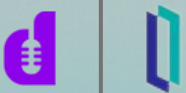# DATA LEADERS WHO'S WHO

DRIVING INNOVATION WITH DATA

Featured in this week's interview

Michelle Bauman,
Head of Data Science & Analytics Transformation
Woolworths Group

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   I   Felipe Flores, Founder, Data Futurology

FINDING YOUR DATA NORTH STAR

Michelle Bauman
Head of Data Science & Analytics Transformation
Woolworths Group

Drawing on a wealth of experience in leadership roles within the retail and FMCG industries, Michelle provides invaluable guidance on how to effectively leverage data and AI. In this insightful article, Michelle emphasises the significance of establishing an ambitious data vision as the organisation's guiding principle. She stresses that value generation should be the central focus of every data and AI project. From the crucial aspect of defining metrics for measuring data projects to the establishment of robust data teams, Michelle offers practical advice that can be readily implemented. Furthermore, she delves into broader strategic insights regarding leadership, providing actionable recommendations for success.

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

The most important thing when devising a data strategy, is to be clear on the business strategy and how data can be intertwined to support the overarching goals of the business. The data strategy shouldn't be developed in isolation, but rather as an enabler for the business as whole. In developing a strong data strategy there are a few key questions to be addressed that include:

What is our data vision?
The vision reflects the purpose for the role of data and how it will be leveraged to support all areas of the enterprise. The vision should be ambitious and plays an important role to guide and motivate the team. The strategy forms the steps and plan on how to get there, which may change over time, however the vision remains as the north star!

Who are our Stakeholders?
Ensure stakeholders have input to the data vision and strategy, as their objectives need to be understood in order to identify key opportunities to unlock.

"BE CLEAR FROM THE OUTSET HOW DATA, ANALYTICS AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE WILL GENERATE VALUE CREATION FOR THE BUSINESS AND HOW IT WILL BE MEASURED."

Stakeholders both internal and external, play an important role to prioritise which use cases to go after first, help to identify the critical value creation opportunities for the business and where data can play a role.

How is value creation generated?
Be clear from the outset how data, analytics and artificial intelligence will generate value creation for the business and how it will be measured. How can data enable disruptive thinking and support innovation for the organisation, enable domain analytics and outline the art of the possible for the organisation?
Underpinning the data strategy is the support needed to deliver on the vision, which involves the role of people, process and platforms/technology. In order to successfully deliver on the strategy, the organisation needs the right operating model in place. A good place to start is by baselining where the team is today, what are the frameworks, environments and infrastructure available to be leveraged. Then look to the target state, where do we need to be? What skills & capability can we develop in house or acquire externally? What is the roadmap for our environment? And importantly, what are some of the obstacles in path that need to be addressed to enable an effective operating model.
In my view the key to a strong data strategy is to have a clear vision for the role of data in the organisation and how that supports the overarching business goals, partner closely with business stakeholders to understand key use cases to be delivered and value to be generated and importantly, that you have the right operating model in place to support the team to deliver!

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

Data literacy is a key unlock to truly drive data transformation across the organisation. If your stakeholders and sponsors are not data literate, it poses a significant roadblock to the organisation's digital transformation.

To quote from Gartner, data literacy is "the ability to read, write and communicate data in context, including an understanding of data sources and constructs, analytical methods and techniques applied – and the ability to describe the use case, application and resulting value".

When I look for indicators of data literacy, I look for business users that understand what data is available to them, knowing how it can be used and question the types of limitations or constraints that may be in place. They have an understanding of how data has been sourced, transformed or combined with different sources.

Those with a strong understanding of data literacy are usually strong advocates of data governance and maintain data quality, as they understand the impact and importance of data. So, it's not only important to develop data literacy for the stakeholders to understand the current use case, but also for the longer term in building a support structure to leverage data into the future.

In a previous organisation where I led the Data Transformation agenda, we experienced significant issues in the manufacturing processes due to incomplete or inconsistent data. Those leading the manufacturing process were acutely aware of the impact to the business, their targets and efficiency measurements when data was not maintained with quality and they became our strongest data champions, helping educate others across their teams and proactively manage data as an asset.

As organisations expect more of their teams to be able to interpret

"BEING ABLE TO FULLY LEVERAGE DATA IS THE CORE CAPABILITY NEEDED TO DIGITISE BUSINESSES"

data, gather insights and generate actions faster, data literacy and being able to fully leverage data is the core capability needed to digitise businesses.

What work are you most proud of?

In one of my previous roles, I was part of a multi-year digital transformation journey that was a massive program for the business. We moved from a 1990s fragmented software approach to a highly integrated ERP centric model and positioning data as a strategic asset for the business was a key driver for the transformation program. The vision was to enable the business to become data driven, leverage automation and enable self-service approach to analytics and insights.

At the time we were transitioning the business from manually generated reports that typically relied upon excel to merge and

consolidate data, that were then sent as endless attachments via email to business partners across the organisation and data was days if not weeks old by the time reports were prepared and delivered.

Our goal was to democratise the data and enable the business to access, interrogate and understand the information available to them, near real time in the new world.

We automated much of the reporting and by making the data easily accessible, putting it in the hands of our business partners and allowing them to interrogate the data for themselves, was a huge step change for the business. I do recall not everyone took positively to this approach, there was some resistance however we worked with our Change Team and identified a few senior Executives to really champion this new way of working which really helped our cause. When our

Senior Leaders started questioning their teams on the analytics available, it certainly accelerated user adoption!

Accessibility of the data was really led through the visualisation layer, which was very intuitive and users truly embraced it. Through visualisation, we enabled the data to tell the story coupled with building further capability to understand the data foundation. When your business partners have access to the data and understand it well, the conversations certainly shift towards deeper insights and predicting what the next action should be, rather than struggling to reconcile numbers and describe what has happened historically. These steps certainly drove us up the data maturity curve and had a significant impact for the business overall.

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

In my experience the best way to structure the data and analytics teams is to ensure you have diversity of skills and thought on the team. You really need to find that balance between the right technical skills, those who understand and source the data efficiently, business SMEs to bring context as to how the solution will work (or may not work) for the user community, as well as the right level of governance to ensure you're building the solution in the most sustainable manner. In addition, having the right support structure in place to help embed the new solution, manage the change impacts and keep communication flowing are all vital elements to land the solution, build adoption and deliver value.

Any one of these disciplines working in isolation will struggle to bring to life a successful solution, although working together in a cross functional way generates a synergy and ultimately the best, most impactful result for the business.

Within the Data Practice at wiq, the Advanced Analytics Chapter of Woolworths, we have over 400 Data Professionals across a broad spectrum of disciplines from data analysts, data scientist, analytics & insights specialists through to machine learning & engineering. We work closely with our Strategy Practice and Product, Design & Delivery Practice to create dynamic squads that bring together representatives from each of those disciplines according to the use case, as well as SMEs from the business. Working together in a cross-functional environment is an important element to our successful deployment of solutions as we bring together the business perspective and have a clear problem statement we're looking to solve as well as the technical skills to design, build & deploy solutions. This, coupled with our agile methodologies ensure our planning and delivery mode is in short sprints, able to gather feedback from our business partners early, test and learn or fail fast to allow us the opportunity to pivot.

As part of delivery, it's important to keep a strong focus on how the solution impacts the team, how to support the change and embed the new tool. The communications and ongoing support for the solution and the user community is a key element for continued success. Though you could build the best solution technically, if the business doesn't understand the impact or how to use it, there certainly will not be value generated.

What are the essential qualities of a data leader?

I've been fortunate to work with a number of outstanding data leaders and some of the essential qualities I see are:

- The ability to define the vision - Defining the vision sets the direction and guidance for the team and should be motivational. Ensuring the vision is understood, linked to business objectives and is kept front of mind for the team

helps to bring the core purpose of the team to life.

- Ability to translate the vision to a strategy - This clarifies for the Data Team as well as stakeholders, how to action the strategy and bring it to life. Identifying stakeholders' key use cases to be delivered prioritising those for quick wins and demonstrating value early, vs the longer term more significant and likely transformational use cases. A strong data leader needs to be able to guide their team and stakeholders to balance delivery with key business objectives.
- Continuous innovation and creative solutioning - keeping an awareness of where new technology and techniques are emerging and how it can be adopted into the organisation is always an exciting part of the role. The challenge can be managing the pace of change and investing in areas that drive real value for the data team and in turn the business stakeholders. .

No data leader is an expert in all aspects of data and analytics so having a strong self awareness of your own capabilities and those of the team is very important. This allows us to identify where there are gaps and then plan how to fill them, in order to set the team up for success.