For this week’s discussion board, I wanted to look into and answer how context can affect our analyses and the effects that can occur when we do and do not take it into consideration during any step in the process. To my understanding, an example of contextualizing data is for an organization to be able to connect their data generated from within with outside sources such as medical, social, and economic sources. Author Lorentz, provides an example of how a business that is in this situation may look at data differently because they are not providing context to their present situation. In this situation, a company is utilizing a business intelligence software that handles all of their internal data. Lorentz states how this company would not be leveraging its full potential. With our society today, we are pushing out immense amounts of data about nearly everything that we do in our lives whether we notice it or not. Hence, what if companies were able to connect this to their data and be able to contextualize what they are seeing from an internal standpoint.

In the article, “With Big Data, Context is a Big Issue”, it provides different perspectives on how a company can view their numbers if they provided some outside and present information. For example, “Why did our sales plummet last month” versus “What happened to our sales figures last month” Pushing this perspective even further, Lorentz describes a political situation where the questions can be centered on how the current political climate or elections are having an effect on certain sales in an area.

One major aspect that I took away from this article was that, “Contextualization is crucial in transforming senseless data into real information – information that can be used as actionable insights that enable intelligent corporate decision-making.” At the end of the day, if there is no surrounding information around the data that you are outputting, aggregating, or collecting, you are simply gathering useless attributes that will provide no answers or insight on anything.

With the impact of context on an analysis, I think it has a strong impression on how an analysis is viewed and how to consume the information within it. In any situation, context can play a key role in whether a certain data points holds any validity as well. For some markets, the revenue and profit they are obtaining may be low compared to some other markets, but for their own area and consumers, they are obtaining strong profits. At the same time, even if it is the same company, their store in New York will have higher profit compared to small town in a rural area that is still making a profit, but understanding the contextualization of that New York is one of the biggest cities in the country compared to a town that is a tenth of its population is important. You may think that the numbers are skewed from the lower profit numbers but they are right on line with what is expected from these areas.

-Gabe

References:

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