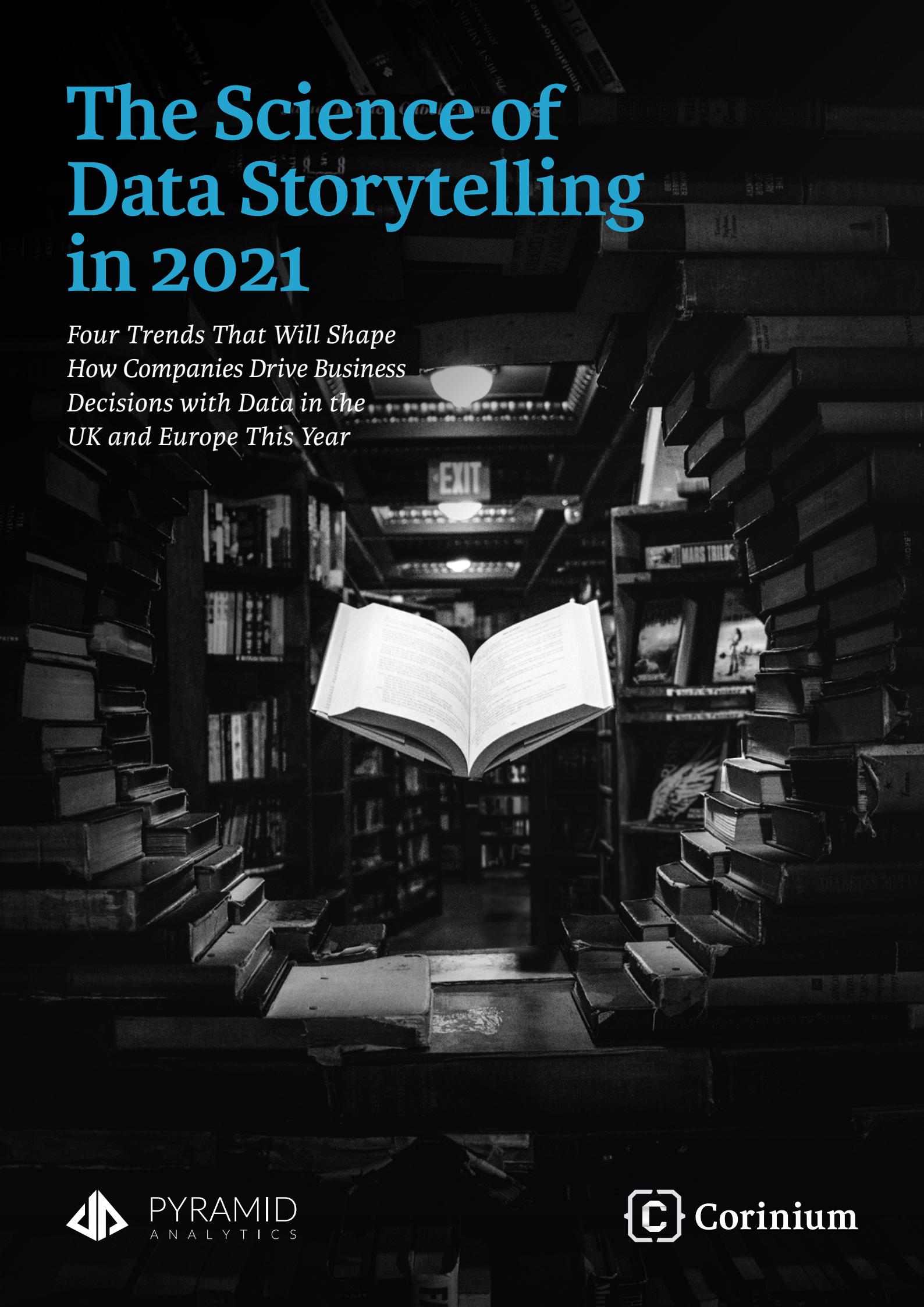


The Science of Data Storytelling in 2021

Four Trends That Will Shape How Companies Drive Business Decisions with Data in the UK and Europe This Year



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Executive Summary

The average enterprise has more than 1 petabyte of data at its disposal. But the vast majority of it is **never used** to drive business value. This report highlights how European enterprises are addressing this analytics efficiency challenge to tell more compelling stories with data.

With expert commentary from some of the top analytics leaders in Corinium's European network, it highlights four trends that will shape how enterprises tell stories and make decisions with data in 2021.

Inside, you'll see how these industry leaders are equipping analytics staff

with essential data storytelling skills and working to create 'citizen data analysts' with the skills to uncover their own data-driven insights.

Along the way, you'll discover how European enterprises are putting the right foundations in place so staff can experiment with data-driven tools in silo-free environments and ensuring their data quality and management practices provide trusted data sources.

What's more, it looks at how agile, product-focussed approaches to BI development is helping analytics leaders develop valuable new capabilities and scale them across their organisations. ■

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Foreword

Why Business Intelligence Implementations Fail

KEY FINDING

Enterprises with the wrong business culture, tools or processes inevitably fail to get the most out of BI or analytics investments

In the world of BI, if those producing the dashboards and reports do not package the insights with the recipients' preferences in mind, or use numbers based on dubious or incomplete sources, it can sow doubts.

Conversely, if the recipients do not thoughtfully seek to understand the insights – this stuff requires skill and focus, after all – then significant investments of time and energy are wasted.

I've been in the Business Intelligence business for more than 30 years, and I'm often asked: what separates the successful implementations from the failed ones.

It's fundamentally about trust (or a lack thereof). It's about reducing the tension between those who produce analytics and those who consume it. And that requires empathy.

Ultimately, the onus is on the producers to be empathetic to the needs of the business – the final consumers of the content. If they are not empathetic to their business users' big hairy challenges, then it's the beginning of the end. The BI initiative is doomed to fail. ►

In particular, BI projects collapse in one of three ways:

Cultural or collaborative disconnects

In failed analytics cultures, the disconnect between strategy and the needs of individual users of data analytics has grown unchecked.

If those who manage the data don't fully understand the data needs of business users (to understand complexity and make confident decisions), there's little chance for analytics initiatives to succeed.

Using the wrong tools or technology

Monolithic, top-down approaches with an over-emphasis on strategy at the expense of end-user agility can lead to stifled innovation.

Equally, bottom-up self-service approaches without enough attention to governance or security can lead to chaos.

Inflexible governance and security processes

Adaptability is no longer 'nice to have'. It's a fundamental requirement for BI and analytics. If a company cannot embrace change or reconsider data management and governance strategies that no longer work, then trouble is just around the corner.

Data needs will change, and business users needs will change along with it. Those that myopically focus on data over speed – and vice versa – will have trouble adapting and ultimately surviving.

Ultimately, while deficiencies in any of the areas above can derail enterprise BI, all successful endeavours succeed or fail with empathy. If there's a fundamental lack of it between those producing analytics and those consuming it, then trust, the foundation on which every data-driven business is built, is compromised. ■



Ian Macdonald
Principal Technologist,
Pyramid Analytics

Rise of the Enterprise Data Storyteller

KEY FINDING

Great data storytelling ensures data-driven insights drive the right business decisions. Forward-thinking enterprises are making sure staff at all levels have the skills they need to understand and tell compelling stories with data

James Calvert learned one of his most important lessons about data from an unlikely source: a group of actors.

He met them while he was working for advertising agency WPP, which had enlisted the thespians for a course to demonstrate the importance of great storytelling. They taught him that even a genius idea is doomed if you fail to tell a story about it.

“You might not dramatize the problem enough, the data you use to show it might be an ugly chart, or maybe the charts are difficult to read,” says Calvert, who is now Chief Data Strategy Officer at M&C Saatchi London. “And it will go nowhere.”

It is no longer enough for data leaders to cleanse and model data. They must also learn to use

the results to weave compelling narratives that inspire action from colleagues, partners and clients.

“You need to take them on a journey,” says Eddie Short, CDAO and Director of Data, Insights and Analytics at Telefonica UK. “The greatest model or the greatest algorithm is not a lot of use unless you’re clear what the problem is you’re solving.”

At the same time, it’s becoming increasingly important for staff who specialise in other areas to be data literate. Some enterprises are already meeting that need with programmes to teach data skills. And in future, we could start to see more new roles for data translators and storytellers who can act as a bridge between analytics and other departments. ►

“Everybody needs to go on a data storytelling course. Especially within the analytics community, because not everyone’s a good storyteller”

Kinnari Ladha
CDO, IAG Loyalty

Great Storytelling Fuels Better Business Outcomes

Enterprises are awash with valuable data, but simply providing staff with access to more insights does not lead to better business outcomes on its own. Those insights must inspire the right decisions and encourage action to see them through.

Kinnari Ladha, CDO of airline loyalty programme provider IAG Loyalty, recalls a project she once worked on that enabled Virgin Trains staff to track customer sentiment in real-time using a simple dashboard, dubbed the Awesometer.

The dashboard showed feedback from customers to hundreds of employees, allowing them to notice patterns at different stations or on certain trains and to act quickly to correct any problems.

"People had a bit of anxiety when they didn't know which platform the train was on," says Ladha. "It was little things like that."

Crucially, this dashboard provided views of the data for each stakeholder group that used it to ensure they could quickly see and act on the most relevant insights for their role. In this way, the Awesometer drove changes at the organization that led to a substantial increase in customers saying they would recommend Virgin Trains to others.

"It started from a view for the train staff, so they could see on their train where the NPS [net promoter score] was, all the way down to head office," Ladha recalls. "People were able to make decisions on the fly with it and track [results]."

Of course, data literacy is another key ingredient, here. The financial cost of missing key insights because the data behind them was presented badly is hard to quantify. But research from Qlik has found that large enterprises with strong data literacy, a foundation of good data storytelling, are worth up to 5% more, a difference of between \$320-534 million USD.

For Manuel de Francisco Vera, Global Head of Analytics at eBay Classifieds Group, improving data literacy company-wide aids communication.

"I can talk with someone from finance or from management or development and I know that they are going to understand what I say," he says. ▶

"It's not about sharing tons of charts or lots of numbers to show the work you've done. It's actually showing what it means for them"

Kinnari Ladha
CDO, IAG Loyalty



How Enterprises are Nurturing Data Storytelling Skills

WPP's Global Head of Data and AI, Di Mayze, predicts that advances in automation will free up data scientists to focus on driving business value in future, and a new class of data storytellers will emerge. To prepare for this, WPP is scaling up its analytics university to train thousands of its staff members.

Analytics leaders at eBay Classifieds Group have also started investing in nurturing data storytelling skills. The group's analytics university is open to everybody at the company, regardless of their role or their seniority. So far, hundreds have been trained,

"I'm also joining that course," adds Manuel de Francisco Vera, Global Head of Analytics at eBay Classifieds Group. "That way, we all have the same foundations. We will speak the same language."

For data professionals, such initiatives are an opportunity to hone soft skills and become better at communicating ideas to non-specialists.

"I feel that everybody needs to go on a data storytelling course," says Ladha. "Especially within the



analytics community, because not everyone's a good storyteller and the people you're trying to communicate data to won't necessarily understand it the way you do."

Knowing your audiences and how they prefer to consume information is just as important as eye-catching graphs, agrees Ian Macdonald, Principal Technologist at Pyramid Analytics.

He recalls showing several sleek visualisations to some insurance clients and receiving "a blank look" in return: "I said, 'Well how would you best want the data?' And they said, 'Just give us a table of numbers.'"

These stories represent an emerging trend in business today. In the coming months, we expect businesses throughout the UK and Europe to place even greater emphasis on data storytelling skills.

This may involve training data professionals in soft skills, ensuring data hires are equipped to tell stories or scaling-up organisation-wide initiatives like those at WPP and eBay Classifieds Group. In time, new roles for data storytellers may also start to emerge.

"These people will really think creatively about how to story-tell," Mayze concludes. "How to bring data to life; how to bring it to every part of every role." ■

Three Principles of Data Storytelling



Understand your audiences' data needs



Understand your audiences' content preferences



Tailor how data is presented to different target audiences

Source: Corinium Intelligence 2021

Solving the ‘Insight Generation’ Dilemma with Trusted Data Sources

KEY FINDING

Technology is helping enterprise data leaders break down analytics silos and empower staff to analyse data without compromising on data governance

Lack of trust in data will undermine any story a company's data and analytics professionals tell with it. If company decision-makers don't trust the data that underpins analytics insights or visualisations, they may be inclined to ignore the stats and 'go with their guts'.

Ensuring data is well-governed and high-quality is the best way to ensure people trust it. But when someone downloads a dataset onto their own device to analyse it, they create an ungoverned analytics silo the data team can't manage or govern effectively.

This ‘insight generation dilemma’ has hampered data-driven decision-making in enterprise settings for decades.

“It’s a problem that’s been around for a long time,” notes James Calvert, Chief Data Strategy Officer at M&C Saatchi London. “But it takes a grownup organization to invest in that, because that takes time and effort to put in place. And you’re putting it ahead of any of those insights.”

Luckily, this dilemma can be solved. In fact, a growing number of European organisations are implementing modern BI solutions that enable teams to uncover valuable insights without compromising on data governance or undermining trust in the data.

Research from Dataversity [shows that](#) roughly two thirds of enterprises have now deployed data preparation, data governance or data intelligence solutions to create a foundation of trusted data within their organisations. ►

“[It’s] getting across to everybody that a trusted single source of data is not just what’s desirable, it’s actually essential.”

Eddie Short

CDAO and Director, Data, Insights and Analytics, Telefonica UK

It All Starts with a Single Source of Truth

'Single source of truth' (SSOT) is one of the most ubiquitous phrases in the data and analytics industry. It's a simple idea that we all should live by: If everyone draws their data from the same trusted sources, then everyone will know the data can be trusted.

Establishing a SSOT for data also helps companies ensure data is used in a way that complies with regulations around respecting customer privacy and handling personal data securely.

For these reasons, IAG Loyalty CDO Kinnari Ladha has made establishing a SSOT for data one of her first priorities since joining the company in November 2020.

"We're really focusing on

"It all circles around corporate culture. If you're in the banking, financial services or even telecom-type areas, there's a lot of resistance to opening up the data"

Ian Macdonald

Principal Technologist, Pyramid Analytics

centralizing the data," she says. "We're trying to get a single source of the truth by aligning data sources, to build trust in any analytics we build."

Enterprises with more mature data functions already have the right data infrastructure in place to ensure data can be managed

centrally and provide staff with access to the datasets they need for analytics projects.

At this point, the priority becomes educating stakeholders about why working in this way is so important.

"One of our key achievements [for 2020], was getting across to everybody that a trusted single source of data is not just what's desirable, it's actually essential," says Eddie Short, CDAO and Director, Data, Insights and Analytics, Telefonica UK.

"We've made a huge amount of progress towards that," he continues. "So, people can do their own analytics. They can put their own Excel models together, providing they're doing it from the same data."

Securing buy-in for working in this way has had a real impact on trust in data at Telefonica UK. For example, it means executives know they're all using the same data source data when presenting figures at board meetings.

Of course, the benefits of working in this way are clear. The real challenge is ensuring staff can find, access and analyse the data they need to generate valuable insights quickly and easily. ►



Empowering Staff to Deliver Trusted Analytics

Ensuring the data a company's staff use to generate insights is drawn from trusted sources is as much about having good processes and promoting good analytics practices as it is about curating trusted datasets.

At IAG, Ladha wants staff to move away from desktop-based tools such as Excel and build their dashboards on top of a centralised data platform.

"One of the biggest values of this group data platform is to centralize the data, but also to start utilizing modern analytics tools," she says.

"[Today], we do have a lot of dashboards in Excel, but we need to move away from that," she adds. "That worries me, because I don't know what formulas sit behind there!"

Telefonica UK is taking a slightly different approach. There is a wide range of legacy systems and BI tools in use across the company. So, Short is focusing his efforts on consolidating this into a selection of modern analytics platforms and ensuring everyone works from the SSOT.

"It's more a question of effectively having [approved] dashboards, so that things that go to the primary executive meetings have been signed off as coming from the trusted source of data," he says. "That's the key thing."



This pragmatic approach may be the way to go for legacy organisations. But it does make it trickier to govern who gets access to analytics models and their underlying data after they have been created.

Either way, technology providers are also working to make their platforms interoperable with

other solutions to facilitate these transformations.

"We're providing access into our platform for third-party tools," says Pyramid Analytics Principal Technologist Ian Macdonald.

"The other thing we're doing is opening up what we call the semantic model," he adds. "That means, if I build an analysis in the Pyramid platform, for example, that particular analysis is accessible to other tools."

Analytics ecosystems with this kind of interoperability help staff to tell stories with data using their preferred tools without creating ungoverned silos. In doing so, they help to promote trust in analytics insights and enable analytics innovation in a way that's consistent with good data governance. ■

"I think that those who invest in data governance will do better, and I hope that brands do continue to do that"

James Calvert

Chief Data Strategy Officer at M&C Saatchi London

Data Quality has Become a Top Business Priority in 2021

KEY FINDING

As enterprises progress further along the path to analytics maturity, business leaders are waking up to the need for robust and automated data quality management processes

Data management and quality has shot to the top of the data and analytics agenda in recent years, the Business Application Research Centre's *Data, BI and Analytics Trend Monitor 2021* [shows](#).

The survey of more than 2,300 data professionals, consultants and vendors reveals that this focus has surpassed 'data discovery and visualisation' and 'establishing a data-driven culture' to become 2021's top industry trend.

"There was [historically] a conception that once you have a lot of data, you can answer all questions," says ZestMoney CDO Natalia Lyarskaya. "With the recent COVID-19 situation, many companies, especially in the financial sector, realised that's the wrong strategy."

There is no doubt that bad data quality leads to poor outcomes,



including wasted time. An average of 30% of total enterprise time can be wasted on non-value-added tasks because of poor data quality and availability, the McKinsey 2019 Global Data Transformation Survey [reports](#).

But why has the issue risen to the top of the agenda in 2021? According to Pyramid Analytics Principal Technologist Ian Macdonald, it's partly due to a rise in analytics maturity in the global business community.

"The analytics drive towards 'understanding my business with data' has shone the spotlight on the quality issue," he quips. ▶

"Analytics systems expose poor quality data faster than anything else on earth"

Ian Macdonald
Principal Technologist,
Pyramid Analytics



Why Data Quality Management is Key in 2021

The success of digital transformation projects built on new technologies such as AI depends on the enterprise starting with high-quality data.

"AI is different from standard software automation projects, because it's based on data," notes Detlef Nauck Head of AI and Data Science at BT. "So, you need to make sure high-quality data is available."

Yet, ensuring data is high-quality is sometimes easier said than done. This challenge is partly a technological problem. In the past, efforts concentrated on structured data stored in relational databases. But modern big data systems and cloud computing have added complexity.

As Macdonald notes, it's common for companies to take shortcuts when configuring and customizing new cloud-based systems that mean only the staff who set them up truly understand the data they collect.

He concludes: "When those systems are being used later by people who are not part of the clique or cabal who know what values

they've entered into the data fields, you're going to end up with quite a bit of nonsense."

Adding to this is the use of AI systems and real-time data streaming platforms operating on a continuous basis, producing ever expanding amounts of data.

Regulatory pressures increase complexity further as data quality demands increase. The EU General Update to Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), for example, allows users to request access to their personal data, and these searches must be accurate and complete.

As a result of all of this, business leaders are increasingly coming to realise that better data quality and business performance are two sides of the same coin. Investing in data quality and governance will in turn improve the performance of analytics initiatives.

Eddie Short, CDAO and Director of Data, Insights and Analytics at Telefonica UK, concludes: "If you're doing all the right things to manage your data, it shows you know your customers. You'll treat them fairly and understand what they do and don't want from you." ▶

"It's just about showing people that risk and performance are two sides of the same coin"

Eddie Short

CDAO and Director of Data, Insights and Analytics, Telefonica UK



How to Tackle the Data Quality Challenge

European businesses are improving data quality across their organisations in a number of ways.

First, companies are incorporating data ownership and stewardship responsibilities into staff roles. This helps employees to understand and consider their own role in improving data quality and business outcomes.

"What we're trying to do here is just making it part of people's day jobs," Short says. "We don't need new head count. We just need to think about how people in the organisation do their work."

Short says it's important to educate staff about the importance

"As with any digital transformation, moving from manual to automated and then 'intelligent' data quality management will require a long-term plan"

Clinton Hook

Director of Data Governance, Experian

of data quality, ensuring they all know it's their responsibility. He describes how Telefonica UK rolled its enterprise data governance model out across its HR and finance operations in 2020. This has helped to increase the average data quality for the entire organisation.

"It is about bringing all the others in and helping them to see the benefits, not just because it's a regulatory compliance thing or because you don't want to get fined," he recommends. "People are seeing that actually, in practice, data quality is not somebody else's job."

As enterprises start taking data quality more seriously, they are also introducing automation into their data quality management processes. This means putting systems in place to help those responsible for data quality see where their biggest problems are.

For example, data management tools can be programmed to recognise standard information such as email addresses or credit card numbers to validate entries or flag potential issues to staff.

"The ultimate goal is ML for data quality that then improves itself over time," says Experian Director of Data Governance Clinton Hook. "A good example of this is company name. Is Tesco PLC the same as Tesco Stores Ltd?"

In this way, data leaders can make data quality management processes more reliable and less burdensome for data owners or stewards. Those that do this successfully will provide their data and analytics teams with the best possible foundations for success. ■





Balancing Innovation with Reusability in BI Development

KEY FINDING

Empowering analytics teams to solve business problems efficiently is about harmonising scalable methodologies with free-form experimentation

Two goals unite the vast majority of analytics leaders in large enterprises. Manuel de Francisco Vera, Global Head of Analytics at eBay Classifieds Group, sums them up nicely. But they will be familiar to other analytics leaders in similar roles.

“My role is first to make sure that we have some common layer and data foundations across all the markets,” he says. “Also, my role is to try to identify synergies and opportunities across countries, to liberate the work that maybe one country is doing and how this can be globalized.”

These strategic goals incentivise business leaders to establish common processes and methodologies across the enterprise to dive organisational

efficiency and create economies of scale.

But in their pursuit of these goals, enterprise analytics leaders must ensure their quests for efficiency don’t come at the cost of innovative thinking. ►

“The main goals or outcomes of that are more resource efficiency, knowledge sharing and really multiplying effects across the company”

Manuel de Francisco Vera
Global Head of Analytics at
eBay Classifieds Group

The Quest for Reusability and Reproducibility

Harvard Business Review [defines](#)

‘productization’ as the process of “abstracting the underlying principles of successful point solutions until they can be used to solve an array of similar, but distinct, business problems”.

In other words, once analytics leaders have solved a business problem with data, they should look at how their solution might be reused or repurposed elsewhere in their organisations.

The title’s editors argue that approaching analytics projects in this way is essential for achieving meaningful digital transformations.

Telefonica UK CDAO and Director of Data, Insights and Analytics Eddie Short agrees that it’s important to have processes in place to combat the duplication of labour that inevitably occurs in large organisations.

“If somebody’s got really good ideas, let’s not reinvent the wheel,” he says. “How can we capture that and leverage it in other parts of the business?”

“What we’ve also been promoting is reusability,” he continues. “In certain things, we’d say, ‘Frankly, you’ve got half a dozen different versions of the same dashboard or report and, actually, one would suffice.’”



“If it’s a regular piece of reporting and there’s a regular cycle and there’s a sense of consistency, then you are going to need some level of productization or reproducibility,” adds James Calvert, Chief Data Strategy Officer at M&C Saatchi London. “When it comes to running that again in three months’ time,

we know it needs to be run in the same way.”

To facilitate working in this way, Telefonica UK has adopted a ‘hub and spokes’ approach to analytics development. Models are typically created centrally first, and then customised for use in different regions or business units where applicable.

The company also holds a regular Cross-O2 Analytics Forum event, where different teams can showcase what they’ve been working on and share projects that might be useful to other business units.

But while there are benefits of scaling analytics capabilities in this way, analytics projects don’t always lend themselves to this approach. ►

“It does, when it comes to analytics, depend on the nature and type of what you’re doing”

James Calvert

Chief Data Strategy Officer at M&C Saatchi London



Balancing Analytics Innovation with Scalability

Analytics or BI development is about creating things that address pressing business needs or pain points. That's why it's so important for teams to develop solutions in close collaboration with end-users in the business.

"For as long as I've been working around with data and models, if you ask people their requirements in a traditional waterfall way, you'd always end up disappointing them," notes Short. "Most of the time, they only had a limited idea of what was the art of the possible and what they could get. It's always been around really taking them on a journey and iterating through."

But of course, not every problem that can be solved with data lends itself to reusability or reproducibility. Meanwhile, restricting analytics staff to certain tools or methodologies may inhibit their ability to innovate.

"You need to have a system or platform that has that type of collaboration, reuse, management and governance built in"

Ian Macdonald

Principal Technologist, Pyramid Analytics

Calvert argues: "Some of the people who are absolutely brilliant analysts need the freedom to look at and tackle and approach a problem in many different ways."

"Most of those things will fail, but they'll find eventually something interesting, and that's quite hard to do when you try to force structure," he continues. "So, it partly depends on the nature of the task. Really, organisations should be able to facilitate both."

"You need to fully understand what it is you want to do with your

analytics," adds Ian Macdonald, Principal Technologist at Pyramid Analytics. "Is this something which is done on an individual or small team level? Or is it something that you want to make pervasive throughout your organization?"

He adds: "If it is the latter, you need to have a system or platform that has that type of collaboration, reuse, management and governance built in."

So, analytics leaders must create working environments that balance the need for a level of reproducibility and scalability with the need for experimentation in the early phases of the development process.

When analytics staff are first let loose on a business problem, it often makes sense for them to adopt an unstructured, slightly chaotic approach.

For business problems that involve common or recurring tasks, models can then be built in a way that's reproducible, using standardised tools and an iterative approach, such as agile.

Analytics leaders can then promote the existence of the capabilities their teams have built and work with other business units to ensure the fruits of their labour are reused and scaled across the organisation. ■



Key Takeaways

1

Data storytelling skills are crucial.

Develop programmes to arm data and analytics staff with the soft skills to tailor how insights are presented to different audiences to tell compelling stories, while also improving organisational data literacy.

2

Data-driven business cultures depend on trusted data.

Enterprises that establish trusted data sources and ensure staff use these to generate analytics insights will ensure decision-makers believe and act on data-driven insights.

3

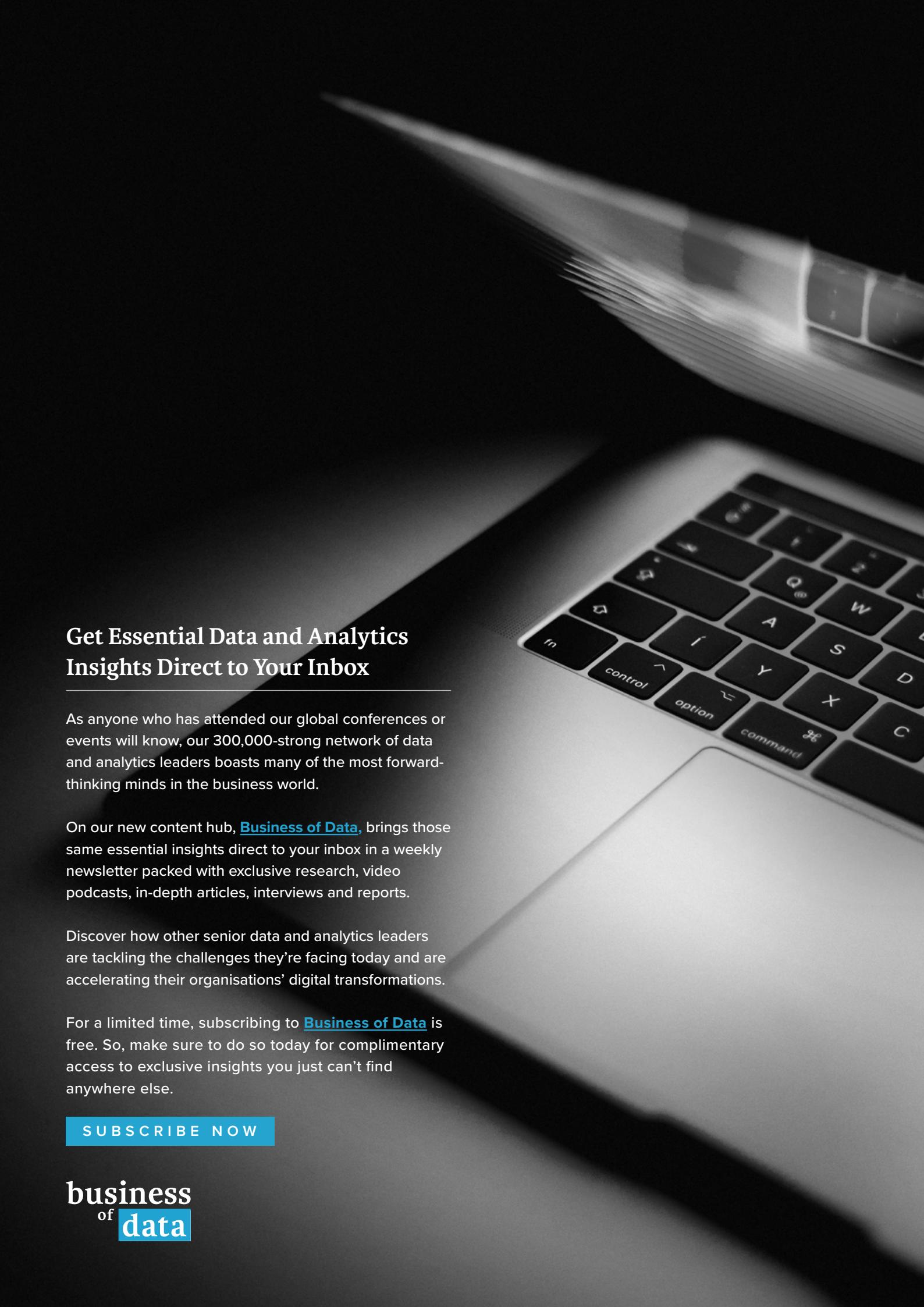
Data quality makes data sources trusted.

Improving organisation-wide data quality has become a top priority for data-focused executives in 2021. This is essential for ensuring BI projects drive better business outcomes.

4

Socialise and scale analytics successes.

Developing dashboards, models and visualisations that can be reused or repurposed ensures analytics teams can solve business problems efficiently. Creating forums to showcase successful initiatives will minimise duplication of labour within an organisation.



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Pyramid Analytics' enterprise-grade BI platform supports the full self-service analytics workflow.

As a complete web-based platform built on trust, Pyramid provides best-in-class functionality for organizations that demand scalable, AI-driven insights delivered to every user on any browser or device within a robust governance framework. With it, users can easily prepare, model, visualize, analyse, publish and present data to make informed business decisions.

Pyramid has a platform-agnostic architecture that can be deployed on-premises, in the cloud or across a hybrid environment.

For more information, visit:
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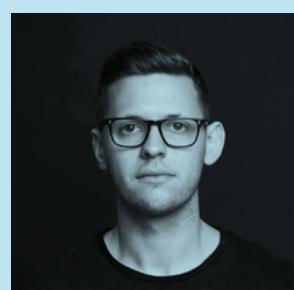


About the Editor

Solomon Radley is an experienced editor and reporter with a deep understanding of the data, analytics and CX space and close relationships with many of the sectors' most prominent C-level executives.

He works with data and analytics, learning and development and customer experience leaders to champion new innovations and highlight how the world's most forward-thinking brands are using data to fuel their digital transformations.

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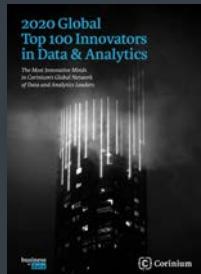
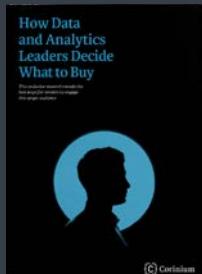
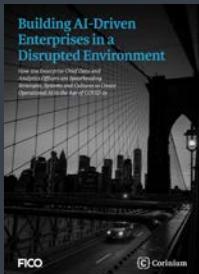


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