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BIG DATA ANALYTICS

How Big Data Can Support Workforce Optimization



John Edwards, Technology Journalist & Author
8/28/2013
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It's well known that big data analytics applied to markets can help businesses become more nimble, efficient, and responsive to the needs of customers and business partners. What's not quite so obvious, however, is that big data tools can also be used to optimize a company's workforce.

Visiting a dead zone

While a growing number of businesses are using big data to gain a deeper understanding of customer and business partner behaviors and preferences, employee insight remains something of a dead zone. This situation exists in part because most businesses have yet to recognize the potential of using big data for workforce analyses and in part because firms don't want to be accused of spying on their employees.

Businesses have come a long way since the days of Henry Ford. In the early 20th century, Ford organized a corporate **Sociological Department** that used investigators to evaluate the cleanliness of employees' homes, checked with school attendance offices to determine if workers' children were attending classes, and monitored bank records to verify that employees made regular deposits. While nobody is advocating a return to those days, big data analytics now gives companies an effective, reliable, and non-intrusive way of studying the vast amounts of employee data that help a business build and maintain an optimal workforce.

IBM, for instance, unveiled **software** earlier this year that allows businesses to scrutinize massive amounts of employee data to reveal job trends that can be utilized to create and maintain more productive work environments, boost employee morale and satisfaction, and stem the defection of valued employees to competitors.

Real-time views

IBM's workforce-analytics services allows human resource (HR) executives and managers to gain a real-time view into the massive amounts of data packed inside HR databases, such as performance reviews, salary, years of service, and demographic profiles. When combined with information supplied by employees through corporate surveys, as well as data shared on internal and external social media platforms, HR divisions can tap into the pulse of their organizations to improve retention, performance, and morale. Analytics can also be used to get a better handle on the factors that drive job performance and to gain insight on how employees view company policies, advertising campaigns, and other programs.

Retention analytics is a key part of IBM's workforce analytics services. The technology aims to help HR organizations uncover and pinpoint potentially damaging HR patterns as they emerge and before they can cause significant damage to the workforce and critical business operations. Most important, retention analytics can be used to reveal areas where behavior patterns suggest that employees may soon be on the move. Rapid turnover and compensation discrepancies can also be detected by the analytics, enabling a remediation strategy to be developed and deployed before a staff exodus even begins.

Takeaway

Big data has already proven its ability to help businesses to learn more about the world at large. Now companies must take the time to learn how big data can help them better understand the challenges that lurk within their ranks.

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smkinoshita, User Rank: Exabyte Executive
9/9/2013 | 11:19:01 AM

Re: Better Place to Work?

@Pubudu: It has to do with how the information collected by Big Data can be used to retain employees without looking like monitoring or invasion of privacy. If certain benefits are required to get key employees to stay with the company, will offering the exact benefits make the employees suspect their behaviour is being monitored?

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It's not the benefits, it's knowing exactly what benefits would make an employee stay. Some employees find the idea of a company studying them creepy.

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Saul Sherry, User Rank: Blogger
9/4/2013 | 7:33:30 AM

Re: Better Place to Work?

@smkinoshita - I'd say good managers and HR teams are already well versed in being aware of these nuances and being proactive. The challenge in workforce optimization is to make this insight available to new appointees to the HR team or to less subtle HR/management employees.

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MDMConsult, User Rank: Exabyte Executive
9/3/2013 | 6:25:32 PM

Re: Better Place to Work?

IBM aims to differentiate competitively through analytics. It can use big data information strategically to reduce time, reduce operating costs and improve areas. The company will face increasing pressure to extract new insights from an explosion of available data.

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Pubudu, User Rank: Bit Player
8/31/2013 | 3:40:38 AM

Re: Better Place to Work?

Exactly dcawrey, there is a famous say that the "customer is king" but I do believe that "employees are the king" if the company treat them well employees will treat the customer in a royal way which will have long term sustainability of the organization.

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Pubudu, User Rank: Bit Player
8/31/2013 | 3:35:29 AM

Re: Better Place to Work?

True a saji, there may be lot of other external things which should be effect to the work please environment. Some time it may be even lack of leadership skills of the boss.

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Pubudu, User Rank: Bit Player
8/31/2013 | 3:29:59 AM

Re: Better Place to Work?

@smkinoshita, What is the relationship with Big Data to these benefits of the work place.

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Pubudu, User Rank: Bit Player
8/31/2013 | 3:13:28 AM

Re: I'm in.

@ netcrawl, I do agree with you. I also believe that from the marketers point of view big data is a mirror of future.

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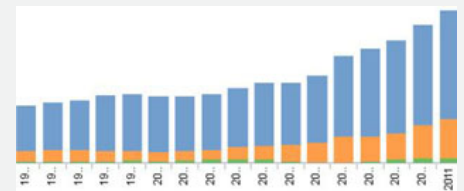
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smkinoshita, User Rank: Exabyte Executive
8/31/2013 | 1:55:09 AM

Re: Better Place to Work?

@James Connolly: ... but that still doesn't change *how* the company reacts in the end. If the org takes action, do they take care not to appear to have spied in their action alone?

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For example, let's say I'm at IBM and unhappy. A new position opens up, and I'm very qualified for it -- but my employee review isn't due for another few months and according to the data, I could be gone in a matter of weeks.

Would they offer me the position, or would instead the HR drop word through the grapevine that this new position well suited to me will be opening soon and that I should apply, even though it's pretty much well a given that I will get the position if I try (do they even tell anyone else)?

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chris.had, User Rank: Bit Player
8/31/2013 | 12:08:57 AM

Re: Big Data for Resume Analysis

@Mishra; Yes but we cannot stop data breaching. All we can do is to mitigate them to a certain level. That will control things a bit but 100%.

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dcawrey, User Rank: Bit Player
8/30/2013 | 6:12:29 PM

Re: Better Place to Work?

It always seems to me that human resources is one step behind what is going on with technology. I am writing this as an outsider to HR, but it has seemed to be lacking the right technical edge to be ahead of the curve.

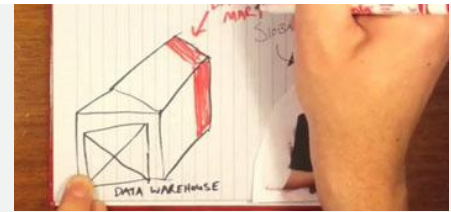
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Just as this article deftly points out, turnover is a huge problem for HR. And what are they doing about it? To me, it appears that they are placing the blame on an ever-shifting jobs market. I don't think that's correct. I believe it has more to do with HR not working hard enough to retain the right talent.

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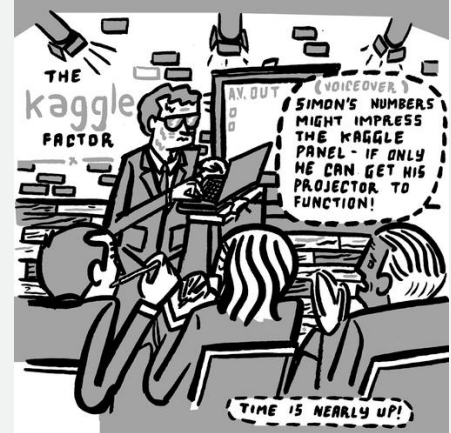
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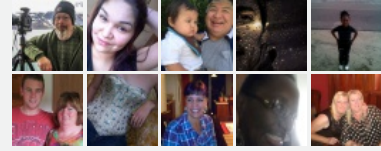
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