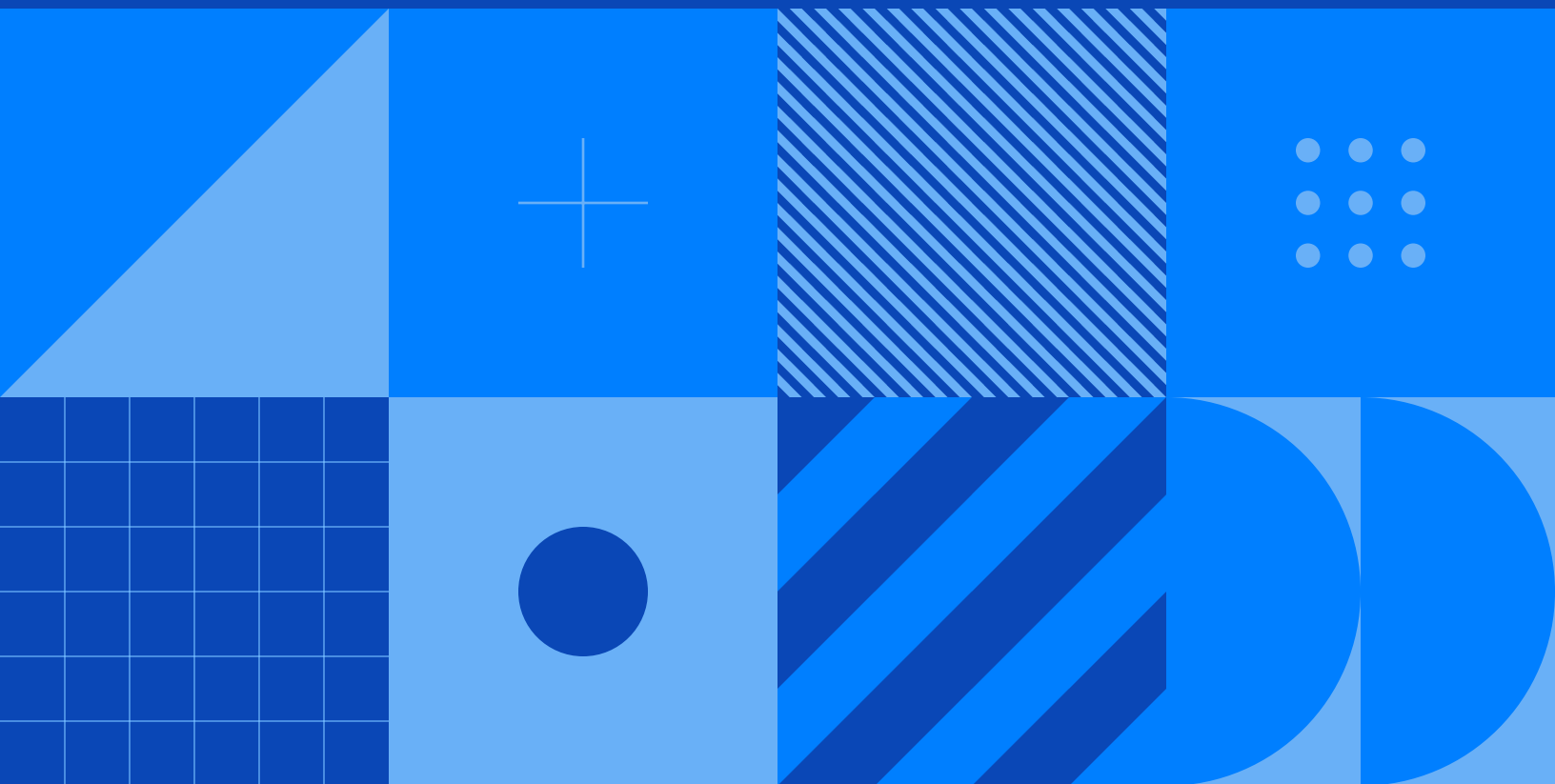


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# Eight Criteria for Choosing the Perfect BI Tool

Make sure it can meet your current requirements and evolve as your needs change.



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# Top Tools Have Different Strengths

At Fivetran, we believe that a business intelligence (BI) platform is an essential component of any modern data stack, and a key driver of data democratization.

Fortunately, there are a lot of top-tier offerings in the market, including:

- Looker
- Sisense
- Microstrategy
- Tableau
- Sigma Computing
- Chartio
- Power BI
- Qlik
- Mode Analytics

So the right BI system for your organization is almost certainly out there, whatever your requirements. Unfortunately, BI tools vary widely in terms of feature sets, capabilities and price, so the choice can be tricky. Applying the eight criteria we discuss here will help you efficiently evaluate your options.

## Criterion #1: Integration With Cloud Data Warehouses

Modern cloud data warehousing has become elastic, fast and cheap, and surveys show that businesses will continue to increase SaaS use for the foreseeable future.

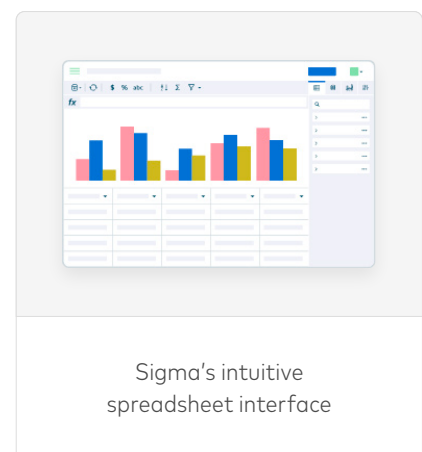
That's why you'll want a cloud-based BI tool that seamlessly connects to major cloud data warehouses. Fortunately, many do. For example, Tableau enables direct connection to 14 warehouses; Mode supports 20; and Sigma supports multiple warehouses.

## Criterion #2: Ease of Use and Interface

BI tools are increasingly focused on ease of use and self-service analytics. For many, the objective is to provide a single source of truth for every key decision-maker, and, ideally, allow non-technical users to explore the data themselves.

Here are a few examples:

- Sigma offers an intuitive spreadsheet interface similar to those of Excel and Sheets
- Tableau offers interactive dashboards and allows users to create visualizations through drag-and-drop functionality
- Power BI enables ad-hoc exploration of data from several sources and is helpful for dealing requirements

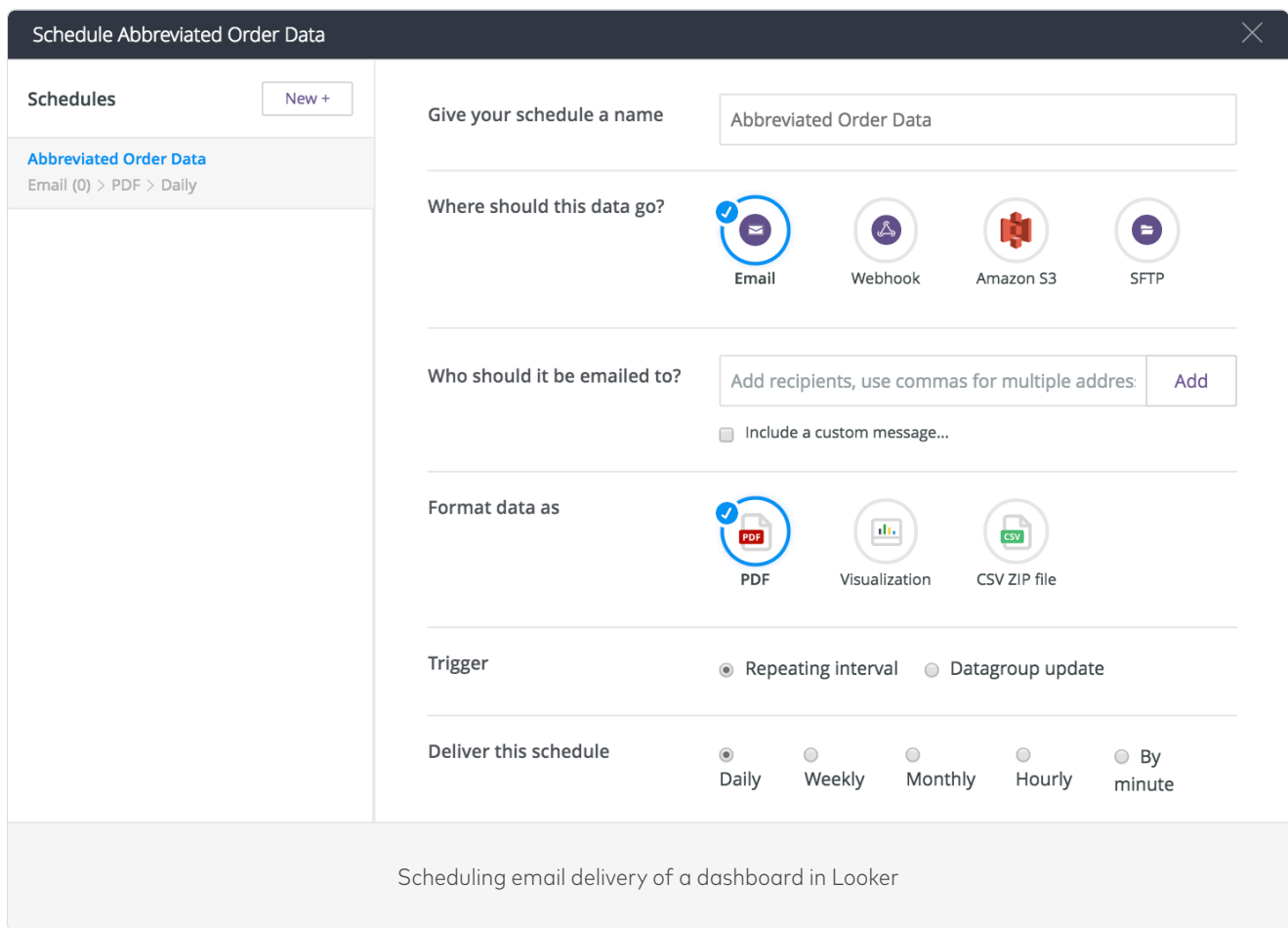


### Criterion #3: Automated Reporting and Notifications

Automated reporting can improve efficiency across your entire business Reports can be generated automatically; one-button refresh makes it easy to view results within a dashboard; and data sharing becomes far easier.

#### Here's a quick sample of offerings:

- PowerBI enables scheduled email delivery of report snapshots and dashboards
- Mode allows snapshots to be regularly sent to a team Slack channel or individual
- Looker enables scheduled email delivery of dashboards, visualizations and data sets



### Criterion #4: Ability to Import and Export Data

For certain use cases, analysts may want to export data into CSV files to make and share quick, ad-hoc calculations. Scratchwork doesn't necessarily need to be saved long-term, but it should still be portable. Importing data files into your BI tool may be useful as well. Adding temporary data to a project can open up opportunities to explore and test out ideas, without the commitment of storing it.

## Criterion #5: Speed, Performance and Responsiveness

The speed, performance and responsiveness of your BI tool impacts speed to insight. Querying data through caching can improve all three.

Here are a few examples:

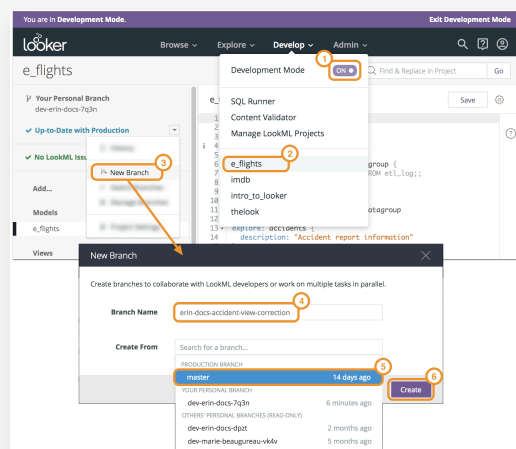
- Qlik stores selection states of queries and associated results in memory, enabling querying from the cache.
- Sisense performs calculations inside the CPU, so it doesn't have to copy data from RAM to CPU.
- Looker employs persistent derived tables (PDTs), which can shorten query time by pre-aggregating row-level data and creating fact tables up front.

## Criterion #6: Modeling Layer With Version Control and Development Mode

As analytics teams grow, collaboration gets more complex. Version control and development modes in the modeling layer support collaboration at scale.

Fortunately, BI tools commonly offer these capabilities:

- Looker offers Git integration, enabling users to save LookML projects, each containing multiple dashboards or views, to GitHub.
- Mode allows users to connect to a GitHub repository and create a two-way sync.
- Periscope Data also offers bi-directional syncing for any Git repository.



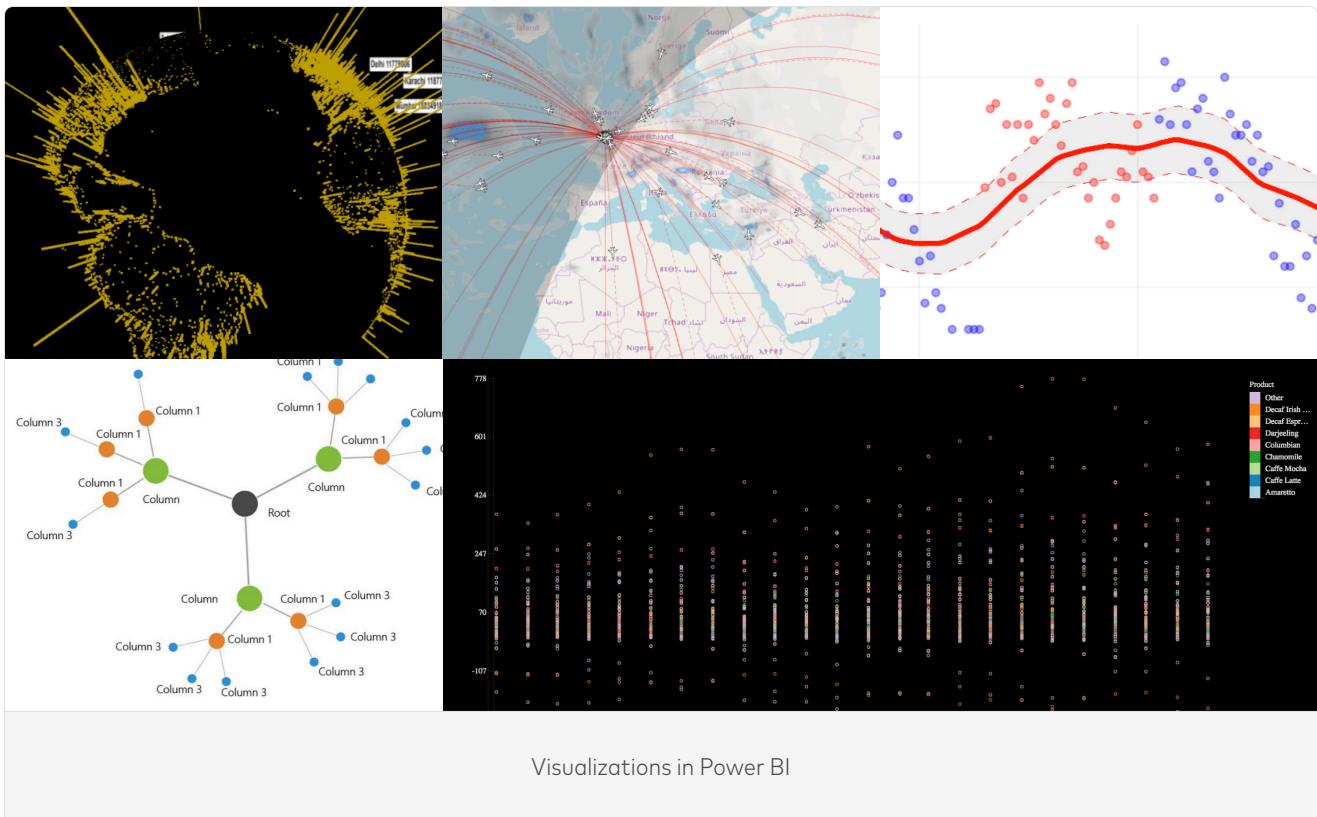
Creating a new Git branch in Looker

## Criterion #7: Visualization Library and Support for Custom Visualizations

You may want to create complex visualizations and embed them in external applications. Find out whether any prospective BI tool offers ample native visualizations, how it supports custom visualizations, and whether it supports embedded visualizations.

Here's how a few BI tools handle them:

- Power BI enables the use of JavaScript libraries to create custom visualizations
- Looker and Tableau offer customer visualizations, and both allow analysts to embed dashboards within Salesforce web pages



## Criterion #8: Cost

After evaluating BI tool features, you'll need to consider cost. Public-facing websites don't always provide pricing information, and quite a few platforms require you to request a quote. Sigma offers a free trial and demo but no pricing information, while the Sisense pricing page requires you to fill out a detailed form to get a price quote. Power BI spells out its costs clearly, but Tableau prices by user type.

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