Embracing Your Data

Developing data practices within an organization

Contents

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Data analytics is drastically changing modern organizations. Organizations that are embracing data analytics are seeing benefits including better information to support decision making, timely insight in to the organization, increased efficiencies and predicting changing trends.

Data is being discussed extensively in the media, at conferences and within organizations. As organizations are creating more and more data at a rate that has never been experienced before, the importance of analyzing this data is become paramount. An organization can use this data to create useful insight in supporting decision making and supporting day-to-day operations. Establishing an in-house data practice will enable your organization to experience the benefits that data analytics brings.

Starting at the Top

For an organization to reap the full benefits available through their data, acceptance is needed from the top down. The benefits of using data within the organization must be communicate by the executives and management. Data analytics is not a new concept but it has been slow to be adapted do to lack of participation from upper management. The role of management should not stop at giving the directive to establish a data practice. It should continue with requesting data for decision making and relying on data to improve processes and support day-to-day operation. As management embraces new ways of doing business, so too will the staff. Often management is removed from the process leading to the failure of the data practice.
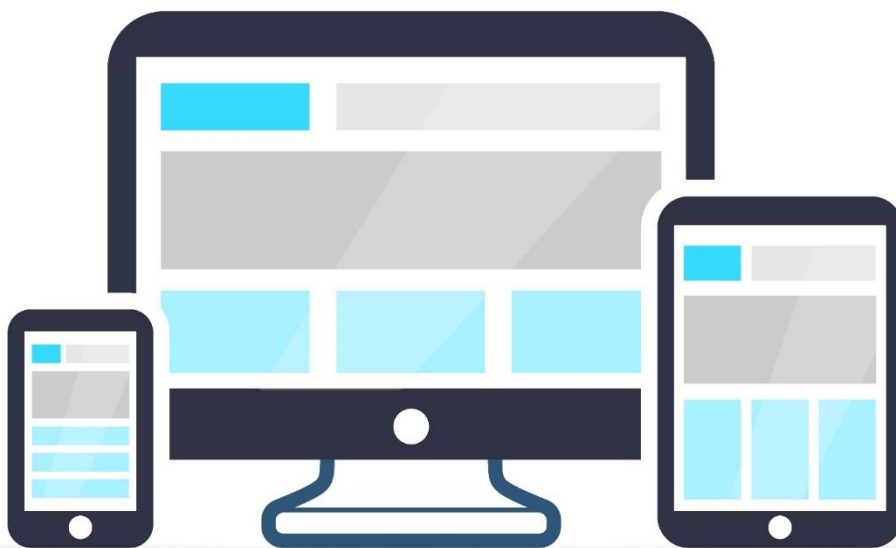
Integrating into the Organization

Analyzing data should not be isolated to one department or one group within the organization. The use of data can benefit all departments in a variety of ways. From monitoring inventory to evaluating the successfulness of a marketing campaign to identifying new revenue streams, data can provide the information needed for the organization to improve and strive.

Combining data from various departments, divisions and sources will give more clarity to decision makers and provide a more holistic view of the organization. Relating marketing expenditure data with regional sales data will assist in evaluating the effectiveness of a marketing campaign and highlight any regional trends that may be overlooked if data is only viewed on a high level.

Choosing the Tools

The most important tool for analyzing data is not the software but the user of the software. Analytics software tends to offer similar functions for analyzing data. The value comes from having someone that knows how to use the feature and how to combine multiple functions and software to deliver meaningful results.

The Data Geek

Finding the employees to unlock the full value of your organization's data can be a challenge. The skillset has to include the data component but also business or accounting knowledge. The value of the data practitioner is derived from applying the data in a business context; using the data to provide guidance and insight.

There is a high demand for data skills. Organizations are looking to fill positions from data analysts to data scientists. According to indeed.com the average salary for a data scientist in Canada is $95,019[1].

Often more than one software is needed to successful analyze data and present results. Many organizations will use one software to extract data, another software to analyze the data and yet another software to present the results. Having a powerful analytics software as the engine and a software that can represent the results in a coherent way to non-data people is key. A good dash boarding or BI (Business Intelligence) software can save valuable time in reporting and explaining results.

1. Data Scientist Salaries in Canada
https://ca.indeed.com/salaries/Data-Scientist-Salaries

Implementing Data Practices

The key initial steps to embrace data are:

1. Start Small – Organizations will not change over night. Take on small meaningful projects to begin. There is no need to buy the most expensive and complex software at the beginning. Basic tools, such as Excel, can start your organization's journey into embracing their data.

2. Quick Hits – Target projects that can have a quantifiable return on investment. Projects such as duplicate accounts payable testing and identifying tax recovery opportunities can result in immediate savings or recoveries.

3. Acquire Skills – Recruit experienced staff. Engage consultants to help establish and train staff, not just to complete one-time projects.

4. Get Buy in From the Top – Ensure top management is embracing data. Have management from various departments, regions, etc. involved in using data.

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