



Integrating Big Data

By Chris Pehura

With Big Data making its way into our organizations there's been a lot of criticism. A lot of Fortune companies are having problems using their Big Data. This is happening because the business people at the Fortune companies are misinterpreting and misapplying what Big Data is telling them. Business people just have a poor grasp on the specifics of what their Big Data, artificial intelligence, and algorithms do... and this significantly narrows what Big Data brings to the table. It's clear we need to up ramp our people so they can take advantage of all the innovative benefits Big Data brings. So what can we do to build our capabilities and competencies in Big Data?

That's the wrong question. Budget owners with the money want to invest in what's important to them. Big Data is still way too shiny, way too new. If any further dollars happen to be dedicated to Big Data, the dollars may be yanked and reallocated in favor of a more "important" budget-starved initiative. Budget owners do not want to invest in Big Data. They want to invest in the business's capabilities and competencies that Big Data supports.

To get our dollars, to get our budgets, we need to reframe Big Data. We need Big Data to not enable, but to reinforce what the business is currently doing and planning to do. This means we need to reposition Big Data away from being a technology, away from being a series of data repositories and build the case that Big Data is much more than those things. That the stuff under the Big Data umbrella strategically supports the business.

Here are the six steps to successfully integrate Big Data into our organization.

1. Business Outcomes. With strong speeches and credible partners we get all the major CxO players at the table. Together we redefine Big Data according to the business outcomes Big Data will deliver. The outcomes are first defined according to the main players' mindset and political positioning. Then Big Data is defined according to our business capabilities, business competencies, operational excellence, financial excellence, and the structure of the talent pool we require to achieve and sustain those outcomes. Milestones with dates are hammered out and renegotiated along with the estimated budgets. We negotiate the key people needed to support our Big Data initiatives. These key people are handpicked based on their political authority, budget authority, historic knowledge, and subject matter expertise. Based on the business outcomes and our main players, we hammer a hard message for what Big Data is and what Big Data isn't.

2. Organizational Change. With our business outcomes defined we go to the organizational change business unit. We have in-depth sessions on

what is currently feasible to execute our Big Data training program, what is acceptable, how existing measurements, assessments, and reviews can be leveraged; leveraged to assess our Big Data solutions; leveraged to assess our Big Data training. We draft high level training plans and training requirements to support our business outcomes.

3. Readiness and Planning. With our business outcomes, training requirements and training plans, we meet with our experts handpicked from our business outcome sessions. With deep discussions we position, structure, and flesh out our business requirements, business plans, training requirements, and training plans... all according to our experts' deep knowledge and expertise. We take in consideration our culture, principles, organizational alignment, future re-orgs, political histories, potential Big Data courses, and the paradigms that we need to change for Big Data to be effective. We do our due diligence that all business outcomes are achieved with optimal cost and minimal risk. We re-estimate the budgets we need, build our deeper plans and request the right people to staff our teams. Based on our discussions we decide either to design/implement the training ourselves or outsource those activities to a training firm.

4. Design. With our teams we design in-depth how Big Data meets the business outcomes. We integrate Big Data into our existing business capabilities and business competencies. We specify hard detailed requirements around training, decision making, automation, forecasting, planning, information flow/sharing, processes, privacy policies, regulatory

compliance, and data governance. We hammer the hard clear message with supporting guidelines for what Big Data Technologies will do and what Big Data Technologies won't do.

We develop a deeper Big Data training plan to reinforce our employees' foundational skills. We develop course content and reestablish Big Data friendly career tracks consistent with our culture and the culture we're changing to. We define the culturally attributes for the people that would make the best Big Data trainers. Cultural attributes easy for our trained employees to adopt and share across the organization.

5. Implementation. People that match the desired trainer profile are handpicked and trained. These new trainers are then sent out in multiple "waves" to train other trainers and employees across the organization. Once employees are "Big Data" centric and "Big Data" ready, they are assigned to the Big Data projects.

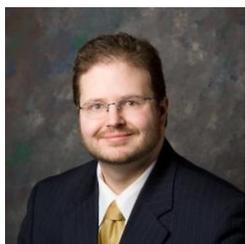
6. Evaluation. After projects and training completes our Big Data solutions and training program are frequently evaluated according to their impact on our employees' work performance. The results from these evaluations are feed into our employee performance reviews and into our onboarding, hiring, and termination processes.

Repositioning and integrating Big Data into our organization can open us to high levels of risk. After all, we're changing the way we do things at a fundamental level. On top of that, we're changing our culture. To keep on track with our Big Data we should track

how Big Data impacts our business health ratios, our productivity, our employee attrition rates, and our returns on investments. To make sure all these numbers look good we need all our employees from business, to data, to IT to go through the same Big Data training program. This will lead to consistent paradigm shifts and build momentum towards the desired changes in our culture.

As long as we progress cautiously and track the right ratios we'll become a data-driven organization with a Big Data friendly culture.

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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