



Big Data? Data-Driven? Think Even Bigger!

By Chris Pehura

We were thrown together to define and frame the new strategic change program. There were a few of us management consultants; a few folk from sales and marketing; some from operations and IT; and even legal and change management were there. What brought us together were the hemorrhaging costs. We wanted profit. We wanted revenue growth. We believed Big Data can help. From there we thought even bigger. We talked about what it would take to build a data-driven organization.

“A data-driven organization uses data to drive business planning, business development, human capital development, culture realignment, and decision-making. Data is supported, interpreted, and analyzed by subject matter experts, algorithms, and artificial intelligence so the organization strategically achieves the right business outcomes.”

We started crafting our big picture, our narrative, of where our organization is now, what kind of data-driven organization we need, and just how Big Data will get us there. It was clear that our new program will reinvent our business. It will change our polices, our procedures, and the people we need to make our organization successful. But there is always this problem when we talk about data.

“When we talk about data we tend to talk about the operational data found deep down in our organization. Talking about this data in this way fragments our big picture. Discussions not only

become too narrow, they become difficult to follow. When talking about data we must think bigger.”

When involving big pictures, discussions cannot be done without proper planning and preparation. To support these discussions our big picture needs foundations for us to build on. To build these foundations we need to scaffold our big picture to narratives that not already exist in our organization but also are strongly accepted.

“Did you ever talk about evidence driven decision making? What about performance indicators, results indicators, and risk indicators? When did you talk last about regulations and compliance? Did you ever touch on or discuss process governance and operational research? All of these are excellent segue ways into Big Data and the data-driven organization. We all need to start from somewhere; a place we are all familiar with and have already talked about.”

Our big picture must be the big blocks of information that we as an organization develop, analyze, maintain, and share. Data-driven is not merely data sources. It’s all about data and how data drives, multiplies, and maximizes everything we do in our organization. And we must never downplay the impact of data. Over 90% of Fortune Companies went on record saying that their data-driven strategies didn’t meet their business objectives. Don’t make their mistakes. From the macro level how our data is organized and navigated drives our organizational design, our organizational structure, our culture, and our human capital. From the micro level our data, its structure and use, directly drives our values, priorities, and behaviors. We must include all of this in our narrative.

“Constructing a data-driven narrative that covers so many things is difficult; more so, when we do not have a common business vocabulary across the organization. It’s difficult to identify and communicate patterns, analogies, and even tell stories through our narrative. It’s difficult to socialize and develop a following. That said many organizations have communication guidelines and standards on what words to use and how to use them. Use these standards in your data-driven narrative whenever you can.”

It’s all too common for our big pictures to be too small. Executives, experts, and even thought leaders narrow our big discussions down to camps and silos such as sales, operations, or IT. We must think bigger. To become a data-driven organization, our big picture must span our company, our market, our human capital, our competition, our culture, and all of our data sources. Once we see our complete big picture, we’ll be ready to determine how data governance, the data office, and the chief data officer fit into all of it. And along with all of this in mind, we must always have our big picture remain rooted to answer the most traditional business questions.

“Are we attracting and serving the right customers?”

“Are we hiring, supporting, and firing the right human capital?”

“Are we doing the right things, the right way, at the right time?”

To win with data-driven we must think bigger.

About the Author



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Chris is a management consultant with a data emphasis helping Fortune 100/1000 companies strategically evolve and reinvent their businesses to maximize their revenue growth. Through realignment, to overhauls, to rebuilding things from the top down and ground up, he integrates and solidifies leaders, strategies, and solutions into all aspects of the organization. As practice director for [C-SUITE DATA](#), a Canadian based consulting firm specializing in data and Big Data, Chris serves as a coach, trainer, and the voice for how data is the new capital that drives, multiplies, and maximizes revenue growth.



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