

People Analytics: Building Capability

The third People Analytics SIG Annual General Meeting was held on 24th September 2019, with the theme of Building Capability in People Analytics. The group heard from three speakers with a variety of experience in building capability in People Analytics.

How to Build Analytics Capability and Skills, the Role of the People Analytics Specialist

Ed Houghton, Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development

Ed considered the role of the People Analytics specialist in building analytics capability, highlighting that using evidence in decision making is one of the best ways to improve outcomes / make better decisions, with the concept of being data driven a fundamental part of being a HR professional. For the last couple of years CIPD have been thinking about the concept of people analytics and the skills that are needed. Considering how an analyst would frame a common problem, looking at the drivers and levers.

Evidence based practice underpins good decision making and draws on a variety of skills and different sources of data. Ed differentiated between 'good' and 'best' practice outlining that there are certain principles of good practice, but there is no universal 'best practice' with context playing an important part, setting out a six step evidence based model.

The CIPD have developed a new People Analyst profession map, with a set of competencies and skills they expect at certain levels. Ed provided an overview of the skills and capabilities, from fundamental through to chartered fellow level, as well as insight on how to build and an analytics culture.

Building People Analytics Capability across Professions in the Civil Service

Elaine Mahon, Ministry of Justice

Elaine drew on her experience of building analytical team in the ONS and MoJ with practical examples of where things have worked well and not so well. She highlighted that although People analytics is not new, its application in the world of business is changing. The main crux of people analytics is the delivery of an exemplary analytical service that enables strategy evidence-based decision making. A model that has been useful is the Bersin People Analytics Maturity Model, which looks at the stages from fragmented and unsupported right through to it being institutionalised and business integrated. Observing that many organisations are really skilled at doing the operational level, but there are few organisations that have developed through to predictive and even less prescriptive.

Elaine considered the role of people analytics in delivering strategic workforce planning for the MoJ. There is a need to understand the general employee lifecycle, with a range of metrics from when people become attracted to the organisation, as well as an understanding of the strategy. The analytics team is a bit of a 'unicorn' including the psychology of human behaviour, statistical analysis and data science techniques, business and data knowledge and context. Requiring each of the strands for the organisation to make robust decisions. The MoJ have used a range of tools, r, python, an Excel based package that enabled the use of workflows and tableau. Carrying out a variety of

analysis, including survival analysis to identify the likely workforce characteristics, as well as association and sentiment analysis.

They have also looked at employee engagement which was found, using a stepwise regression model, to relate to leadership with other factors including the effects of bullying and harassment. They ran hackathons bringing customers in to determine the direction putting together story boards. There is a focus on predicting the likely outcome of actions, e.g. if an action was taken around employee voice there would be an increase in results. This gave HR professional something substantive to take to the executive board. In considered dissemination they took an approach that was non-traditional for analysts (non-numerical) that was more akin to how HR professionals present.

Elaine highlighted that it was key to keep the conversation going with customers and to build a partnership. Outlining a number of practical activities to build confidence and competence including; buddy schemes, dedicated 1 to 1s between the analyst / HR professionals, show and tells, verbal briefings, practical workshops and attendance at senior leadership team meetings.

Building Data Science/AI capability to help Government make Better Decisions

Jane Crowe, Data Science Campus of the Office for National Statistics

Jane the lead on building data science capability across government and public sector, considered how data science is being used to enable government to make better decisions. Outlining the real opportunities for data science to be used to support people analytics from Natural Language Processing to data analysis around sentiment in staff surveys.

The data science role can be defined in a broad way and covers a wide span of activity. Data science campus is about building data scientist skills, but recognising that many people who use the skills would not consider themselves as data scientists.

How are they doing it?

- Academic programme, to create a talent pipeline and work with academic partners to deliver learning programmes for government analysis.
- In-house programmes including the data science accelerator programme in partnership with the government digital service

In collaboration with the Government Digital Service (GDS) and the Government Office for Science they formed the Government Data Science Partnership. To help government realise the potential of data science, with the remit to build data science capability across government.