Microsoft Power BI and MyAnalytics
drive executive effectiveness

Using two powerful Office 365 Enterprise E5 offerings—Power BI and MyAnalytics—executives in the Microsoft IT organization and elsewhere in the company have direct access to the intelligence they need to make smarter, more effective, and impactful business decisions.

The Office of the Chief Information Officer (CIO) took advantage of the increasing capabilities of Power BI—combined with the predictive analytics power of Azure Machine Learning—to couple IT scorecard data with hundreds of other related reports, transforming independent reports into rich and interconnected executive dashboards. It gives us deep business insight, and lets our leaders drill down into any number and level of data points.

Microsoft MyAnalytics powers a brand-new category of communications and collaboration insights. It provides a simple and powerful way to analyze both the consumption and the effectiveness of our IT executives’ group communications using Microsoft Outlook.

These two tools are key to our cultural transformation toward real-time, data-driven decisions.

Transforming executive decisions

Like many enterprises, when our IT leaders needed facts and data to make strategy decisions, they faced the almost overwhelming challenge of linking up multiple data points—from multiple sources, like SQL Server Reporting Server and Excel. What they needed instead was the ability to quickly and deeply dive into business information and find trends.

Not surprisingly, our IT leaders had specific requests for what they wanted to see. They wanted to drill down much deeper into the analysis of common business data, such as:

- Key performance indicator (KPI) reporting and dashboard management.
- Human Resources planning and reporting.
- Resource allocation.
- Financial reporting and analysis.
- Employee satisfaction and sentiment.

We also wanted to find a way to more easily gauge the effectiveness of our IT leadership communications campaigns. We used to go through a complex process of data queries and analysis to determine read rates and response times for large-scale group messages. We needed a more effective and efficient way to get the information.

We found our solutions in the tremendous power and flexibility of Power BI, and new self-service communications analysis capabilities in MyAnalytics.

Power BI democratizes data

Power BI integrates naturally with Excel, the world’s most-used analysis tool. Not only do our executives use it, but so do Microsoft employees, at all levels of the organization. The impact of Power BI is continually growing, because it connects to hundreds of publicly available content packs—logically grouped dashboards, reports, and datasets—and ever-increasing amounts of data are consumed from a variety of Azure data sources.

Power BI fuels the “democratization of data” at Microsoft. We’ve provisioned Power BI across Microsoft, and have an active and enthusiastic user base. Power BI is used by many knowledge worker teams at Microsoft. Our employees use their familiarity with Excel to easily create their own rich, specialized, and interactive Power BI dashboards. The
dashboards generate the insights that we need to drive our business groups forward. Power BI also provides new and simple ways to interact with data, such as asking Cortana questions, or using natural language queries.

One standout example is our Finance organization. It has profoundly changed the Microsoft business review process by transforming what was a labor-intensive reporting process into a streamlined series of Power BI dashboards.

In the past, getting the data for business reviews and then creating the visuals—such as waterfall charts—took so much time that it left very little opportunity for deeper analysis or insights. Power BI lets Finance shortcut and automate the creation of visuals and reports, and the time required for review meeting preparation has been dramatically reduced.

In addition to making business review meetings themselves much more interactive and meaningful for both the business and our Finance professionals, business analysts now have the time to focus on activities to gain deeper insights, like drilling down through the data, speaking with account teams, and so on.

Dashboard development

A significant benefit of Power BI is that dashboard design and deployment has increasingly become a business function, rather than a centralized IT service. In the past, dashboard development for business teams was a centralized and governed IT function that required custom coding and engineering resources. Rich data and reporting dashboards were created, but the process was resource-intensive and time consuming. Like any other software development project, custom dashboard projects followed software development lifecycles and IT governance processes. It could take months to build a dashboard, and that doesn’t take into account the need for dashboard revisions. Not surprisingly, bottlenecks resulted, and it became challenging for IT to keep up with rapidly evolving business needs.

Because business analysts use Power BI to create and modify their own dashboards, IT engineering resources can now be dedicated elsewhere. Business analysts are much closer to the business needs that determine initial dashboard designs, and can quickly implement changes.

New business capability supports decision making

Our Office of the CIO uses Power BI to power a set of analytics competencies that specifically help our executives drill down into the decision data that they need to effectively manage their organizations and accelerate innovation. We took advantage of the increasing capabilities of Power BI, and coupled our IT scorecard data with hundreds of other reports that feed into the same dashboard.

We turned on secured Power BI dashboard capabilities, transforming reports that had been previously independent into interconnected dashboard components. Using our Power BI leader dashboards, an executive can quickly navigate across multiple discipline areas and subjects, and drill down to rich analytic experiences.

Importantly, the Executive Insights dashboards required no programming, no code, and no engineers. Rather, business professionals leverage native Power BI features and capabilities that are available to anyone who uses Power BI.

The ability to drive quick-turnaround analytics with sound governance led to a vast reporting collection supporting our IT organization. Our Office of the CIO partnered closely with our colleagues in the Power BI development team and the BI@Microsoft team, to help a variety of groups bring to life more than 700 Power BI dashboards and reports.

Benefits of Power BI

Using real-time Power BI dashboards and reports helps us to solve problems as they occur, and seize opportunities as soon as they arise. The dashboards empower our leadership team to connect many pieces of data that they were already consuming—across dozens of key dashboards—and add compelling visualization components to that data. Our leadership teams can have much more meaningful, data-driven conversations that lead to key decisions.

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Accelerating decisions with richer data
With multiple categories of information incorporated into the IT scorecard, our leaders can drill down to facilitate much deeper conversations. Consider the workforce planning area. Clicking into future starts, for example, gives the leadership team the ability to pursue any number of questions. Leaders can now explore open requisitions, review future start candidates, and identify matches and opportunities within their organization. From there, the leadership team can move into any number of related conversations.

Capturing actionable satisfaction metrics
Satisfaction and sentiment with IT services across the global Microsoft workforce is gauged based on periodic surveys and polls. Overall satisfaction used to be represented on the IT scorecard as a single color dot and a number score. Now, people who use our dashboard can drill down into millions of rows of data and component scores that build into a single score.

Our sentiment dashboards represent a wide variety of services delivered across Microsoft by Microsoft IT and our partners, and the satisfaction metrics associated with each. Examples of services include email, the Office 365 suite of products, and the wired corporate network. With granular data, IT can now see an end-to-end experience associated with a service, and take action. Take a meeting, for example. Among many satisfaction measures, the scorecard captures:

- Feedback on scheduling meetings.
- Wired network performance during meetings.
- User experience while launching a conversation.
- Applications used during meetings, such as Yammer.
- Audio/video projection satisfaction.

Empowering budget prioritizations
Power BI dashboards help our IT leadership team streamline their budgeting and project prioritization decisions. With data that breaks down services offered by IT, the dashboards can reveal where we can we fund a specific IT initiative or objective, to have the biggest impact for Microsoft employees.

Using the IT Power BI dashboard collection, strategic conversations easily segue to related reports. In the past, access to that related information would have required signing in to multiple systems, such as supplier cost reporting, to acquire the data.

Improving communications effectiveness
Our IT leaders send emails to large groups within Microsoft IT every week, and they also collect data about their use and consumption. Our Office of the CIO used to go through a complex and resource-intensive process of analyzing aggregated data to determine overall summarized read rates and response times to leadership emails.

We needed a more effective and efficient way to get the information. We wanted to easily and quickly assess both consumption and effectiveness, to make sure that our IT leadership communication campaigns were achieving their goals.

Enter MyAnalytics—a new set of self-service tools for personal analytics. The MyAnalytics Outlook add-in delivers email reach and impact insights, right from your inbox. MyAnalytics provides insight into two of the most important factors in personal productivity: how you spend your time and who you spend it with.

MyAnalytics breaks down your time spent in meetings, email, focus hours, and after hours. It provides an overall picture of how you spend your collaboration time. It also provides read rate and response time information when qualified emails are sent to more than five people. The information provides quick insights about the people that you collaborate with on email.
The MyAnalytics personal dashboard

The MyAnalytics personal dashboard encompasses a comprehensive view of your time spent at work. The dashboard provides information in these categories:

- **Network.** This category includes your top collaborators, who you’ve spent the most time with.
- **Meeting hours and habits.** This category includes how much time you spent in meetings, and the breakdown between meetings you scheduled yourself and meetings others scheduled, how much time spent in common categories of meetings.
- **Email hours and habits.** This category includes an estimate of how much time you spent sending and reading emails, both within and outside of defined business hours.
- **Focus hours.** This category includes focus hours—they’re defined as two consecutive hours without meetings.
- **After hours.** This category includes after hours—it captures time spent on email and in meetings outside defined work hours, such as emails read or sent on weekends.

MyAnalytics and IT leadership communications

For our IT leaders, we use MyAnalytics to measure group email communications metrics—in aggregate, never on an individual level—while simultaneously maintaining strict confidentiality of the email recipients. It quickly and easily measures the impact of group email communications. A sender simply presses a button in Outlook to track metrics associated with group messages, such read rates. MyAnalytics also shows message activity—the number of forwards and replies, and graphically displays the time at which readership peaks, and then drops off.

Readership data is a quick way to gauge immediate interest in topics, and in turn lets teams fine-tune email campaigns and strategies. For example, we’ve seen that in some cases, if a report is shorter, more people are likely to open it. Consumption data can show better days—or even better hours—to send messages.

Improving IT scorecard messaging

Capturing anyone’s attention through email is challenging. An IT leader might typically receive around 2,000 email messages every day!

We wanted to improve read rates on our monthly CIO Scorecard message. The CIO Scorecard shares pertinent KPI and performance metrics from the wide variety of services that Microsoft IT delivers to the company. We decided to use MyAnalytics as part of our scorecard publication process to get a gauge of executive communication effectiveness.

Historically, the scorecard publication message was delivered in a complex template that contained a large amount of text, required scrolling to read completely, and contained multiple links to related content. We wanted to make changes to our leadership communications, both to make the best and most respectful use of the audience’s time, and to communicate the most direct understanding of the message content.

We made design changes that “lightened” the message. We constrained it to about 40 words, and—leveraging Power BI dashboards—showed a single screen with key visual content—our leaders can quickly gauge status across all KPIs at a glance. The message was also optimized for a mobile device. MyAnalytics quickly showed us that consumption of the revised message increased at both the 24-hour, and five-day points.

“**MyAnalytics is the fastest and easiest way we’ve found to get an immediate gauge on message penetration for key emails. We consistently refine our executive-focused messaging, and leverage MyAnalytics as one way to measure communication effectiveness. MyAnalytics data helps us streamline content, and increase our read-rate above 60% to a key audience.**” —Chris Workman, Executive Insights Director–Office of the CIO

Communications analysis using familiar tools

No one needs to tell you that we’re faced with an overwhelming number of distractions. Email is the common language of business, and effectively communicating by email is essential. With the MyAnalytics add-in, our teams...
can use a tool familiar to everyone—Outlook—in a new and powerful way to gauge how many people are reading group messages. Note that statistics are presented in summary form, so the people who read or forwarded your email are not identified by name.

**Inspiring communication innovation**

Following on the ability to quickly see how many people are reading, replying to, or forwarding your messages, MyAnalytics provides the ability to quickly tailor your email communications according to readership results. You can experiment with many attributes of your messages and quickly see any changes in read-rate behavior.

Because MyAnalytics is built into the Outlook interface, and is intuitive and quick, it encourages innovation in communication. You can use data to inform small changes, test your readership, and then either continue making more changes, or revert. Some changes you might experiment with are:

- Varying message length or format.
- Exploring different messaging templates.
- Sending on a different day of the week, or at a different time.
- Reducing the number of recipients.
- Testing targeted email messages and recipients.
- Iterating on your approaches.

**Key takeaways**

At Microsoft, we have a culture of data—and we want data to influence every decision. We’re using key new technology features in Office 365 Enterprise E5 that help us intuitively visualize data, facilitate deeper analysis, and make more informed decisions. Power BI has been adopted across all organization levels at Microsoft—it helps our leaders work across disciplines and organizations to make more informed and nuanced decisions.

At the same time, we’ve leveraged MyAnalytics—a powerful new set of self-service capabilities that helps our knowledge workers maximize their time and collaboration efforts—to perform analysis on IT leadership communications deliverables that used to require many times more effort. Because it’s so easy and quick to use, it inspires innovation and experimentation in communications.

**For more information**

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