The gap between the business and its data

One of the most common problems I have seen in companies is that there is a huge divide between the data that a business collects and the business decisions that are being made by its leaders. Gone are the days of being able to run a company based on gut feel alone however some business leaders are still trying to do that and you can see the evidence in the results. It might not be that the company is losing money it might only be that the company is being outstripped by the competition in growth figures, it all comes back to not listening to the data.

So, what's the solution? Do we need to educate the Leaders? I don't think so, they are already experts in their field. What we need to do is help them bridge the gap and the easiest way to do that is with a specific talent.

People think that the analytics and data industry is only about tech people who understand the tech, what it can do and its benefits, without needing to know anything else. There is actually another breed of people emerging in the industry, they are almost a hybrid of a number of traditional roles that actually form the glue that fixes the data team to the business.

If you think about it, every business wants a return on investment from its data strategy, how do they ensure that they get it? Do they need a Business Analyst, a Data Analyst, a Commercial Analyst or something else? I believe it's actually a combination of all three and I am going to call them a Subject Matter Expert in Data and Analytics. They don't know all the intricacies of the tech, but they know what's possible and they don't need to come from the industry that the business is in, but they do need to understand the key drivers of business.

Imagine having someone in your business that can understand the language that the leaders of a business speak so that all the leaders need to do is say they want to look at a particular aspect of the business from a particular point of view and this person understands their needs. They are then able to translate that into what that looks like from a data point of view and put strategies in place that deliver what the business leaders want to see, giving massive ROI to the data strategy.

I can hear the business leaders claiming that they have that in the person they have appointed as the leader of the technical team, and I completely disagree. The person I am talking about doesn't manage the tech budget, they don't manage a team of tech people who like to work isolated from the business free of distraction. They are the face of the data team, they are the person that the business goes to for help with sourcing an answer to a question, not the person they go to when they want access to data that already exists.

What this person deals in is questions and answers, the questions are provided by the business and the answers are provided by the data. That data is provided by the technical team under the direction of the SME I am talking about because most technical teams do not look at things from a commercial point of view, they only look at if data is being returned not what it says.

The other consideration is trust... The leaders of the business need to be willing to trust this person and trust needs to be earned. For this reason, I say to the business leaders, look at your organisation, at your Commercial Analysts, at your Data Analysts, at your Business Analysts, talk to them about their interest in data and the infrastructure that sits behind it, you never know, you may already have a diamond in the rough...

Is there a special skill set? There is no one size fits all because we are talking about people, the leaders need to be able to work with them. I believe that they need to have commercial acumen, be willing to ask the tough questions and be able to think about things from multiple points of view. They also need to be unbiased, the biggest challenge with hiring this person from within the business is they are likely to have a continuing alignment to the department they came from.

I can hear you say that the person I am talking about is a unicorn and you will never find someone who can talk and understand tech and is also able to interpret commercial requirements. I say they exist and if you find one hold onto them, do what you need to keep them in your business as they will be worth every penny.

If you feel like you have found this person, they might need help to implement an updated data strategy, please contact a Fujitsu Data & AI specialist now.

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