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Key Question

What responsibilities and capabilities for data analysis and insights should the modern human resources business partner (HRBP) have according to current academic and industry research?

Context

With an increasingly digital world of work, companies must learn how to leverage more and more data about their workforce. This development means that the modern multinational corporation requires much more from its HRBPs than ever before — HRBPs must analyze data sets, employ data-driven algorithms, and apply the results of their analyses to advance the business strategy and drive efficiency in their business units. To meet these new expectations, **HRBPs must obtain new capabilities and take on a new set of responsibilities** related to data analysis and insights.

Capabilities

In order to play a part in the digital world of work, the modern HRBP must be equipped with a toolbox of specific data analytics skills while also balancing other key capabilities of the HRBP.

Defining Key Data Analytics Skills

The HRBP must master the data analytics skills of **understanding data sources**, **leveraging tools to complete data analysis**, **connecting analysis to tangible outcomes**, and **communicating those outcomes to key stakeholders**.

Understanding Data Sources

Before conducting data analysis, HRBPs must be able to **identify and accurately understand the available people data sources** and weigh the data quality and data privacy concerns for each source.[1] They should understand how the raw data they will work with was calculated and know what precise metric the data points within a data set represent.[2]

Leveraging Tools to Complete Data Analysis

An HRBP must also **master a data analytics tool** and know how to leverage that tool to **complete data analysis**. The most common data analysis tools for human resources overall are Power BI, R, and Tableau.[3] Note that the suitability of data analytics tools varies by human resources function. For example, the recruiting team may want to leverage IBM's Watson whereas those focusing on retention may find Tableau to be a more useful tool.[4] The most common analyses for human resources overall are regression, association analysis, and machine learning. Note that the utility of certain analyses also varies by function. For example, recruitment analysis tends to heavily leverage machine learning and regression while analyzing employee engagement more heavily relies on sentiment analysis and decision trees.[5] *See Appendix 1 and 2 for information on the suitability of data analytics tool and analysis type by HR function, respectively.*

Connecting Analysis to Outcomes

At all steps of the data analysis process, HRBPs must be considering **how their findings affect outcomes** for their internal clients. They must have the capability to ask questions that matter to their internal clients, select and analyze the data sources that hold the answers to those questions, and then ultimately **translate data analysis and insights into actionable recommendations** that resonate with and compel their internal clients.[6]

Communicating Outcomes to Stakeholders

Once an HRBP has identified data-backed outcomes that add value, they must be able to **effectively communicate their findings to relevant stakeholders** using a variety of methods including workforce data consulting, data visualization, and **data-driven storytelling** during verbal presentations and in writing.[7] HRBPs should be able to manipulate dynamic dashboards during live presentations and communicate compelling business cases for their recommendations.[8]

Keeping Sight of Complementary Competencies

An HRBP may struggle to execute the data analytics skills listed above without the prerequisite **HR domain expertise**, **consulting and problem-solving skills**, and **business acumen**. Mastery of technology and data skills builds from a

foundation of these three prerequisite competencies to develop a "full-stack HR professional"[9] who can combine the data analytics skills they gain with existing competencies to positively impact the business. *See the complete "full-stack" model in Appendix 3.* Therefore, it is important not to lose sight of the complimentary and prerequisite capabilities that an HRBP must possess in addition to their emerging data analysis and insights skills.

Responsibilities

The Dynamic Role of the HRBP
The role of an HRBP is to focus on solving strategic issues that can help a business grow and become more competitive.[10] Because these issues and their solutions vary by organization and over time, it is difficult to pinpoint foolproof examples of people data analytics and insights that all HRBPs should prioritize. Instead, it is recommended that HRBPs focus on driving business outcomes and value creation for the business as it grows and changes, rather than emphasizing a rigid set of responsibilities.[11] Therefore, one way to determine the data analytics and insights responsibilities of the HRBP is to identify the problems that their business unit is facing and brainstorm ways that enhanced data analysis and insights could provide clarity about those problems and their solutions.

Starting Points for HRBP Data Analytics
Another way to determine data analytics and insights priorities is by identifying common responsibilities of the modern HRBP and determining how to embed the data analytics and insights function into them. For example, Deloitte recommends that business HR should leverage performance data to **scout and coach emerging leaders** and **monitor recruiting data and the employer brand** to better understand employee engagement and talent flight risk.[12]

The HRBP may also consider conducting data analysis and insights on **retention** and **change management** as a starting point for their business unit, since these areas are generally within the purview of the HRBP[13] and may be particularly timely during the War for Talent and in the post-COVID era.

Retention
The retention of existing employees is of paramount importance during the current War for Talent,[14] and HRBPs are equipped to calculate and analyze the retention rate for employees in their business unit because they typically have access to information about the employment history and turnover of these employees. The HRBP can analyze retention across segments of their business unit's workforce and make their findings tangible by recommending appropriate strategies to drive retention, like increased training and development or adjusting compensation, by segment.[15]

Change Management
As exemplified by the COVID-19 pandemic, change is becoming the new normal and forcing corporations to sharpen their change management abilities.[16] The HRBP can use data analytics and insights to identify unintended consequences of organizational change such as decreased productivity or increased turnover, make recommendations to ameliorate these pitfalls, and communicate the problems and solutions they have identified through data analysis to business unit leaders.

Implementation & Benefits

Building new capabilities and creating new responsibilities for the HRBP will likely require thorough planning and careful implementation. One model for HR analytics adoption begins with the introduction of new data analytics trends and tools, and it recommends training on these new tools until adoption is complete.[17] *See Appendix 4 for the full view of this model.* Upon adoption, ensure a long-standing culture of data analytics and insights by providing opportunities for early adopters to stimulate and work collaboratively with other HRBPs on data analytics and insights tasks, to drive the diffusion of knowledge and best practice throughout the organization.[18]

Organizations who successfully implement these new responsibilities and capabilities may expect to see an increased ability to manage and measure key outcomes, a stronger linkage between business and people strategies, and the potential for performance improvement and increased return on investment.[19] *See more details about these benefits in Appendix 5.*

Citations

[1,7] Bersin, J. (n.d.). *The global HR capability project: A new approach to accelerating HR capabilities.* Josh Bersin.

[2,8,18] Martin, Lexy. (n.d.). *The HRBP as people analytics evangelists*. Academy to Innovate in HR.

[3-5, 17] Saxena, M., Bagga, T., & Gupta, S. (2021). Fearless path for human resource personnel's through analytics: a study of recent tools and techniques of human resource analytics and its implication. *International Journal of Information Technology*, *13*(4), 1649-1657.

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[9] Bersin, J. (2019). *The full-stack HR professional.* Josh Bersin. https://joshbersin.com/

[10-11, 13] Deloitte. (n.d.). *HR business partners and centers of expertise*.

[12] Deloitte. (2016). *Enabling business results with HR "measures that matter."*

[14] Brooks, Ben. (2021). *Brooks: Is your organization prepared for the second war for talent?*

[15] The Society for Human Resource Management. (n.d.). *Managing for employee retention*.

[16] Kotter, J. P., Akhtar, V., & Gupta, G. (2021). *Is your organization surviving change - or thriving in it?*. Harvard Business Review.

[19] Mohammad, A. Q. (2019). HR analytics: A modern tool in HR for predictive decision making. *Journal of Management, 6*(3), 51-63.

Appendix

Appendix 1: Tool or Software and Impact of HR Analytics by HR Function

HR function	Tool or software	Impact of HR analytics
Recruitment	Social networking analysis	All the respondents who are using analytics accepted (100%) that HR Analytics has changed the working of HR towards the recruitment process in terms of posting jobs, looking for talented candidate and approaching them
	IBM'S Watson	Facebook, Tweeter, Instagram and other Social media sites will be used to post a job and hire a talented person
	HireVue—AI driven tool	Video interviewing software which will analyze candidate language, personality and expressions [47]
Training and learning	Python, R, Tableau	62.03% states that the training modules are well organized as per the need. Outdated stuff is replaced with new techniques with new methods. Direct conversation with mentor made a heart out interaction. This contributed towards clarity and much better performances
	e-Learning—social sites, mobile devices, machine learning	Helps in comparing the learner's performance, understand diverse learning styles and preferences. Giving utilization of predictive analysis and multi-source knowledge mapping which will recommend and provide feedback with intervention of mentor based on employee performance [48]
Employee engagement		79.6% reported an increase in the engagement of employee out of which best method is developing transparent reports and visualize the data of participation with performance
	Actimo, machine learning	Communicating even with non-desk employee effectively, support and train when needed and track the individual employee participation with insights [49]
Career development	Python, machine learning, sensitivity analysis, social media	42.5% HRs accepted that they are able to plan jobs in much better way after clear analysis on projects, needs, growth prospects, opportunities and threats. Analytics is making a way out. Leaders with proactive insight can foster talent for new opportunities and train and support career growth [50]
Employee retention	Tableau	67.5% HRs reported that the retention rate showed a positive trend as they are able to work better on their policies, procedures, and employee safety and satisfaction
	Sage people, Sage HR	Analytics highlights the critical factors, expectations and skills which helps the managers to positively allocate duties [51]
Employee performance	R, Python, Tableau, Vsier	73.1% has accepted that through analytics a steep rise in performance is marked as they are able to make performances reasonable than intuitive
	Servicenow, Monday.com	Give insight in trends, predictions and low time. It is helping managers and employee themselves to track their performances and compare with the standards. It improves the reliability and no scope of biasness

Graphic from: Saxena, M., Bagga, T., & Gupta, S. (2021). Fearless path for human resource personnel's through analytics: a study of recent tools and techniques of human resource analytics and its implication. *International Journal of Information Technology*, *13*(4), 1649-1657.

Appendix 2: Types of Data Analysis by HR Issue

HR issues	Machine learning	Regression	Association analysis	Sentiment analysis	Decision tree	Social network analysis
HR planning [41]	73.1	6.4	5.5	19.4	–	5.5
Career management [42]	12.03	28.7	6.4	25	–	–
Recruitment analysis [24]	63.8	67.5	26.8	25	26.8	41.6
Employee performance analysis [43]	78.7	60.1	22.2	5.5	9.2	6.4
Employee satisfaction level [43]	53.7	21.2	19.4	79.6	–	–
Employee engagement [44]	–	29.6	8.3	77.7	59.2	–
Employee empowerment [45]	6.4	7.4	5.5	–	–	–
Employee turnover analysis [46]	75.9	33.3	42.5	–	62.03	36.1
Predictive analysis [6]	71.2	56.4	39.8	7.4	38.8	31.4

Graphic from: Saxena, M., Bagga, T., & Gupta, S. (2021). Fearless path for human resource personnel's through analytics: a study of recent tools and techniques of human resource analytics and its implication. *International Journal of Information Technology*, *13*(4), 1649-1657.

**Appendix 3: The Full-Stack HR Professional Model**

Graphic from: Bersin, J. (2019). *The full-stack HR professional.* Josh Bersin. https://joshbersin.com/

Appendix 4: Framework for Easy HR Analytics Adoption
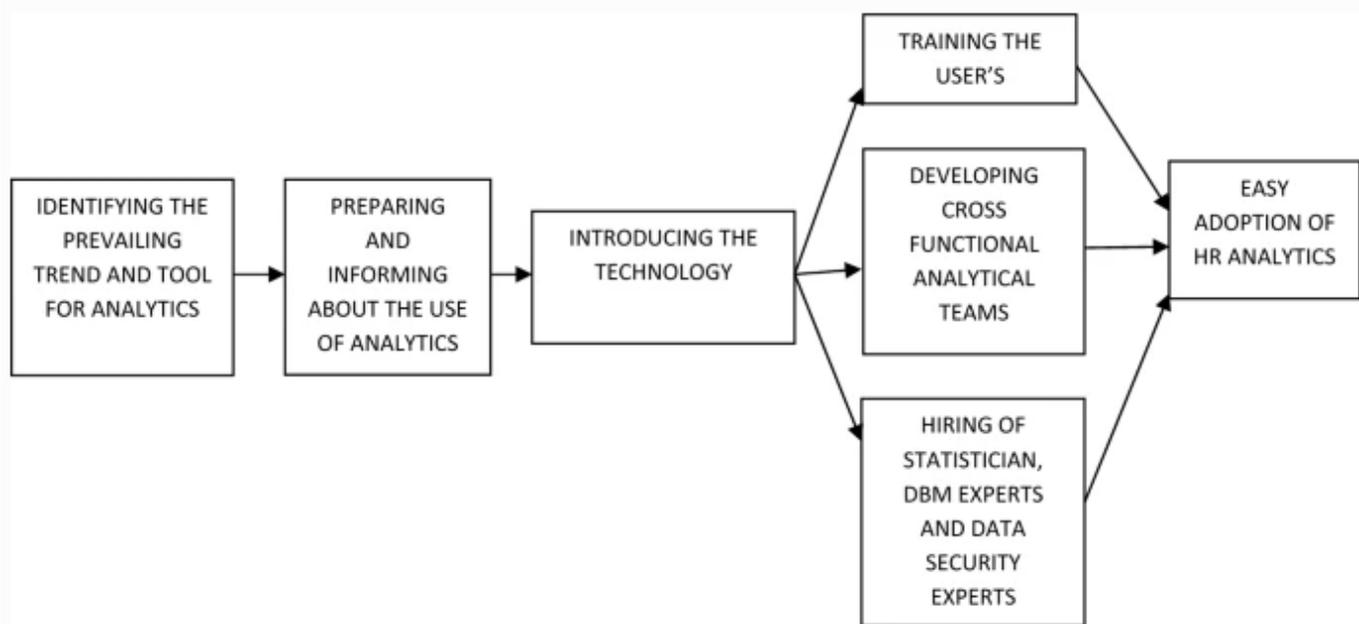
Graphic from: Saxena, M., Bagga, T., & Gupta, S. (2021). Fearless path for human resource personnel's through analytics: a study of recent tools and techniques of human resource analytics and its implication. *International Journal of Information Technology*, *13*(4), 1649-1657.

Appendix 5: Benefits of HR Analytics
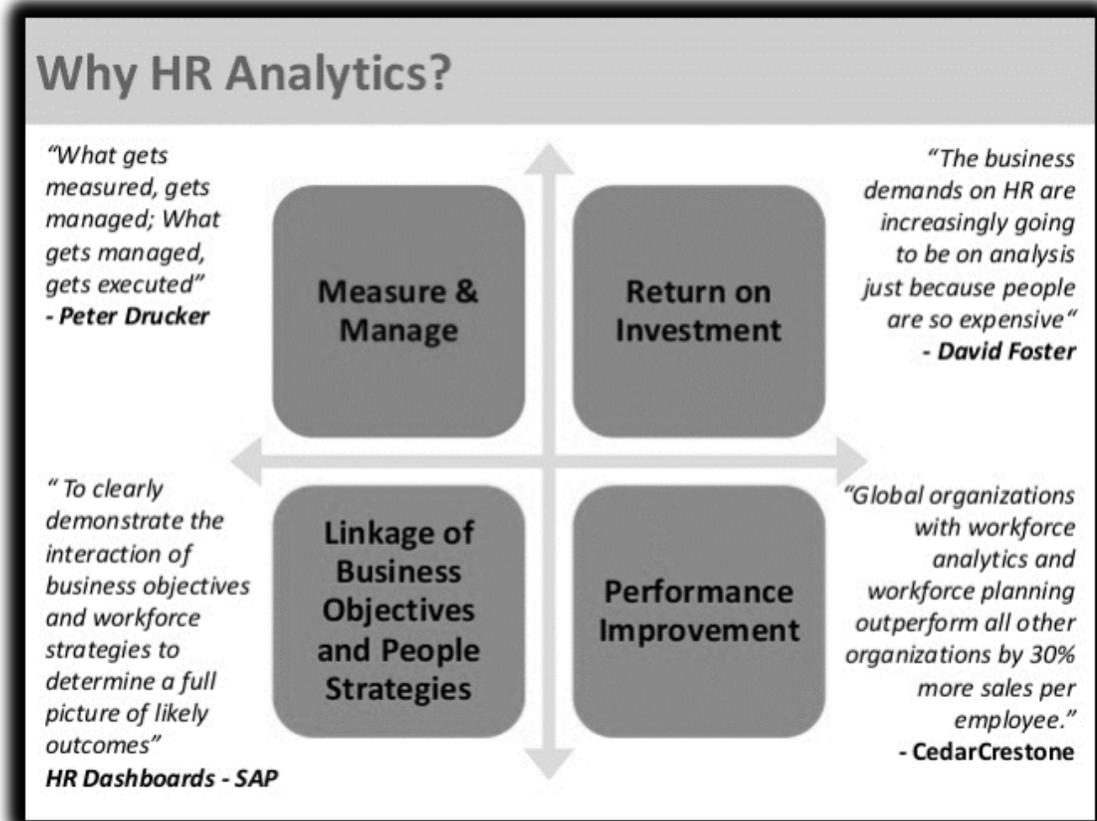
Graphic from: Mohammad, A. Q. (2019). HR analytics: A modern tool in HR for predictive decision making. *Journal of Management, 6*(3), 51-63.