, or all, of your data sources. Your IBM i server becomes a single point of access to all the data in your enterprise—the entrance to the gold mine.

## SEQUEL Delivers

With SEQUEL you can quickly design a powerful, cost-effective, and flexible data access solution, without a time-consuming development project requiring new staff and hardware. Everyone at your site—executives, managers, power users, and others—gets fast, easy access to the information they need to make informed business decisions. And, you can store your data on the same system you use to run your business while you use SEQUEL to access, analyze, display, and report on it. So, when you think of true Business Intelligence—meaningful access to data in a format that is usable for each type of user—think of SEQUEL. Whether you're accessing DB2 data, or data from the other databases across your enterprise, SEQUEL delivers.

Visit [www.sequel-software.com](http://www.sequel-software.com)  
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