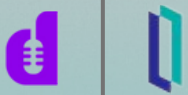


DATA LEADERS WHO'S WHO

DRIVING INNOVATION WITH DATA

Featured in this week's interview

Kathryn Gulifa
Head of Data & Analytics
Catch



TECHNOLOGY

Editors note

Data has become the core of how we operate as a society, and is central to business success. Data-driven businesses are finding new ways to compete by letting their data uncover unique points of differentiation. The value of data can't be overstated; it has been referred to as the new currency. We are proud to bring you the latest Data Leader's Who's Who and support the increasingly critical role that these emerging and established data leaders play both now and into the future.

The insights these leaders provide will be pivotal in strengthening the position of data in the business community and we thank them for sharing their valuable experiences.

Andrew Aho, Regional Director Data Platforms, InterSystems | Felipe Flores, Founder, Data Futurology

DERIVING BUSINESS VALUE FROM DATA



Kathryn Gulifa
Head of Data & Analytics
Catch

A true analytics champion, Kathryn has spent more than a decade in financial services, government and retail industries, combining analytics, innovation and customer-first thinking in a variety of analytics leadership roles. Specialising in transformation, new builds and growth agendas, Kathryn has experience setting a data strategy, modernising analytics architecture, building and leading teams, engaging broad stakeholder bases, and delivering on analytics programmes to create business value. Kathryn is Vice-Chair of the IAPA Advisory Committee and brings to IAPA the same drive, enthusiasm and uber-cool nerdiness she has injected into industry roles for the past 15 years. In this edition she shares on the key pillars for great data strategy and leadership and the key ingredients to deliver on the promise of data and AI.

STRATEGY & LEADERSHIP

How do you devise a data strategy? What sets apart the good from the bad?

The most important element of a good data strategy is that it is anchored to your Corporate Strategy and it makes choices about what to do, and what not to do. There are so many opportunities so it's important to be disciplined at focusing what are usually scant, expensive resources towards the most critical business priorities. It will help your team understand how their efforts contribute to the organisational goals, simplifies prioritisation of new demand,

and makes it easier to justify the value your team is creating. By contrast, a poor data strategy is one that isn't well connected to business strategy. It chases the 'cool tech' and can't be linked to business value.

How do you structure metrics to create effective delivery of projects/ products?

I start with outcomes:

- What do we want to achieve at the end of this sprint, month, quarter, or year?
- What does it look like? If it can be quantified as a business metric, great!

- But if not, we need to be able to describe what the outcome looks like and how it links to business value.
- What are we / stakeholders / customers doing differently than today?

Then chunk it down into value drops and then tasks. I'm a big fan of the Agile mindset, so I'm looking for limiting work in progress, maximising productivity and flow, and time-boxing exploratory tasks. Counting cards or story points are simple productivity measures to get a sense of whether distractions are disrupting the plan.

What are the essential qualities of a data leader?

- Clarity of vision so everyone's clear why we're here and how what we do is creating value for the business.
- Ruthless prioritisation so we're working on the most important priorities, minimising distractions and keeping workloads manageable. Do a few things well, not a lot of things poorly.
- The ability to build the brand of the data and analytics team both internally and externally.



It's typically something data people aren't great at so it's important that the data leader can bring the good news stories to business stakeholders and industry to demonstrate value.

What work are you most proud of?

- In one of my banking roles, my team prototyped in 6 weeks a Rapid Predictive Modelling solution with a simple GUI interface that enabled non-technical users to develop their own predictive models, like many of the off-the-shelf products you'd pay hundreds of thousands for. More satisfying than the output was the delivery, as the team really lived and breathed Agile delivery, exploring new data sources and making timely decisions to abandon or pursue a feature based on value and effort.
- Another was in Victoria Government, transforming the reporting and insights capability to meet demand during the pandemic. In the beginning, reporting processes were highly manual, requiring physical eyeballing of records in order to meet daily ministerial demand. By bringing together people from different teams we were able to redesign processes, integrate data and automate reporting. This in turn unlocked opportunities to perform more advanced analytics and share those models and insights with other government agencies. This was a real example of an organisation rallying around a single purpose and testament to what can be achieved when the business is aligned.

What is interesting about these examples is that they are less about the tech and the analytics, and more about the delivery success. In reality the technology is the easy bit. The hard part is implementation and adoption.



"DATA IS REQUIRED TO ENABLE VIRTUALLY EVERY BUSINESS STRATEGY. YOUR DATA AND ANALYTICS TEAM HAVE FINGERS IN EVERY PIE AND THE BIGGEST GIFT YOU CAN GIVE TO THEM IS RUTHLESS PRIORITISATION."

If you can nail that, it's very satisfying.

What do you wish senior leadership knew or understood?

- To grow data & analytics capability and deliver business value, you need to invest and you need to stay the course. Transformation initiatives without the requisite funding are doomed to fail.
- Data is required to enable virtually every business strategy. Your data and analytics team have fingers in every pie and the biggest gift you can give to them is ruthless prioritisation.
- As such, Data needs a seat at the exec leadership table.

MATURING YOUR DATA CAPABILITY

What have you found to be the key ingredients to make data analytics capability create an impact on business outcomes?

- Talk to stakeholders about the outcomes they are trying to achieve, actions they want to take, or decisions they're trying to make so that you are designing to the right outcome,

not order-taking.

- Understand how the output is going to be implemented before investing time in developing analytics solutions. No one enjoys seeing their hard work sit on the shelf unused.
- Think commercially about the problem you're trying to solve and strategically about the solution design. Is near enough, good enough? Will solving the last 1% of the problem change the recommendation or outcome? Or will small errors potentially result in significant financial losses or gains? Learn to recognise when to choose depth over breadth and vice versa.

AI PROJECTS, PRIORITISATION AND PRODUCTIONISING AI

How do you determine which projects to use AI for and how do you prioritise your projects?

In the simplest terms, I would use AI for projects where the business rules for recommendations or actions aren't obvious, and there is a business benefit to automating that process. Consideration would be given to

how the solution is to be implemented and its potential to directly impact customers and financials if it were to make the wrong decision. For high impact decisions, I prefer AI-assisted solutions as opposed to AI automation.

An Agile weighted-shortest-job-first (WSJF) methodology usually works well for data science project prioritisation, with some preliminary scoping sometimes required to size the business opportunity.

TEAMS, TALENT, SKILLS, DIVERSITY

What is the best way to structure your data and analytics teams? What processes and methodologies are key to underpinning analytics project success?

The structure of a team depends on the maturity of the data and analytics capability, the type of

work being performed, and the organisational structure of your business stakeholders.

I think generally centralised teams work best when trying to build capability, so best practices can be established and knowledge sharing accelerated. When mature, a federated model allows analysts to get close to the business and have more context around business problems.

I like to structure teams so they're aligned to workloads and are able to operate at an appropriate pace for the type of demand. This minimises context switching from strategic projects to ad hoc requests and improves productivity

I also like to create sustained alignment with business units to build deep subject matter expertise, and rotate team

members regularly to create a more well-rounded knowledge base.

What legacy do you hope to leave behind you at your organisation?

Overall, the goal is always to leave the data and analytics capability of the organisation in a better position than when I joined it, which is something I'm constantly sense checking.

In my current position at Catch, I would like my legacy to be about leaving the organisation with a stable and reliable data environment with trusted data, an empowered workforce with the knowledge and ability to answer their own data questions, and a Data & Analytics team that is creating tangible value aligned with Catch's key business priorities.



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