

Driving Actionable Analytics

So "What are you gonna to do about it?" - It's a song the Pretenders covered, back in the 90's and it was also the challenge from Paul, the 10-year-old kid with whom I got into my first punch up with, in the playground years ago on a Friday at lunch time. It's also the foundation on why we do what we do, both individually as data professionals and as a company. That is providing insights that drive action that results in change.

So how is it done? How do we craft solutions that turn data into action through insights?

In fact, it's not so simple as to cover it in the one article, so let's divide this up. Without giving too much away, the best place to start before any dashboards have been created, any data has been manipulated or reconciled or any calculations have coded, it's actually in the requirements.

So to begin, I find it easier to show what I'm talking about with the user story format:

As a _____, I want _____ so that _____.

For those who don't follow this approach, bear with me. For those who don't know it, essentially this summarises the who, what & why of a requirement in a way that makes sense to both business and technical people alike.

Now focusing on the last part "so that" (or "why") part of the requirement, we need to ask for each piece of information requested:

1. What would you currently do differently if you got this information?
2. What else would you do if you got this information?
3. What would others do as a result of you having access to this information?

So, looking at a common example:

As an IT Systems Support Manager, **I want** a report that shows how much annual leave each employee in my team has accrued, **so that** I can encourage employees with excessive leave to take a holiday, to enhance their mental health and reduce the departments financial overhead.

In this case, our requirement aligns with 2 / 3 questions we asked to determine actionability.

"What else would you do".. Encourage employees to take a holiday

"What would others do".. Take a holiday

The final part the requirement "to enhance their mental health and reduce the departments financial overhead" is the change or the result of the actions.

For this who don't follow the user story method and capture requirements other ways, I do recommend capturing a "why" for each requirement. This is where you would capture the actions and results. It not only helps the user clarify their thoughts, but help the business prioritise the requirement and helps the data specialists understand the context of the request.

I do encourage always having this at the forefront of your mind when eliciting requests & requirements from your stakeholders. Let's just hope that they give you a more mature response than what I gave Paul on that sunny Friday afternoon.

If your business needs help to get started on driving actionable analytics, please contact a Fujitsu Data & AI specialist now.

Contact

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