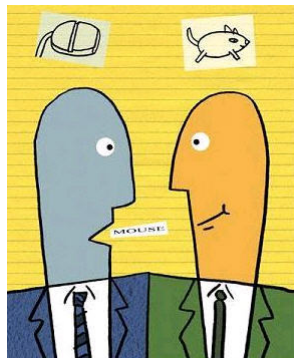


## On why performance management and data dictionary go hand in hand

Performance management and business intelligence is about data and reporting on data. That is true, no matter what. Data or reports however are not the end product, they are just means to serve a higher purpose: better performance. There are quite a lot of steps between the reports that your business intelligence environment produces and the actual actions you decide to take in order to achieve your results. One of these steps is communication, based on those reports. Communication however remains tricky, it always involves interpretation which makes it sometimes hard to understand each other.



We believe that business intelligence can act as a catalyst in finding a common language between departments which could avoid misunderstandings, inefficiencies and frustrations. When implementing a data warehouse or constructing reports, commonly used concepts as revenue, customer, clients, etc are used and shown on reports. However, depending on the department, people can have a different view on those concepts. Having a performance management culture can help you in creating your own single version of the truth, discussing these concepts, getting a unified way of thinking. Capturing this one single version of the truth can be done in what we call a data dictionary.

A data dictionary or business vocabulary can be described an enterprise vocabulary of business terms which facilitates in correctly understanding your metadata. You could find the following information in a data dictionary:

- Definition of attributes, measures, fields in business terms
- Allowable values of attributes
- Business rules used in the transformation of data

Having a data dictionary, whether it is a home-made MS Excel file or [IBM Business Glossary](#), will help you in getting the maximum out of your data warehouse. Not only will it increase the reliability of your data, it will also improve the consistency and hence the comparability of your figures. And of course, it will make communication, internal as well as external, much more comfortable.

In conclusion, we dare to say that two phases are needed when it comes to business vocabulary and performance management. First of all, it is a way of thinking: realizing that you need to communicate across business units, communicate between IT and business, that one depends on one another and we all serve the same goal. You really need this phase, this mindset, in order to be able to benefit from the next phase: implementing data dictionaries, using software to facilitate this common language, to help to achieve the Walhalla of information management: one single version of the truth – and better performance of course.

*October 2010*

*written by Nico Huybrechts with contributions from Joren Melis*