ENHANCE YOUR BUSINESS VALUE: WIN WITH DATA

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How Data Strategy Leads to Business Benefit

Creating a new data strategy has become a top priority for many organisations. Senior leaders are clear that they want their organisations to be data driven, but most organisations still have a long way to go.

FIGURE 1
The Gap Between Aspiration and Reality in Creating a Data-Driven Culture

Streamlining and modernising your business processes and decisions through the use of data and analytics should be a priority to drive improved performance in areas such as customer engagement and customer and employee satisfaction.

FIGURE 2
Economic and Business Benefit Follow from Data-Driven Innovation

Source: *IDC Data-Driven Culture Survey, December 2020*

Source: *IDC Europe Custom Survey, June-July 2021 (n = 1,100)*
Next-generation data technologies can smooth the path to becoming data driven. Easy to scale, these technologies can help spread a “data culture” throughout the enterprise, both top-down and bottom-up, with every employee being empowered to be part of data-driven decision making. There is clear evidence that this transformation can lead to significant business outcomes, including higher revenues, greater agility and a more innovative organisation.

**Data-Driven Transformation Via the C-Suite**

Adopting a data culture is best driven from the top. In companies with a strong data culture, executives are comfortable accessing data and encourage data literacy and use in all staff; they are at ease with demonstrating how data has influenced decisions and driven value in meetings, experimenting with data and using data to better collaborate.

If top executives understand the value of data and model its use, then employees are much more likely to be data driven in their work. The IDC Future of Intelligence Survey data shows that when the enterprise invests in intelligence initiatives, it leads to an increased frequency of data-driven decision making at all levels and to greater trust in data (to an extent of 7.5 out of 10). Leaders that highlight evidence-based decision making set the tone for the rest of the organisation. Nurturing teamwide data and analytics skills, they encourage and empower a whole-company approach where everyone can leverage data and analytics and transform processes on the way to a data-driven enterprise.

**Data Democratisation Needs Culture and Tools**

A data culture is built on appropriate tools and platforms. Good tools lead staff to use, understand and manipulate data, gaining confidence to do even more, in a virtuous circle. Data access will be easier, not siloed or only available to select teams, therefore delivering new and better insights.

Low-code approaches to analytics are now becoming widespread, making analytics easier to use for more people. They enable broader teams to collaborate around the use of data and advanced analytics in decision making. By making data easier to understand and driving widespread use by business teams, the process of data democratisation begins.

Digital transformation has accelerated the shift to these categories of tools. For example, AO.com, an electrical retailer operating in the UK and Germany, leveraged a new, cloud-based solution as the foundation for business operations to be able to understand, decipher and manipulate the data with a single view of inventory and customers. Thanks to easier advanced analytics capabilities, the results are better and faster actionable decisions about how to trade.

**Cloud Technology Is the Essential Platform for Intelligent Insights at Scale**

Data-driven organisations have their internal and external data sources organised for easy access and comprehension. One of the first steps of data modernisation is moving to the cloud: this can be a hybrid or a total cloud approach. Combining data in the cloud can enable employees to access insights they’ve never had before from a common, consistent set of information, eliminating data silos.
Furthermore, modern cloud technology can now offer better-than-on-premises data security and governance, thus overcoming one of the remaining barriers holding some enterprises back from shifting to the cloud. For example, French power utility provider ENGIE created a Common Data Hub to align business units around the same solution and help them easily store, ingest, share and consume insights through a unified and secure platform. Business users are taking ownership of data quality and building important and valuable applications to exploit centrally held, governed and trusted data.

**AI/ML-Driven Insights Drive Additional Value**

When considering the most appropriate tooling for the modern enterprise, it's important to look at next-generation tools to drive maximum business value from your data assets. Descriptive (reporting) visual analytic tools are now used widely; future-looking predictive and prescriptive analytics are not so common but offer great power in decision making. These are increasingly available, incorporating AI/machine learning. This can enable analyst users to create and run analytical models without needing rare, advanced data science skills. AI/ML-infused analytics can also provide automation in data workflows, which can greatly reduce time-consuming manual processing.

As a success story, Element, a global business that provides specialist testing, inspection and certification services to a diverse range of businesses, has shifted to a new platform with the aim of automating paper processes. Thanks to its cognitive services features, it not only enabled it to get rid of paper, it also enabled it to automate the process of pulling the documents from email, storing and scanning them, and updating the system with extracted data and a copy of the invoice. Similarly good outcomes have been achieved by the NHS Business Services Authority, which used machine learning, visual capturing and AI to read documentation and handwritten info, enabling it to deliver better taxpayer value, better outcomes and better patient safety.

**Essential Guidance**

Enhancing business performance is something every organisation wants — and there's increasing C-level recognition that business value can be created by better harnessing existing data assets. To "win with data", organisations should:

- Create a data culture and encourage data literacy through training and by example
- Select and disseminate the right tools
- Modernise their data assets using a governance-led approach that provides a common, consistent information base
- Establish a common cloud platform for their data infrastructure to eliminate data silos

Ultimately, this is about people. People who are given the right tools and who can access, understand, manipulate and trust their business data will drive the best value from those assets.
MESSAGE FROM THE SPONSORS

Microsoft

At Microsoft we recognise that forward-thinking organisations build data strategies that are future fit. Data is no longer solely the domain of IT stakeholders, so while a solid technology foundation is fundamental, we encourage customers to think more holistically about data culture and data capabilities for all. As this report details, data literacy and skills are at the heart of driving cultural change. Read more about Microsoft's approach to data by downloading our ebook *Building a Data-Driven Organisation*.

MBG

The Cognizant Microsoft Business Group (MBG) has a singular purpose — advancing our clients' cloud modernisation journeys with focus, simplicity and scale. To become a modern business you need a next-generation operating model that delivers an agile and future-ready technology landscape enabling your business to respond and adapt to fluid market demands. Our experts help you imagine, build and implement your distinct next-generation operating model so your business can anticipate and act, as if on intuition.

About the Analysts

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Giovanni Cervellati is a research manager in IDC Europe's software group, supporting the European Intelligent Analytics and Data Strategies practice across both research and consulting projects. His core research coverage includes user practices and the cultural aspects of analytics software usage, as well as demand and supply trends in advanced analytics and business intelligence.

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Neil Ward-Dutton is vice president, AI and Intelligent Process Automation European Practices, at IDC. Before joining IDC, he was founder and research director of MWD Advisors, a technology advisory firm focusing on digital technologies and their impacts on business. He is recognised as one of Europe’s most experienced and high-profile technology industry analysts and he has regularly appeared on TV and in print media over his 20-year industry analyst career. He has also authored more than 10 books on IT and business strategy.

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Philip Carnelley is AVP for Software and Analytics in IDC’s European IT Research Group. He leads IDC’s European research on analytics and Big Data software, with a focus on their implications for digital business transformation. He is also tasked with consulting, writing and presenting on broader enterprise software trends and the impact of emerging software technologies in the European region.
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