

ENTERPRISE AI · CASE STORY

Give people a first move

Two powerful AI features nobody opened. Redesigning how people ask their data questions and read the answers.

4 min

Click or press → to continue

Imagine asking a librarian a question and getting back an error code.

The answer was in the building. The conversation broke before you reached it.

WebFOCUS had two AI features for exploring data: ask a question in plain English, and generate automatic insights.

Both were powerful. Both were buried several clicks deep, then inside a popup.

Asking a question looked like a command line dressed as a web app.

A blank prompt with no first move.

Cannot convert SQL to FOCUS

And errors handed straight to a business analyst.

Rule 1

Never a blank page.

Try asking (examples):

Which region grew fastest this quarter?

Top 10 products by revenue

Suggested questions give people a first move.

Rule 2

Fail like a human, not a database.

ENGINEERING'S INSTINCT

Show the raw failure.

THE REDESIGN

Catch low-confidence questions before the query ever runs, and respond in plain language.

● PRINCIPLE

Help people recover

Error messages should say what went wrong in plain words and suggest a way forward.¹

Rule 3

One answer, read every way.

Bar

Line

Pie

Table

...

A chart switcher on every answer. A bigger version with 36+ chart types was built. The disciplined, smaller version is what shipped.

Ship the disciplined version.

Rule 4

Read, don't decode.

BEFORE

Every finding collapsed in a long list of accordions.

AFTER

Pick a dataset, hit Generate, read the findings in plain language.

A grid answers nothing. It just shows you everything.

Rule 5

Meet the behavior people already have.

Right-click a dataset

Predict Data

Generate Insights

Ask a Question

Grouping the AI features on a dataset's right-click menu was the designer's suggestion.

WHAT CHANGED

Natural Language Query: +25% adoption. Live in WebFOCUS 9.3.



Asking questions: the new language model and the redesign built around it together drove about a 25% jump in adoption



Insights: 3 steps, nothing to configure, one right-click

BEHIND THE STORY

"I redesigned the conversation, not the AI."

My job wasn't to add capability. It was to make the capability legible.

A first move instead of a blank box. A sentence instead of an accordion. The engines didn't change. The conversation did.

CHEAT SHEET

Making AI answers usable

- 1 **Never a blank page.** Offer a first move.
- 2 **Fail like a human.**
- 3 **One answer, many views.** Ship the disciplined version.
- 4 **Read, don't decode.**
- 5 **Meet existing habits.**

READ MORE

The full case study.

Both redesigns, the chart switcher, and the guardrails.

Full case study: anujaharsha.com/work/explore-data

Enterprise story 04: "Give people a first move." Designed by Anuja Nimmagadda for WebFOCUS at Cloud Software Group.