



Pradeep Rupakula

Business Intelligence Consultant at Yellow Brick Road

Seeing Is Believing: How YBR Picked the Right Platform and Added Value to Their Business

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Moving from one business intelligence (BI) platform to another is a massive undertaking. It can require considerable shifts to data collection and storage—let alone the human side of change management. Sticking with an ill-suited setup can be disastrous, but if done correctly, finding the right BI foundation can transform your business.

At Yellow Brick Road, we wanted to become a better BI operation by replacing our existing tool with one of the leading and cost effective in the market. This is the story of our transformation, which began by selecting a new tool.

Created in 2007 and founded by Mark Bouris, [Yellow Brick Road](#) (YBR) began as a finance company offering planning, advice, wealth management, and home loans. More recently, we rebranded to focus almost entirely on home loans. Today, we operate as a national network of community-level financial services branches. YBR's vision is to provide all Australians with financial solutions from a local perspective. We have more than \$50 billion in loans on our books and operate through 73 YBR franchises and a strong network of 1,300 brokers and growing, offered through the Vow Financial platform.

Beginning Our BI Journey

I started with YBR as a consultant in July 2017 as part of their first steps into BI. Like most companies, we began our data analysis operation hunkered down in Excel documents, trying to create reports. Good decision making requires quick data delivery, but we had a massive problem with delays. Our sales teams need information to help them make decisions regarding sales targets and strategies. But we didn't have insights into loans until we received the commission statements from the banks—a delay of around eight weeks from the time of the actual sale.

The delayed insights were always a challenge in making informed decisions to improve the sales KPIs, and the stacks of Excel sheets received from the lenders in different formats didn't help with a timely and meaningful presentation.

The first steps in improving this tedious process and to provide actionable insights were to gather data from the sales CRM as opposed to the funder statements. This began with an agreement with the platform vendor to supply activity data on a daily basis through a secured channel. This was a major step undertaken as part of the process improvement of data analytics, and as a result, we are able to carve out the data delay and report the key performance metrics on a timely basis. The next hurdle was to choose an economical and client-friendly reporting tool.

Reaching the Limits of Our Starter Tool

Just before I was hired, YBR implemented an emerging reporting software. They were aware of other enterprise-level BI tools, but for some reason, had assumed they would be too expensive. Since it was a developing tool, there weren't many online support communities to give me a head start in the initial phases of development.

However, it was a step up from Excel and a step in the right direction. We could now gather our data in one place. But not having local technical support and the tool's exorbitant pricing made us lean towards a more established tool with a local presence. So, the quest for the new tool began with the top three players in the market and finally narrowing it down to Qlik.

We needed an enterprise-level tool to help us become a data-driven agency, and I believed Qlik Sense was that solution. I had some knowledge of the platform, however, the support platforms were enormous, and I also personally knew analysts who were well versed with Qlik Sense. On a personal level, I also believed that more experience with Qlik would be beneficial to my career since the platform is used by major financial and government organizations in Australia.

Although I thought Qlik would be the perfect choice for us, we put significant effort into exploring other tools. We went through demos and pricing to ensure the platform we chose would be the best solution for our future. Along the way, we learned that we had vastly overestimated the true cost of Qlik. It was more affordable than we'd expected and would save us a considerable sum compared to our previous software.

Working with a local partner means that problems get solved in a snap instead of next-day support.

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Another thing that won us over was the relationship with Qlik partner EMARK Analytics and special credit to Kristina who has supported us since the beginning of the journey. It was also great to have locally-based assistance.

Kristina initially recommended a cloud-based approach to Qlik Sense, but we decided to keep everything on premises and moved forward with that approach. However, we've seen the global trend continue to shift towards cloud everywhere and we are now considering the SaaS solution for our renewal. We have an advantage here, as the on-prem version is compatible with SaaS so we can re-use everything we've built so far..

Finding the New Road to Data Intelligence

After deciding to move to a new platform, there is always some apprehension about whether the choice was a good idea. In many cases, the migration process is the best indication of how the product will work going forward.

However, due to the vast support network and Qlik learning modules, I was able to complete the migration in six weeks. As an analyst, I almost immediately noticed a few benefits with Qlik.

Qlik Sense uses sheets to structure their apps as opposed to cluttering everything in one sheet. Instead, it lets you spread information across multiple sheets. With other BI software, it's often necessary to scroll through the document to see everything, which makes it easy to unintentionally skip data. It turns out to be a good strategy for better user adoption and Qlik's easy navigation supports this approach.

Filtering is another standout feature of Qlik Sense since it greys out non-relevant sections for users. That is a great way to make sure that the user only sees the appropriate information and also saves time and increases accuracy.

The Human Side of a Migration

But of course, changing the tool is just one part of a migration. We also had to get people on board, and as expected, there was some pushback. Here, we took a bold approach, and the management was instrumental in making this happen by decommissioning some of the work done on spreadsheets.

We still had staff who were committed to using Excel. For a better Qlik adoption, we brought an end to ad-hoc data requests that were readily available in Qlik. For users who wanted an Excel document, they had to log onto Qlik Sense and export the data into Excel themselves. These efforts significantly reduced the hours spent manually extracting the data from our SQL database for ad-hoc reports requests. Instead, the report requests were slowly integrated into Qlik Sense, so users didn't have to wait days to get their ad-hoc reports. This strategy forced users into Qlik Sense, and once they were in there, they began to love it. It was a win-win for everyone.

The ultimate test of our new Qlik operation was COVID-19. Going into the pandemic, we expected the housing market to slow, but the opposite happened. The Australian market exploded, and we needed fast, accurate data to make intelligent decisions. Thankfully, we had the tools to enable that. Regardless of whether people are in the office or working remotely, they can use Qlik Sense anytime, anywhere, on any device, and on the go. As a result, several of our executives now use Qlik Sense several times a day with our CFO being one of the super users.

Transformation Begins with a Single Step

The future can only bring more reliance on modern data analytics that are self-service and easy to use. With flexible data analytics, users can access relevant and up-to-date data anytime and anywhere, base their decisions on that data, and improve the data-driven culture of an organization. I hope that the success of the sales and financial units will lead to an enterprise-

wide data operation based on a single source of truth. Departments like compliance, payroll, legal, and human resources deal with complicated data requirements but can still benefit from data analysis.

The road to transforming your approach to BI might be bumpy, but it's worth the trek. To make sure the journey is secure, comfortable, and efficient, you need the right vehicle. It can empower your employees—and your entire company. I'm confident that Qlik Sense is the stable, robust vehicle that Yellow Brick Road needs to build a better, more data-driven culture.

About Qlik

Qlik's vision is a data-literate world, where everyone can use data and analytics to improve decision-making and solve their most challenging problems. Qlik provides an end-to-end, real-time data integration and analytics cloud platform to close the gaps between data, insights and action. By transforming data into active intelligence, businesses can drive better decisions, improve revenue and profitability, and optimize customer relationships. Qlik does business in more than 100 countries and serves over 50,000 customers around the world. [Qlik.com](https://www.qlik.com)

About EMARK

EMARK's drive and passion for data-driven solutions as well as long and warm relationship with Qlik resulted in being officially named a Qlik Select Solution Provider in Australia and a Qlik Master Reseller in Slovakia, Czechia, and Hungary. EMARK's team of more than 50 specialists loves to address every data challenge because they believe in data helping to drive better decisions. [Emarkanalytics.com.au](https://www.emarkanalytics.com.au)