

Research Paper

Question

How are HRBPs' job roles and responsibilities changing due to Analytics & Insights and how can they become better equipped to handle these transformations?

Introduction

The Human Resources Business Partner (HRBP) role focuses on creating value for constituents which include customers, capital market, competitors, and communities. This role can vary from organization to organization but traditionally features an HR professional advising a group of customers within the organization.ⁱ Looking to the future, the HRBP role will be vital in creating value through data analytics.

The actual analytics that a company engages in will vary drastically depending on where they fall on a data analytics maturity model (Exhibit 1); most companies are still at a very basic level (Level 1 - Operational Reporting)ⁱⁱ. Simply put, the field of HR data analytics encompasses any business practice that involves collecting and analyzing corporate data in an effort to improve HR performance and overall business performance. McKinsey found that nearly 60% of CIOs and CTOs said the need for data and analytics expertise within HR personnel would be more acute than any other skill gap within a year.ⁱⁱⁱ This is particularly true for the job of an Human Resources Business Partner.^{iv}

Recommendations

The role and responsibility of an HRBP is rapidly changing due to Analytics and Insights. There are four distinct steps a company can take that will help them equip their HRBPs with the tools and expertise needed to adapt to these changes (Exhibit 2).

I. Assess Data Maturity

The first step a company must take is to accurately assess their own level of data maturity. This is a vital first step because, as mentioned above, every company is at a different level in regard to their data maturity; a correct assessment must be made in order to then determine the "best practices" that should be adopted. Worse than having no plan at all would be having the wrong plan. One method of assessing data maturity is through the Data Management Maturity Index (Exhibit 3)^v. Another method of assessing data maturity, albeit less formal and comprehensive, is through the use of a data maturity model (Exhibit 4).^{vi}

II. Upskill Human Resource Business Partners

Once you have determined the level of your company's data maturity, the next step is to begin upskilling your HRBPs (and other HR personnel the company sees fit to include).^{vii} The main question when it comes to upskilling HRBPs is "buy, build, or borrow?"^{viii} Several avenues are

available that a company can choose from in order to pursue relevant upskilling for data analytics expertise (Exhibit 5).

An accurate assessment of *where* your company's data maturity is will inform you on *what* skills to begin developing. These two steps combined give a clear picture of what specific data analytics and insights talents you need in your HRBPs and how to obtain them.

III. *Develop a "Data Storytelling" Competency*

Storytelling is a key aspect to communicating the data in a comprehensible format. By using storytelling tactics with data analytics, dialogue that drives action is created resulting in positive organizational change.^{ix} Listed below are easy steps to effective story telling:

- **Find the middle.** The middle of the story helps drive the direction of the data. Data may communicate one issue, but the root cause can be a separate issue. By finding the middle, or the opportunity, a conversation that engages leaders and increases action is created.
- **Manage Emotion with HR Data.** Know the data being presented and which aspects will need action. Once you have established the most important data, create an emotional story to attach. This can include documentary, drama, and horror. All three of these are utilized in different settings with different data.
- **Be bold in presentations.** The best presentations know the material, are confident, and create succinct messages. Use limited amounts of data that drive the story forward and focus on visualizations.
- **Record your wins and share your stories.** The more practice, the better the story telling becomes. Find a way to keep the successful presentations, helping to have more success in the future.^x

IV. *Utilize Predictive Analytics*

Predictive analytics is considered the highest level of HR analytics, composed of predictive models and scenario planning. Looking to the future, predictive analytics helps to create and optimize new directions, offering insights to where HR investments are working and where improvements can be made. Predictive analytics are the most critical type of data for the future of strategic decision making.^{xi} By evaluating where the company is currently located on the data maturity model, there will be a clear path to reaching the predictive analytics level.

Conclusion

By identifying the company data maturity, the knowledge gap between data professionals and HRBP can begin to close. This must be done through equipping HRBPs with the proper tools including upskilling, storytelling, and the use of predictive models and further data maturation. Through combining the steps as outlined, HRBPs can have more knowledge and confidence with data analytics resulting in more successful strategic decisions being made. By assessing data maturity, upskilling analytics expertise, developing storytelling competencies, and orienting towards future data maturity, companies can equip their HRBPs to be more effective in their evolving roles and responsibilities.

Appendix

Exhibit 1 - Deloitte Data Analytics Maturity Model



Exhibit 2 - Four Step Process for HRBP Data Analytics Transformation

1. Assess data maturity
 - Before you can know *what to do*, you must know *where you are*. Through a formal and objective data maturity assessment, companies can get a better idea for where they are, what data skills they currently need, and what talent to begin developing.
2. Develop upskilling for HRBPs
 - Companies must not just know *what* data skills to obtain, but they must also know *how* those skills will be obtained. There are many options for how to upskill HRBPs for their evolving role in data. Companies need to first determine *what* upskilling will occur and then *how* that upskilling will occur.
3. Build "data storytelling" competency
 - Regardless of where a company's data maturity lies, the need for "data storytelling" will always be present. HRBPs and HR employees often work with a myriad of groups, and so their ability to tell an understandable and persuasive story with data is an absolutely essential skill to build.
4. Orient towards maturation
 - Once a company has determined where their data maturity is, what data skills they need to develop, and how their HRBPs and HR employees will tell stories with the data, the next step is to orient towards the future. Data analytics and insights is not a stagnant field and therefore a company must always be looking towards the future to keep their talent pool fresh and their employee skillsets sharp. One way to do this is to focus on data analytics maturation and actively work towards moving to the next level of maturity.

Exhibit 3 - Data Management Maturity Index and Graphic

DMM categories	Process area ID	Process area name
Data Management Strategy	1.1	Data Management Strategy
	1.2	Communications
	1.3	Data Management Function
	1.4	Business Case
	1.5	Program Funding
Data Governance	2.1	Governance Management
	2.2	Business Glossary
	2.3	Metadata Management
Data Quality	3.1	Data Quality Strategy
	3.2	Data Profiling
	3.3	Data Quality Assessment
	3.4	Data Cleansing
Data Operations	4.1	Data Requirements
	4.2	Data Lifecycle Management
	4.3	Provider Management
Platform & Architecture	5.1	Architectural Standards
	5.2	Architectural Approach
	5.3	Data Management Platform
	5.4	Data Integration
	5.5	Historical Data, Retention and Archiving
Supporting Processes	6.1	Measurement and Analysis
	6.2	Process Management
	6.3	Process Quality Assurance
	6.4	Risk Management
	6.5	Configuration Management

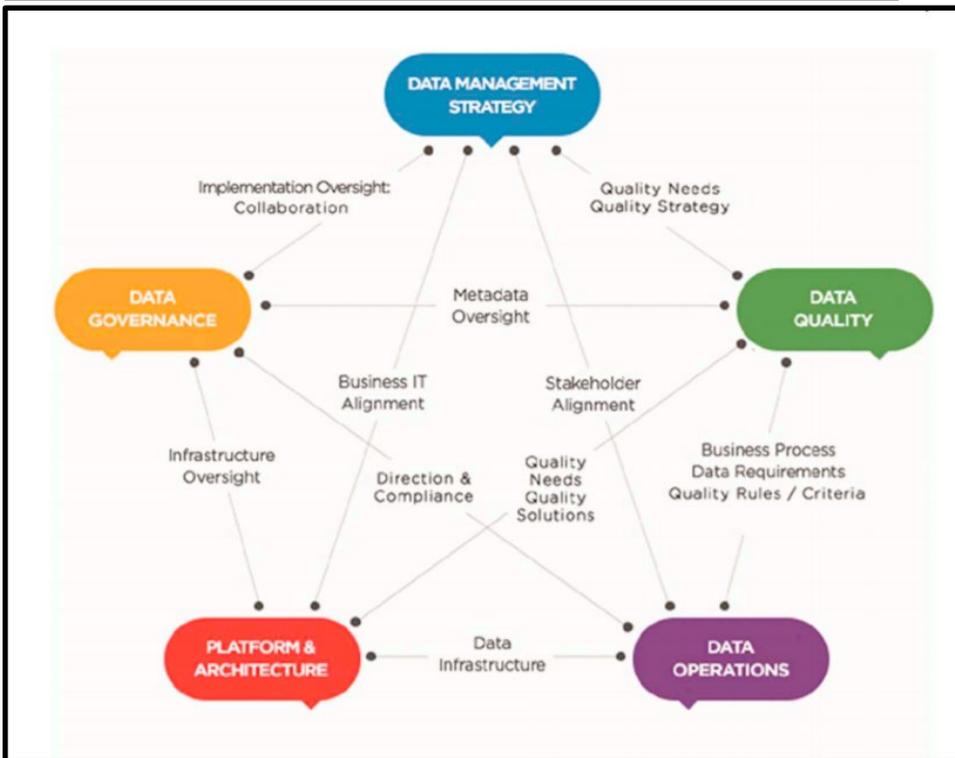


Exhibit 4 - Data Maturity Model Assessment

Level	1: Raw content assets	2: Smart 'granular' content	3: Personalisation	4: Knowledge	5: Insights
Store and manage	Document level metadata User access rights data	Granular content 'chunk' level metadata	Semantic fingerprints for users 'Integrated' usage data	Data relationships (e.g. as triples)	Large primary and supplementary data sets
Extract and create	Manual metadata creation during editorial processes	Semantic fingerprints for content items	User interest metadata User 'cohort' analysis	Knowledge extraction - as relationships	Predictions and recommendations
Data use	Access control Document collections	Granular search Faceted search Proximity matching Usage trending	Personalised proximity matching User type analytics	Powerful knowledge query capabilities	Predictive and prescriptive analytics
Product value	Find and access documents online	Enhanced search and discovery Slice and dice content products	Personalised discovery experience	Answer questions Explain what has happened	Explain what will happen and what to do about it

Exhibit 5 – Examples of Upskilling Pathways

Upskilling Type	Description
Borrow	Partner with a university or college program
Build	Develop and deliver upskilling training internally
Borrow / Buy	Utilize online training forums (e.g., LinkedIn Learning, MOOCs)
Build	Real-time learning and training in-house (e.g., assemble cross functional team with analysts and HR employees where the analysts will train the HR employees in real-time)
Build	Go for low hanging fruit: An HR Employee doesn't need a PhD in statistical analysis to be able to add value to data maturity. Find skills that are needed and also easy to develop (e.g., using Excel)
Buy / Borrow / Build	"Return and report" programs where someone goes to learn and comes back to teach others. The original training can come from any upskilling type
Hybrid	Combination of all the above tips may be best

References

- ⁱ Ulrich Dave, Brockbank, Wayne. (2009). The HR Business Partner Model: Past Learning and Future Challenges. *People and Strategy*, Vol. 32, Issue 2, p. 5-7
- ⁱⁱ Gottlieb, J., & Roggendorf, M. (2020, October 20). [Data and analytics: Why does it matter and where is the impact?](#)
- ⁱⁱⁱ Gottlieb, J., & Roggendorf, M. (2020, October 20). [Data and analytics: Why does it matter and where is the impact?](#)
- ^{iv} Kelly, C., Rapp, K. (2020). [The HR function in 2021: Models and competencies.](#) *CAHRS White Paper*.
- ^v Thomas, M., Cipolla, J., Lambert, B., & Carter, L. (2019, September 20). [Data management maturity assessment of public sector agencies.](#)
- ^{vi} Herbert, S., & Lawlor, B. (2019). [The road to data maturity - Why publishing has to stay relevant in the digital age and why it needs to start now.](#) *Information Services & Use*, 39(4), 297–302.
- ^{vii} CAHRS Working Group. (2018, June 18). [The Evolving Role of the Human Resources Business Partner.](#)
- ^{viii} Zielinski, D. (2019, August 16). [Buy, Build or Borrow? How to Develop Data-Analytics Skills in HR.](#) *SHRM*.
- ^{ix} Welborne, Thersa. (2015, January) Data Driven storytelling: The missing link in HR data analytics. *Employment Relations Today*, Vol. 42 Issue 4, p27-33.
- ^x Welborne, Thersa. (2015, January) Data Driven storytelling: The missing link in HR data analytics. *Employment Relations Today*, Vol. 42 Issue 4, p27-33.
- ^{xixi} Jose Sousa, Maria. (2018, January). HR Analytics Models for effective decision making. *Preceding of the European Conference on Management, Leadership and Governance*.