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Dashboards as Easy To Use as Amazon

Sponsored by **QlikView**

Contents

The Business Intelligence Usability Crisis	1
<hr/>	
Why Is Amazon So Useful?	1
<hr/>	
Why Do We Need a More Amazon-like BI Experience?	3
<hr/>	
How Is QlikView Like Amazon?	4
<hr/>	
How QlikView Differs from Amazon	6
<hr/>	
Conclusion	6
<hr/>	



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The Business Intelligence Usability Crisis

How many people use Business Intelligence (BI) tools? Fewer than 3 in 10. Why is that? Is it because 70% of people in companies wouldn't do their jobs better using data and analytics to support decision-making? Or is it because the systems provided to them are complex, hard to use, and don't provide value?

QlikView user-driven BI is striking a blow for clarity and usability for systems used to explore data. QlikView is a rare example of BI technology that people like to use. (Some go as far as to say that QlikView makes working with data *joyful*.) But for companies to benefit from QlikView or any other technology, it is important to constantly search for what makes software easy to use, intuitive, and appealing. In this paper, CITO Research examines one of the most popular and usable services in the world, Amazon. What can we learn from Amazon that will help more people get more from BI?

This CITO Research paper explores what BI tools can learn from Amazon to provide a more useful, and more valuable, experience.

Why Is Amazon So Useful?

Now 18 years old, Amazon has weathered many business and Internet storms, partly because it never rests on its laurels. Driven to find new markets and revenues, the company has morphed from an online retailer to a consumer electronics maker (the Kindle) and a major provider of cloud computing services.

At its heart though, Amazon is the ultimate purchasing engine. Final checkout is just one of Amazon's strengths. It's the elegant sum of its parts—searching, finding, evaluating, comparing, reviewing, sharing and buying—that sets it far apart from other online retailers. How far apart? In 2012, Amazon's total sales of \$61.09 billion accounted for 66.7% of all web-only merchant sales in Internet Retailer's Top 500.





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The Amazon Experience

In a nutshell, Amazon is easy. The experience is streamlined and designed to meet users' wants and needs. Clearly written text and intuitively designed graphics, fast page loading, a search engine that finds everything, and an easy to use interface are hallmarks of the Amazon shopping experience.

What sets Amazon apart from other online experiences is how it personalizes a user's shopping experience—suggesting items a user didn't think of or want but might need or find valuable. In this way, Amazon leads users to new discoveries.

For example, type in "air purifier" and you'll get thousands of product descriptions. Click on the purifier you're interested in and you'll be directed to a "Frequently Bought With..." section with related products like carbon filters and a "Customers who Bought... Also Bought" section.

Customer reviews add another layer of potential interaction. Good or bad reviews lead to different brands and different models, letting users explore different products based on their interests. Amazon's design invites exploration.

All of this is a testament to Amazon's associative capabilities. The company promotes discovery by taking users down multiple paths of purchasing. Adding to its associative nature, Amazon is universal, offering products and services to people in North America, Asia, Europe, and South America.

The Amazon experience is defined by these characteristics:

- Multiple paths in purchase process
- Seamless personalization of the buying experience
- Intuitive and easy to use, yet very powerful in terms of recommendations and driving more purchases





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Why Do We Need a More Amazon-like BI Experience?

The virtues of Amazon's user experience are in stark contrast with BI. Finding information and searching for answers within BI is not nearly as easy as it is on Amazon.

Instead of intuitive simplicity, the BI experience has been cumbersome, complex, time consuming and must be integrated with more complicated tools to be effective.

BI requires extensive training for users, and experience using one tool doesn't transfer to another. Most BI infrastructure has computed answers to narrowly predefined questions from a set of dimensional data. The answers were not based on users' emerging interests but responses to a predetermined set of queries.

The BI Equivalent of Amazon: The Dashboard

Dashboards are designed to provide answers specific to an end user's needs. But dashboards have significant limitations. They tell users *what*—answers to some predefined questions or preordered metrics—but they don't help them discover *why* the dashboard says what it does or invite further exploration such as comparison and contrast with historical data or with *what-if scenarios*.

Most BI dashboards lack the intuitive, dynamic, and easy to use experience Amazon offers, *except for one: QlikView user-driven BI*. QlikView takes BI discovery to an Amazon-like level, offering an associative, intuitive nonlinear experience. Its in-memory associative search, which allows users to pull answers toward them rather than accept what IT pushes at them, enables living dashboards—applications that can help identify leading indicators and allow users to share them throughout the organization.

Living dashboards such as QlikView's let business users:

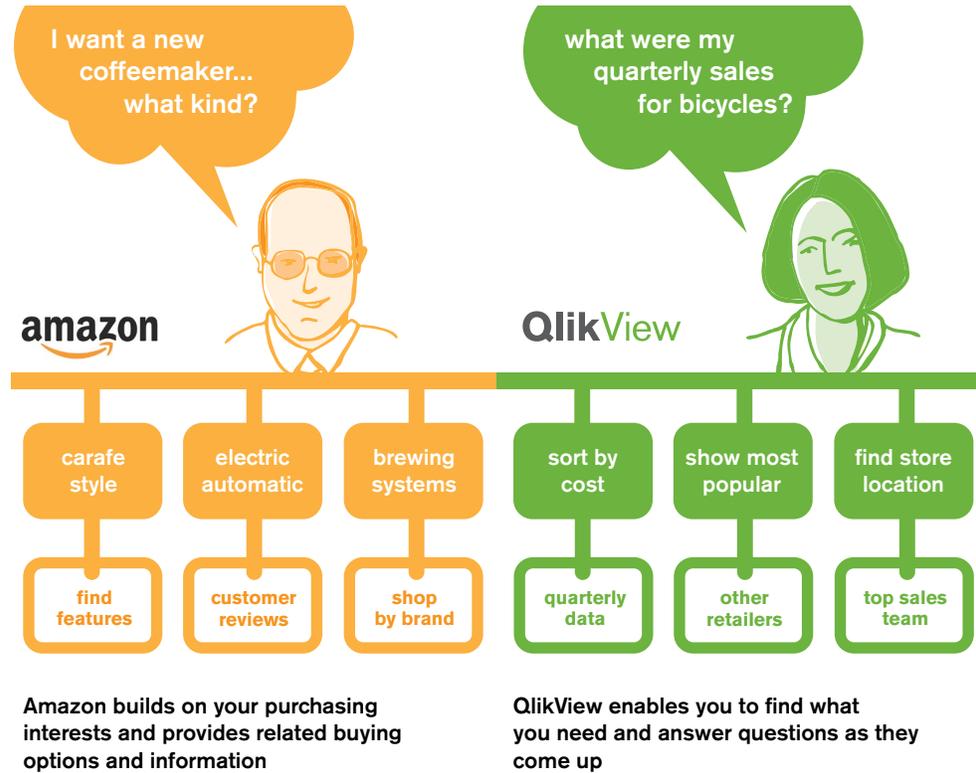
- Ask and answer questions themselves, without complicated queries or IT middlemen
- Add new data sources at will, in any combination required for the task at hand
- Get answers quickly, almost instantly. No more waiting for reports to run
- Change the dashboard themselves on the fly without the help of IT
- Share their dashboard with others to create meaningful data dialogs

There are other similarities when comparing QlikView user-driven BI with Amazon.





How Is QlikView Like Amazon?



Amazon	QlikView
Diving In For Detail	
You can click on any search result to get more detail	You can dive deeper into dashboard charts and tweak them to get a different view
Personalized Without Effort – It Just Happens	
Personalized recommendations based on customer preferences via big data	Associative suggestions based on what you are looking at; you also see what didn't match your query, leading you to ask questions such as why these sales regions and not those are in the top 5





Amazon	QlikView
<i>Saving to Wishlists and Bookmarking</i>	
Ability to save products to wishlists	Ability to bookmark in context
<i>Sharing and Recommending</i>	
Make recommendations and post to social media	Send bookmarks to others and brainstorm together in realtime collaborative sessions
<i>Seamless Security</i>	
Multifactor ID when you ship to a new address	Fine grained access control ensures users see only the data they are authorized to see
<i>Intuitive Design Enables Serendipity</i>	
You now buy everything using a different pattern and are open to suggestions	Associated search reveals correlations you might have anticipated as well as unexpected insights
<i>Simplicity and Ease of Use</i>	
Chock full of products and information, but intuitive—it's easy to get from product search to purchase	Simple and intuitive, inviting exploration into unimagined variations on the data you're looking at





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How QlikView Differs from Amazon

QlikView user-driven BI has unique features tailored for the business world. Amazon is tailored for consumers. Here are some distinguishing features in QlikView.



Social Business Discovery enables business users to collaborate on discoveries. They can ask and answer their own stream of relevant business questions in formal or informal groups, in real time as well as asynchronously.



Collaborative sessions let users jointly interact with a QlikView document in real time – sharing selections and testing scenarios together to better uncover insights and solve problems.



Annotations let users create notes associated with any QlikView object. Other users can add their own commentary to create a threaded discussion. Users can capture snapshots of their selections to include in the discussion.



Comparative analysis allows users to compare and interact with multiple views or selection states of the data, making it easier to spot trends, outliers, or differences as well as to gain new insights into patterns of use, opportunities and threats, and relative performance.

Conclusion

The comparison of QlikView to Amazon isn't just about technology and process. QlikView's style of thinking and working is similar to the Amazon style of searching and buying. Just as people find themselves saying, "I wonder if Amazon has..." any number of times a day, so businesspeople find that QlikView makes analytics an extension of both their natural thought processes *and* their business processes. They find themselves thinking about a business problem, then turning to QlikView to find answers, and in the process discovering answers to questions they hadn't even thought of yet.





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Amazon's model has always been imitated, but its success never duplicated. According to Statista, in Q1 2013, Amazon averaged 164 million monthly unique visitors, compared with No. 2 site eBay (92 million) and Wal-Mart (57 million). The same applies to QlikView. Competitors are unable to match its interactive visual BI that is user friendly to all, not only the tech elite.

For those millions who visit Amazon every month, shopping is not a chore anymore. CITO Research believes a similar phenomenon occurs for people who use QlikView user-driven BI: business intelligence gets a whole lot easier as users say to themselves, "I wonder..." and start their explorations afresh.

It's easy to see that Amazon has transformed retail. What transformations are in store at your company when 10 out of 10 users can make data discovery an integral part of their workday?

This paper was created by CITO Research and sponsored by QlikView.

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