



Data trends



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The C Suite

If you are looking for examples of data driven change in the world, look no further than who is sitting in all the Level 38 corner offices around the globe. The CEO and his personal assistant are there, of course, and so is the CIO. But now a whole new band of brothers is forming – so many bands that buildings will need a lot more than four corners to accommodate them.

The changes we are seeing are new roles at the most senior levels. These roles have been created because data about key features of a business are now available to be analysed that previously was not, or the relative importance of a set of data are only now being seen as truly important.

Some banks, for instance, recognise that the complete end to end user experience of a customer is critical to retaining their client base. Some banks have taken the step of appointing Chief User Experience Officers (CUXO) – a role created after banks realised the true power of tracking data about user behaviour in minute detail.

The C suite used to have a CFO and maybe a CIO reporting to the CEO at the top, and the CEO was usually on the Board. The ultimate decision-maker and go-between involving Board members and the business, the CEO was ‘the man’. This is not the case anymore.

One of the powerful things that data does is allow the people that have access to it to become experts within very narrow but important knowledge bands that can make a company’s competitive edge just that much sharper.

In a recent Forbes article entitled ‘Big Data: 20 Mind-Boggling Facts Everyone Must Read’, it was stated that ‘more data has been created in the past two years than in the entire previous history of the human race,’ and we have been slowly building the tools to deal with this data. When I say ‘deal’, I mean use, dissect, draw conclusions, make predictions and, in a business context, essentially make new and exciting types of experts that allow the sharpening of that competitive edge I mentioned.

masters of data can change a company’s view of the competitive landscape

Generating more data in the last two years than has ever been created in the history of the world is one thing. Trying to make use of this data in a meaningful and impactful way is another. All of this new data needs experts, and experts need bosses. This has seen the C suite blow up and out in all sorts of new directions; Chief Artificial Intelligence Officer (CAIO), Chief Analytics Officer (CAO), Chief Data Officer (CDO), Chief Content Officer (CCO) and even one called Chief Ninja (CN).

The other important change that this spawning of Chiefs has created is that the lines of reporting no longer go up and through the CEO to the Board. Many of

these new ‘Chief’ positions that are being generated are so important to strategy that they report directly to the Board. This is changing the dynamics of how companies operate, report and achieve their objectives in very significant ways.

It is data that has opened up all of these new possibilities, and the pursuit of new possibilities that has created all of this data. Within this circular dynamic lies the future of most organisational change – hard core pillars of strategic focus and new empires to be won.

If you are in the game of generating data, and don’t have a Chief in your domain, ask for one or become one yourself – go on – give yourself a ridiculous title and just run with it.

Businesses (oil and gas, miners or otherwise) need to take serious note of the way data and masters of data can change a company’s view of the competitive landscape. The Board is used to seeing the landscape at the level of forests, oceans, cities and suburbia. The use of data can now let them see the individual leaves, fishing holes, taxi ranks and the very doorsteps of consumers.

If you fear having too many Chiefs and not enough Indians, then just count the Indians. Then the Indians become data, and creating data is what makes Chiefs. Don’t wait until your company needs Chiefs, just go with the confidence that data can be turned into knowledge and knowledge wins every time.

Editor’s note: Guy Holmes is retiring as *Preview*’s regular commentator on data management and analysis – and on life, the universe and everything. He is starting a new business, which requires his full attention. I am sure I speak for all *Preview* readers when I say that he will be sorely missed, but that we wish him, his family and his new enterprise well.