

How Data Analytics Continues to Transform Organizations



IMAGE: [https://cdn.pixabay.com/photo/2018/09/16/12/09/analysis-3681353_1280.jpg]

Data analytics practices have been making their way into businesses of all kinds for the past few years, and organizations driving social and environmental initiatives are no exception. While data can be applied in innumerable ways the applications are limitless, the fundamental idea is quite simple. The primary aim, as it's described in an [North-West University publication article in 'The Conversation on data science'](#), is to extract insight from data — that is, to gather measurable information and determine what it says about performance and potential.

Data Analytics can be applied to countless initiatives in the name of positive societal and environmental change. To fully understand the potential benefits, it's helpful to break data analytics down into simple steps practices and purposes to see understand how the idea is transforming businesses and organizations.

Gathering Data

The first practice step in any data analytics operation is to gather the data itself, which can be done in a number of ways. Depending on the type of organization, including gathering data might entail surveying customers, combing through transaction histories, assessing finances, monitoring customer feedback and social media conversation, and/or maintaining numbers related to website performance. These are just a few examples of the areas and means by which company and organization leaders can begin to gather the data points, which can in turn that will serve as the foundation for an analytics operation.

Keep in mind also that this shouldn't sound overwhelming. While it's true that gathering data requires some effort, and the more data you collected the better, a lot of this process is typically automated. With the right tools and software, even a small organization can collect a great deal of valuable information.

Furthermore, any organization leader — of a non-profit, a volunteer group, an app-based company combating climate change, or anything similar — should appreciate the potential benefit of this sort of data collection. In the simplest of terms, more insight into operations (both internally and with regard to customers or communities served) should lay the foundation for improved performance.

Producing Draw Insights

People tend to imagine data analytics as a thoroughly advanced process involving complex computation. The not-so-secret truth though is that once an organization gathers its data is gathered, it can begin discovering insight can be discovered and used with relative ease. Often, it just comes down to by simply turning raw information and numbers into something that can be seen and interpreted clearly and at a glance.

This process is referred to as data visualization, which means turning data into charts and graphs, to make it easier to

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~~draw insight and craft strategy from~~. Creating simple visual representations ~~of data~~ out of unclear sets of information helps in analyzing the data and strategizing plans.

Apply Learnings

Once an organization has its data in an easy-to-digest format, leaders can begin making key improvements.

● Identifying Breakdowns

Arguably the primary benefit of data analytics in organizations of all kinds is that it helps leaders to ~~identify where operations are breaking down and falling short~~. Last summer's [blog post on 'Using Data Analytics for Good'](#) touched on this very idea, noting that surveys in test communities had helped an analytics team to "understand what isn't working and what is needed." It really is about as simple as that. Whether in startups, civic engagement, or even big business, one of the key purposes of data analytics is figuring out what's going wrong and why. ~~Needless to say, any organization looking to do good for its community or for society more broadly can benefit from this same knowledge.~~

● Identifying growth & Acting on Opportunities

Similar to ~~identifying breakdowns~~, ~~gathering and analysis of data can also help to~~ spotting opportunities. ~~This is in fact is the part of the process~~ leading many organization leaders today to hire analysts ~~or enlist volunteers~~ from what has become a robust talent pool of data experts. ~~Providing information for some of the growing number of people turning to online courses to earn qualifications in these areas~~, [Maryville University's overview of the bachelors degree in business administration](#) notes that a trained analyst can help a company in these areas. ~~As an example, a trained analyst might observe data that indicates the success of a particular outreach effort at generating engagement, and from there develop ways to repeat or imitate that effort on a continual basis.~~ Someone in this role drives data-driven decision-making efforts, taking advantage of insights to revamp strategy and seize opportunity.

As an example, a trained analyst might observe data that indicates the success of a particular outreach effort at generating engagement, and from there develop ways to repeat or imitate that effort on a continual basis. That's a simple way to put it, but it explains how identifying and acting on opportunities based on data helps to improve company performance.

● Improving customer ~~T~~argeting and outreach strategies

~~Beyond identifying internal shortcomings and general opportunities~~, ~~d~~Data analytics is also used to target customers (or partners, donors, voters, and so on). A [Towards Data Science piece on doing more with data](#) delved into how this worked, essentially pointing out that organizations can use data to glean demographic information about consumers. Whether this information relates to socio-economic status, purchasing history, location, interests, or any other factors, it can help organizations of all kinds sharpen their outreach efforts. ~~Marketing can be targeted~~ towards specific audiences in specific ways that are more likely to work than a more general approach.

~~Any organization leader — of a non-profit, a volunteer group, an app-based company combating climate change, or anything similar — can appreciate the potential benefit of this sort of data collection. In the simplest of terms, more insight into operations (both internally and with regard to customers or communities served) lays the foundation for improved performance.~~ All of these efforts are helping to transform organizations of all kinds, and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future.

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written for DemocracyLab.org

by Rhia June