# People Analytics: People are assets

Following the establishment of the People Analytics Special Interest Group in 2017, our second annual meeting was held at the Transport for London offices at St James Park.

Our first talk was given by James Holdstock (TfL) and Feraz Ishfaq (Financial Times), about demonstrating the link between HR processes and business outcomes. It was agreed by those at the meeting that people are usually an organisation’s greatest asset, however HR Departments in general are not able to effectively use people data to influence business direction and improve business outcomes. James and Feraz are working with a group lead by Lance Mercereau [Link: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/lancemercereau/>] to develop a common taxonomy for linking HR processes to business outcomes, building on a model developed in conjunction with Max Blumberg. A paper will be published by the group later this year, when it will be made more widely available to the group. To find out more please contact either James Holdstock [Link: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/james-holdstock-09204239/>] or Feraz Ishfaq [Link: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/ferazishfaq/>]

Keith McNulty (McKinsey) reiterated the theme that people are the most important asset for an organisation and went on to explain how McKinsey, as a very data driven and analytical organisation, invests heavily in people and people analytics. The people analytics and measurement team at McKinsey is around 30 people strong. It includes people with a range of skills from business intelligence and data, data science, engineering and development, and translators who act as an interface between business and technical staff. Keith explained the symbiotic relationship between analytics and measurement: People Analytics requires strong underlying People Measurement for effective discovery, but People Measurement requires good Analytics to understand what is effective. At McKinsey, R is widely used for analytics. Where possible data and metrics are automated, reducing the need for humans to serve data needs and freeing up time for advanced statistical and psychometric approaches to help solve strategic business questions. For further information find Keith on LinkedIn [Link: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/keith-mcnulty/>].

Our final speaker was Ed Houghton from the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), who posed the question “are businesses using people data to its full potential?” HR professionals are criticised for not being data driven, and Ed went on to talk about how we could improve this. Data visualisation and dashboards are very common, but there needs to be more emphasis on a high quality narrative to accompany these while also ensuring accessibility and utility. Ed has carried out two academic literature reviews, which revealed lots of definitions for HR analytics, and these have been drawn together in a CIPD paper [Link: <https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/strategy/analytics/people-data-driving-performance> and #PeopleAnalyticsReport on Twitter]. In HR there is a drive towards evidence based practice, but there are different types of evidence: scientific research, analytics, personal judgement and stakeholders concerns. Both HR and Analysts need to understand that different evidence may be appropriate in different situations and what is appropriate evidence. But analysts can make the case for analytics, by learning the language to talk to the business, building stronger links with HR colleagues, and proposing analysis that is needed not just what you have the data for. Where people analytics is in use by HR, business outcomes are improved, and access to data and data visibility are key influences in outcomes.

The SIG’s AGM was held during the meeting, and the core committee stays the same for the next year, with 3 additional volunteers to help with organising events. To learn more about the community we spent a few minutes gathering information about those attending the meeting, and their interest in People Analytics. The majority of those at the meeting were Analyst practitioners, either currently working in HR Analytics or with a general interest in HR analytics, with a smaller number who were HR practitioners, students, or had another role, and the most common areas of work given were workforce planning and diversity and modelling (all responses in word cloud).

