

People Analytics

Build the Value Chain



Littal Shemer Haim

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Contact: Littal@shemerhaim.com

<https://www.littalics.com/>



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Introduction

"People Analytics – Build the Value Chain"

HR people must acquire better analytics skills. There is no question about that. When HR role vacancies are analyzed¹, this orientation is listed among the most critical competencies. The data-driven part of HR practitioners' work has emerged rapidly in the last years. All HR sectors must now leverage their data assets to make better decisions and support all stakeholders, from employees to executives. They must also understand ML (machine learning) and AI (artificial intelligence) to have ownership of procurement and ethics in HR-Tech implementation. But how can HR practitioners close the gap? How can they re-skill and become more analytical?

A secret factor in learning programs

While most academic programs in the HR field still lag, and only a few exceptional programs focus on People Analytics², you may find various learning solutions online. With a strong background in HR, analytics, and tech, wise and agile entrepreneurs already offer learning platforms and excessive content. But I believe that all of them still lack the secret factor that guarantees re-skilling in HR. After few years of training and mentoring HR people in the domain of People Analytics – with different levels of success, I must admit – I think I now understand how to prepare the HR team to embrace a data-driven mindset and People Analytics practices. By tracing the way HR groups in various organizations have

built their value chain in People Analytics, I discovered new ingredients of success.

For quite some time, people who follow my work already know that I promote psychological safety in a learning environment to bypass change resistance. Or, in the word of a mentee testimonial, in a case study of people Analytics is SMBs³ – "We could afford to experiment with data, and making mistakes, knowing that we had the support of a professional framework." However, crucial as it is, that psychological safety is not enough. The keywords here are "experiment with data," our own data.

Experiment with data – our own data

I honestly believe that HR people can overcome their analytics barriers when they exercise. Online courses do offer a lot of exercises. However, only when HR people practice real data - their organizational data - they can bypass the obstacles. They must define business questions related to people in their organization. They need to practice methodologies that help to make critical workforce decisions. Only then can they succeed in developing the desired skills and start their journey, interpreting and presenting analytics for people-related decisions.

It does not mean that HR people should become data scientists. In their training programs, they only need to gain a new mindset by following the original path that I offer in this book. It will enable them to make the first steps toward a quick win concerning business questions, acquire in-

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house resources and abilities to executing the first analytic project within the organization, and use the first analytical project to impact the organization. From my experience, the principal motive is exercising based on real questions, real challenges, and real data. Moreover, such training enables re-skilling and may also be the solid foundation of a data-driven HR. Following the path that I describe in this book, especially when done in groups in which each member contributes according to actual role or aspirations and when establishing collaboration with People Analysts or other relevant functions within the organization, HR up-skilling in the analytics domain is guaranteed.

HR people can overcome their analytics barriers when they exercise. Online courses do offer a lot of exercises. However, only when HR people practice with real data, their organizational data, they can bypass the obstacles.



Connecting the dots

This book is not a typical textbook about People Analytics practices. Fortunately, there are plenty of great books out there, particularly more than thirty on my Kindle list⁴, which I regularly share with colleagues, clients, and students. I wrote this book differently to offer readers an opportunity to learn and change while enjoying themselves, taking time

to contemplate, absorb ideas, and, hopefully, overcome barriers. The book captures the spirit of my popular blog about People Analytics and HR-Tech, which I have been writing regularly since 2016. I based some of its chapters on viral posts and articles that I published over the years. I also decided to preserve my visual signature as a photographer artist in this book and my point of view as a positive psychology practitioner. Personally, the book connects my dots⁵.

As a People Analytics consultant and mentor, I helped HR teams to leverage people's data and HR technology to drive insights that contribute to business success. A positive side effect of my activity as an advisor is making HR professionals heroes in their organizations. I am an applied researcher for more than two decades now – a multi-disciplinary professional with a background in Economics, Business Strategy, Psychology, Statistics, Programming, and more. Connecting all dots into a diverse role is not only a millennials theme. It is the reason I started my own business many years ago. Moreover, multi-disciplinary means that my sources of inspiration are diverse.

Computers are useless

The first quote I added to my diverse inspiration list on my website has been attributed to Pablo Picasso⁶, the most vital artist of the 20th century: "Computers Are Useless. They Can Only Give You Answers". Picasso had no clue about People Analytics, but his idea applies to all of us in this domain. There is no point in running the most sophisticated

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analytics or building a shiny dashboard without the attempt to answer a business question. Although computers can give us answers, we are the ones who must come up with the right business questions in the first place. Only then can we proceed with the data, our people data, and contribute with our actionable insights.

I see my whole career on a spectrum between People and Business, and the domain of People Analytics mediates between these two poles. Every transaction between people and organizations can be revealed through data. However, as much as data is thrilling, it is not enough. The key to every success story that I was ever involved in was leveraging data to insights by asking the right business questions first and long before analyzing data sets, using sophisticated machine learning models, or creating a fantastic visualization. As a consultant, I understand that only by being a part of the strategic hub in an HR group, I can access business questions and make a difference, supporting them with the right projects. I decided to be where questions are evoked, not where answers are requested. Therefore, I chose to focus on exclusive long-term partnerships and offered my expertise to selected companies and small learning groups, one at a time.

Through these reach experiences, I take two hacks that I want to offer you right before you start following the entire value chain. The first is regarding your fear of failure, and the second is about the challenges involved in creating a change.

Hack #1 – when you afraid to fail

When you start your journey to data-driven HR, be prepared to fail. However, with the right attitude and psychological safety in your learning experience, you will not be afraid to start again. Your failure will only mean that you are not there yet, but you are getting there. Take Adam Grant's advice² – always question your default solutions and try other options. Or, in the word of one mentee of mine, "We could afford to experiment with data, and making mistakes, knowing that we had the support of a professional framework. In our mentoring sessions and between sessions, each of us could comfortably ask any question, raise ideas, and make a mistake. Thanks to the openness that the team created, everybody felt that we were able to cope with the challenge."

Hack #2 – when change is difficult

Change is inevitable, and that is also true in the HR domain. But the experience of leading a change is challenging. Why? Scientific evidence connects the challenge to change⁸ to how the human brain is wired and explains why most change initiatives fail. A core driver of the brain function is maintaining safety and stability. Therefore, even a beneficial change might be perceived as a threat. When you lead a change process in your organization, you directly conflict with your brains' core needs. To overcome this barrier and help against the reflexive resistance, you need to create new rituals within learning sessions to generate a sense of security. While mentoring HR teams, I discovered that rituals are effective. When the meeting agenda and pace of learning are

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predictable, and when new social norms such as asking questions and thinking aloud are created, people practice openness and curiosity. Familiarity with the setting gives them a sense of certainty and stability.

Build the Value Chain

I followed all these essential practices – Practice your own data, psychological safety, and rituals – as I built my data-driven HR training program. I hope you would follow them too, along with your reading. In this book, you will find sixteen lessons, organized in four milestones that, from my experience, build the People Analytics value chain: Charger, Journey, Capability, Culture. I invite you to create your learning rituals to cover them all. Make an effort to use your company data to solve business questions in an experimental environment, where mistakes and failure are welcome as an opportunity to learn.

This book's parsimonious structure can serve as a road map that you can follow on your journey to create value by your People Analytics practices. However, each lesson in it stands on its own. You may start with each lesson or come back to it at any stage of your reading. You may also use this structure when broadening your learning with additional resources. I believe that every article you read about People Analytics can be documented under one of the sixteen topics.

When I covered those sixteen topics over the years in my blog and added complementary content to this book, I always had an HR leader in my mind. However, this book can serve many other professions and perspectives. Business leaders can use it to be more precise in setting

their expectations from the HR department. Consultants and my colleagues in the domain of People Analytics can use it as additional resources. People analysts and data scientists can leverage the book for a better understanding of their inner clients. Finally, HR-Tech leaders can use it to diagnose the analytical mindset of their prospects.

Figure 1 – build the value chain in four milestones and 16 lessons



Data Makes you fly

When I started my People Analytics blog back in 2016, I chose one of my crane's photographs for the main page header. Cranes are a great metaphor – always on a worldwide journey, with their large flocks, dynamic roles, and inter-dependencies. They are just like us, people in

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organizations who are on their journey to a data-driven career. When I wrote on that header that "data makes you fly," I couldn't imagine that in a few years, I would be recognized as one of the global influencers in the HR-Tech industry⁹, and have such a fascinating career opportunity and responsibility. Back then, I only had in my mind my career path up to that point. But I also thought about HR leaders who embrace analytics and become heroes in their organizations.

I hope that the HR journey in the world of data will last, as the cranes' endless journey. However, we face such dramatic change now that may turn everything in other directions. The demand for new skills in the HR role, i.e., the Procurement and Ethics of HR-Tech, breathe down our neck. HR people cannot procrastinate their transformation. I call you to join this journey today.

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Part I - The Charger

You cannot start using a new electronic device without charging it first. I used the charger metaphor when I discussed the first things that HR leaders must understand before starting their People Analytics journey. There are four types of understanding, or charges, that these professionals must load when they make their first steps: the definition of People Analytics, this profession's characteristics, the main barrier in entering the field, and the myths in this domain. In the following four chapters, we start building the People Analytics value chain by reviewing each one of these charges.

Figure 2 - The Charger: Definition, Profession, Barriers, Myths



- **Definition** "The Complexity of People Analytics Resolved: 5 Perspectives of Definition"
- **Profession** "Who are you, my fellow People Analytics Leader?"
- **Barriers** "Learning culture, rituals, and establishing People Analytics"
- **Myths** "Five myths about People Analytics that inhibit your progress"

1. Definition

"The Complexity Resolved: 5 Perspectives of Definition"

I've witnessed a lot of interest in the People Analytics domain these years, among HR and other C-level managers that I met in Tel Aviv. At some point, in any networking conversation that I had since 2016, I've always been asked to explain how different People analytics is from the traditional Organizational Research that I've conducted for more than two decades. A comprehensive definition of the People Analytics field would have been useful to clarify the difference. Unfortunately, I kept finding myself lost in vague and exhausting explanations since it was still hard to describe the complexity of People Analytics in one or a few clear sentences.

People Analytics is still a growing field. Yet, it is not mature. Many terms in this domain are quite fluid, especially among HR practitioners. We still lack parsimonious definitions that would lead us through many blurred concepts in this professional raising area. Yet, while I keep looking, I suggested my own definition.

A search for a definition

Definitions are found all over the web, you may say. Indeed, Google will give you millions of results in less than a second. I remember that one of the first in my google search was in Technopedia, which referred to HR analytics¹ as "applying analytic processes to the HR department, in the hope of improving employee performance and therefore getting a better ROI." According to this definition, the objective is to provide insight into

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business processes through data analysis and improve those processes with informed decisions based on data.

However, this short definition was neglecting many features of People Analytics in practice. For instance, it ignored the massive amount of employee data, which is not directly related to business processes and Performance but may raise an essential understanding of it. "Bersin by Deloitte" used the term Talent Analytics² to clarify "the use of measurement and analysis techniques to understand, improve, and optimize the people side of the business." This definition details many kinds of data, e.g., demographics, job history, training, assessments, and compensation, which "can be correlated and matched to many different types of business data to help companies understand profiles and behaviors that create high performance."

Bersin's definition is indeed broader. Nevertheless, it implies almost nothing about the time point of view. Specifically, do we use data elements for inference (i.e., explaining past or present results), or do we use them for prediction (i.e., learning something about future results)? Although Bersin suggested a framework to measure the analytics maturity, starting low at "operational reporting" and ending high at "predictive analytics," this core definition does not include the time perspective. Isson and Harriott³ nicely state the importance of time perspective: "People Analytics has the most impact on the organization when it is forward-looking – not backward-looking" It is most useful when it is predictive regarding likely business outcomes.

Include five perspectives in any definition of People Analytics: Starting from C-level and business perspective, go through HR processes and IT and HRIS, and end-up with a Data Science and the People analyst role.



Five perspectives of an expanded definition

So far, just by scratching the surface, it is clear that People Analytics is much beyond the HR department's scope compared to old-school organizational research. It is about business performance in general. It is involved with different kinds of data, and it is relevant not just for inference but rather for prediction. However, these definitions of People Analytics are still not sufficient, in my opinion, to fully distinguish between Organizational Research and People Analytics.

The complexity of the People Analytics domain, let alone the complexity of its parsimonious definitions, is demonstrated in an inspiring article published by Sundmark⁴. Trying to answer the question of "how do I get started in the field of HR Analytics," Sundmark lists the building blocks of People analytics, which domain experts must be familiar with. These building blocks include HR functions and business processes, Information technology and HR information systems, Business statistical analysis, HR measurement and metrics, HR operations, HR decision making and policies, and Data Science framework.

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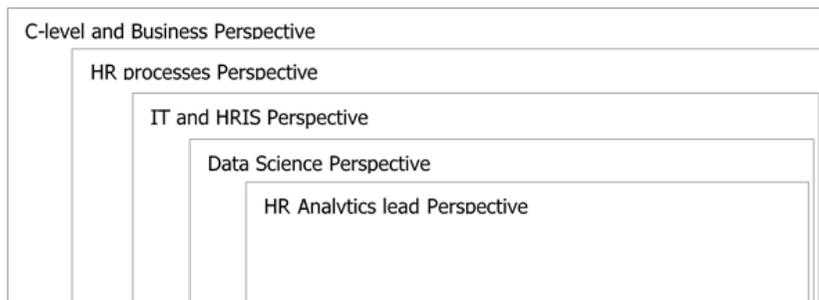
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Indeed, this is a multi-disciplinary long-long list. Reading Sundmark's article, I suddenly realized that the definition which I'm looking for should have some top-down structure, describing People Analytics through different organizational perspectives. A top-down structured definition may emphasize this field's complexity and its vast influence on various aspects of organizations' activity.

Explicitly, I suggest to include five perspectives in any definition of People Analytics: Starting from C-level and business perspective, go through HR processes and IT and HRIS, and end-up with a Data science perspective and the role of the People analytics lead:

Figure 3 - A top-down structured definition for People Analytics



Such a scheme may serve as a diagnostic guideline when approaching a new organization. Indeed, it is of assistance next time I try to explain the differences between People Analytics and the traditional Organizational Research domain. In effect, each level in this suggested structure influences and is influenced by the nature of its top level. Hence, such a guideline may deepen the understanding of the organizational challenges in regards to People Analytics and point to the core opportunities for different roles in the HR team. I'll come back to this s

Months following the first publishing of this top-down structured definition, I found validations in other experts' publications. For example, the connection between the two upper layers in the definition was validated from technological and scientific points of view, respectively, by Schwarz⁵ and Blumberg⁶. HR departments have long focused on achieving operational excellence in their processes and systems, e.g., performance management, learning and development, compensation and benefits management, and applicant tracking. These efforts generate lots of data but did not lead to business insights. The HR transactional systems were designed to process one record at a time and without integrating HR data with business data. When the C-suite level uses HR's data, it can make informed strategic decisions, as the impact of people process on business results becomes clearer.

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2. Profession

"Who Are You, My Fellow People Analytics Leader?"

The "People Analytics" domain is gaining a lot of attention worldwide. However, most of the people I meet in the Israeli HR arena have not decided to formalize such a role within HR departments. I believe that times are changing, and new practices will surely shake the state of affairs.

Meanwhile, data scientists can keep offering external consultancy for HR analytics in the Israeli market. Realizing that at least 40% of the workforce will be freelancers¹ in the next few years, as many studies predict, data scientists can continue to develop their skills to work and manage without borders, particularly in the domain of People Analytics.

The decision to outsource HR analytics activities² has been long discussed. There are many reasons why a business should consider hiring an external data scientist, e.g., quality of work, tools, costs, and schedules. But the key consideration is the fit of the analysis project with the company's long-term strategic planning.

Unfortunately, HR analytics doesn't play a critical strategic role in many businesses YET. Hence, many companies choose not to develop internal HR analytics capabilities but instead buy expertise and save tremendous resources.

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HR ability to run analytics

However, had a local HR group decided to include a People Analytics position, would it be capable of running the analytical processes in-house expansively? I doubt. Apparently, even among large corporations, which spend massive amounts on people analytics, the progress of HR analytics is pretty slow³.

Research reveals that HR tends to focus on metrics with little meaning outside the HR function. Therefore they lack credibility to create models that connect talent metrics to financial outcomes. Moreover, HR is less adept at communicating business terms and using storytelling and visualization in its messaging, essential skills for exploring and explaining any analytics project results.

The People Analytics leader is in charge of combining all the data of people in the company in order to deal with business challenges. This leader must understand all employee data and its impact on business performance.



Nevertheless, with the perspective of traditional Job Analysis in my mind, I keep encountering some new people analytics positions here and there, mostly within local representatives of leading companies in tech industries. I enthusiastically explore the combinations of skills and

responsibilities. As much as possible, I review the processes in which this role is involved. People Analytics, as a business discipline, has arrived⁴, and there must be a growth in this market. But what kind of leaders are emerging?

The People Analytics leader is in charge of combining all the data of people in the company in order to deal with business challenges, e.g., sales productivity, retention, and customer satisfaction.

This leader must understand all employee data and its impact on business performance. It goes far beyond HR kinds of soft metrics: Understanding domains such as data management, statistics, visualization, and business language is a must! All these skills enable to implement the analytics insights. So, should companies start looking for Unicorns⁵?

A multi-disciplinary role

The People Analytics leader is a multi-disciplinary role. In that view, new discussions among talent acquisition professionals are emerging. In a podcast about building the People Analytics team⁶, the People analytics leader was described as a person who has a combination of strong qualitative and analytical skills, along with emotional intelligence and behavior insights. Data Science background⁷, a solid understanding of Statistics, and programming skills are only part of his qualifications.

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As a "knowledge worker," the People analytics leader must have conceptual thinking abilities, forward-thinking. He must also handle ambiguity and complexity. Those abilities enable him to define the right questions, understand the information needed, structure problems in terms of factors and variables and anticipate different action choices' outcomes.

Ideally, the People Analytics leader⁸ is a brilliant management consultant, more than a great mathematician interested in finding and addressing business opportunities. Analytics is a tool of choice. Therefore, such a leader appreciate analytic techniques but focus on getting business outcomes as quickly and cheaply as possible.

While People analytics leaders aren't all over my professional environment yet, I believe that my modest contribution is to preach the gospel to HR departments. Awareness is a primary step for change, and the difference I hope to see is many new professional partners, in the domain of People Analytics, within HR departments.

Hopefully, my own experience and what I learn from leaders in the field would be useful for those struggling with the recruitment and starting activities of the first People Analytics leader in their organization.

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3. Barriers

"Learning Culture, Rituals, And Establishing People Analytics"

Business acumen and quantitative skills are vital parts of HR leaders' role in the data-driven organization's journey. I believe you won't argue with that. However, we still see that although the adoption rate of People Analytics is high, barrier overcoming is still slow. As an HR leader, you may ask yourself why your organization is stuck at a certain point in the maturity model¹ of this field.

People Analytics practices are related to HR practitioners' mindset. Sometimes a mindset change is a key to a successful path in analytics. That's a significant part of my role as a consultant when helping HR people find and follow their analytics path. I decided to be where questions are evolved, not where answers are requested, which means that I mentor HR people in analytics instead of doing analytics for them. But to do so, I must understand their level in analytics first.

People Analytics practices are related to HR practitioners' mindset. Sometimes a mindset change is a key to a successful path in analytics. People Analytics mentees find it so hard to change, but learning culture and rituals help them overcome.



Who are the People Analytics mentees?

Guenole & Feinzig nicely illustrate different levels of comfort with analytics in HR². Specifically, they present three groups of current analytical capability: Analytically Savvy, who are formally trained in analytics techniques; Analytically Willing, who are open-minded about analytics and are ready to learn; and Analytically Resistant, who are skeptical and dismissive of the value of a data-based approach.

The key to developing analytical capability among HR people is to provide engaging learning opportunities aligned with their expertise level. Most HR people may be defined as Analytically Willing. Therefore, a good starting point for them, according to Guenole & Feinzig, is to provide foundational education, e.g., an introductory online course about workforce analytics, and then put learning into practice by applying techniques to day-to-day work.

However, as much as I appreciate the willingness and the ability of HR people who are Analytically Willing, I don't see the online suggestion practically works. The contents presented in online courses are valuable but are mostly general. When applying analytics technics to work, an organization's specific challenges appear. The power of will alone is not enough to handle them and close the gap between theory and organizational reality. Furthermore, the barriers I witness are not related only to analytics practices but also to the implementation of technology that is sometimes necessary for those practices.

Why People Analytics mentees find it so hard to change?

Change is inevitable, and that is also true in the Human Resources domain. In a recent keynote speaking, Josh Bersin mentioned that the amount of investments in the HR-tech market³ is enormous as the size of the market itself. While all the giant players, e.g., IBM, Microsoft, Google, Facebook, want to be in this market now, most of the investments go to plenty of brand-new companies.

There are so many brand-new technologies that any reasonable HR leader will find it hard to start categorizing them. No wonder why so many HR managers that I meet feel paralyzed facing the rapid change in this field. What would help HR leaders to change, become more data-driven, and rely on state-of-the-art solutions? It's time to start re-thinking about hacking the human side of digital transformation⁴ within Human resources departments.

Scientific evidence connects the challenge of change to how the human brain is wired and explains why most change initiatives and digital transformations fail. A core driver of the brain function is maintaining safety and stability. Therefore, even a beneficial change can be perceived as a threat. When you lead a change process in your organization, you directly conflict with your brains' core needs. Any consultant's best efforts and even the most excellent technological solution are sometimes not enough to overcome evolutionary tendencies.

Overcome change barriers with learning culture and rituals

So, we need an alternative. My suggestion for making change more comfortable and helping against the reflexive resistance is creating new rituals within learning sessions that would generate a sense of security. Through my experience in mentoring HR leaders and teams, I discovered how effective such rituals could be. When the meeting agenda and pace of learning are predictable, and when new social norms such as asking questions and thinking aloud are created, people practice openness and curiosity. Familiarity with the setting gives them a sense of certainty and stability. It contributes to a culture of learning.

In a reality where the reasonable employee has less than 30 minutes a week to learn, new practitioners of People Analytics need something else. They need to be encouraged and guided, in mentoring sessions, to connect the right microlearning opportunities to their actual analytics tasks. However, I don't encourage mentees to be dependent only on my resources, but rather teach them how to find and use the right resources to support their advance.

In my People Analytics mentoring sessions, the group agreed to ask anything and consider any thought or idea as feasible. Together we encourage taking risks, making mistakes, but we also celebrate our wins. While acknowledging everyone's ability and encouraging the unique contribution of anyone in the team, I inspire people to find their answers instead of telling them what to do. That's how they learn how-to-learn, on the flow of work. A learning culture and rituals are essential for establishing People Analytics functions.

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4. Myths

"Five Myths About People Analytics That Inhibit Your Progress"

If you randomly select an HR leader and ask about her progress in the journey into data-driven HR, the chances that she would tell you that she is already on the track, according to a survey¹, are about 70%.

However, if you dig deeper into your conversation, you might find out that you and your interlocutor mean completely different things when pronouncing the words "People Analytics."

What your partner sees as progress might not be at all progress in your eye. No wonder this might be the case, when the definitions of this field are vague, and we are still struggling to form its practices.

In a public talk, I challenged myself to describe the state of People Analytics in five sentences. Each point I made implies a myth. HR leaders should be aware of these misconceptions, or otherwise, continue to let these false ideas inhibit their progress.



So how can we describe the status of People Analytics better than a single number in survey results? In one of my public talks about People Analytics this year, I challenged myself to describe our practice's state

in five sentences only. My qualitative effort worked, I guess, at least according to the audience response.

Looking back at my list, I realized that each point I made implies a myth about People Analytics. HR leaders should be aware of the following five misconceptions, or otherwise, continue to let these false ideas about People Analytics inhibit their advancement.

Myth #1: People Analytics is an established practice within HR management

No. Although we witness higher adoption rates every year, there are barriers, and overcoming them takes time. Among companies that presented case studies at a recent conference in Europe², many mentioned a period of one or two years until gaining a return on investment from People Analytics activities.

I was fortunate to hear dozens of lectures about People Analytics. Those case studies presented in conferences are just a handful. Conferences curators will not pick organizations that have not reached significant milestones. However, other organizations, those who are still struggling, shuffling, freezing, or just learning from their mistakes, are not less attractive nor less critical.

If you experience difficulties in your People Analytics journey, you are certainly not alone. In a recent study, organizations' obstacles include the lack of connection between analytics and business results, basing analytics HR system data only, insufficient "data-driven" skillset among

HR people, data quality issues, unstandardized metrics, and over-dependence on IT for analytics.

Myth #2: People Analytics is professional research about HR practices

No. People Analytics is a multi-disciplinary profession that aims to support business decisions related to people on data. HR leaders are not using People Analytics to measure HR practices' efficiency, but rather to understand the impact of their practices on the business results⁴.

HR people manage various processes throughout the employee's life cycle: planning, recruitment, learning, evaluation, recognition, reward, mobility, promotion, safety, welfare, and more. These processes create aggregated workforce capabilities: engagement, culture, efficiency, leadership, innovation, and so forth. Those capabilities enable the organization to achieve its business goals: productivity, quality, and customer satisfaction, which, in turn, result in business outcomes, e.g., revenue growth and stakeholders return.

People Analytics means that HR focus on the use of people data, derived from their processes, to impact the business. In this context, it is worth mentioning that the HR dashboards are not People Analytics. Both People Analytics and HR dashboards deal with Performance. However, each practice has a different approach. Dashboards enable us to present different HR KPIs but can't answer the question: Why? For that purpose, we need People Analytics, which supports understanding the factors that drive those KPIs presented on our dashboards.

Myth #3: Traditional research is outdated in the era of People Analytics

No. People Analytics practices combine new data sources and technologies with good old practices. Mentioning tradition, let me share the puzzlement I've experienced lately, in a People Analytics conference⁵.

I chose in advance to participate in those sessions that seemed most innovative. However, I discovered that some speakers relied on quite traditional research methods, that actually, I've been practicing myself in organizations for years. How does it fit in with new technologies and with plenty of new sources of people data?

The bridge between traditional research methods and innovation are two trends⁶. The first trend is data integration. We no longer settle for analytics based on HR data sources but rather combine many data types about people, both from HR and business units.

The second trend is our new perspective on the future. We refer to people data at different stages in the employee life cycle: candidates, employees, and former workers. We focus our analytics efforts on forecasting outcomes related to business questions.

Myth #4: People Analytics is great only if you are C-suite

No. People Analytics is about different objectives and questions of old and new stakeholders: Executives, HR, managers, and people. Yes, the people! Despite the emerging trends, new technologies, and data

sources, leaders in organizations still ask the same old and fundamental question: Who?

In the past, this question was quite general: Who are the people with the skills, work habits, knowledge, experience, and personal qualities that drive the organization to meet its goals? Today they still ask "who?", but more specifically, and with a focus on business metrics: who create the best new products, make the most revenue, find the most excellent efficiencies, build great workplaces, adapt to changing business conditions, delight customers, attract others to join the organization? In other words, we put the question "who?" with things that are outside the traditional territory of HR.

Traditional research, e.g., employee engagement or training effectiveness, which was already out there for decades, is now connected directly to the business. However, HR and business leaders are not the only ones who raise questions. Today employees expect to receive personalized service in the organization, just like they do in any other context of their lives. We all live through our smartphones, and there's no reason why employees should expect it to be different at work and regarding important questions about career and wellbeing. The People Analytics function should address these needs.

Myth #5: People Analytics means having a data scientist in HR

Not necessarily. Although it would be nice to have such a professional in every HR department, we witness a shift from a research perspective and data science projects to analytics products. Part of the progress in

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People Analytics is implementing HR-tech solutions that enable real-time analysis instead of research cycles.

Organizations implement analytics solutions throughout the entire employee's life cycle. My HR-tech classification, which I present in details in later chapters, includes many categories: Workforce Planning and Mobility; Sourcing, Selecting and Hiring; Onboarding and Culture Fit; Employee Experience and Sentiment Measures; Employee Wellness, Health, and Safety; Employee Growth, Learning and Development; Goals Tracking, Performance Review, and Productivity; Organizational Design, Networks, Teams, and Collaboration.

People Analytics leaders have a lot to offer in the processes of HR-tech implementation. They help using technology to amplify, not overtake, the influential role of humanity in organizations. They can do so, mainly due to their ability to embrace two new responsibilities: Procurement and Ethics, which I also review in later chapters.

I truly believe that awareness of these five misconceptions contributes to faster progress in People Analytics.

Endnotes

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Part II - The Journey

When HR professionals start their journey in the domain of People Analytics, they usually follow similar steps. These steps represent essential parts of their developing analytical mindset. Notably, there are four steps in understanding this field: gaining orientation in the activities included in this field, finding a quick win to start with, striving to reach data integrity, and understanding the technical aspects and technological tools of this field. In the following four chapters, we continue to build the People Analytics value chain by reviewing each one of these steps in the journey.

Figure 4 - The Journey: Orientation, Quick Win, Data Integrity, Technology



- **Orientation** "HR Dashboards are not People Analytics – but you need both!"
- **Quick Win** "People Analytics: Your very first step in a long journey"
- **Data Integrity** "Workforce data is a mess! What can you do about it?"
- **Technology** "A Lighthouse in the Rough Seas of HR-Tech"

5. Orientation

When I talk to a typical prospect, i.e., an HR leader who is interested in starting the journey to data-driven HR, our conversation always begins with an important distinction: Are we talking about "People Analytics" or "HR Dashboards." These two terms are confounding, but they are certainly not synonyms. Understanding the differences between the two terms is the key to our joint mission's successful discussion and plan.

People Analytics vs. HR Analytics

People Analytics refers to exploring employee data patterns and communicating significant results to business leaders to support workforce decisions and improve business performance. HR dashboard aims not to improve business performance directly but rather to serve HR functions' efficiency.

Guenole, Ferrar, and Feinzig¹ clearly explain the distinction between People Analytics and HR dashboard. They define People Analytics as "the approach of measuring behaviors in organizations and knowing how to knit them together to improve business performance. This approach is similar to that taken with customer behavior, but this one concerns employee behaviors". Their definition for HR Dashboards (HR Analytics) is "the functioning of the HR team itself—for example,

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analyzing HR key performance indicators (KPIs) such as time to hire. Such analytics are about holding the HR team accountable".

People Analytics and HR dashboards deal with Performance. However, each practice has a different approach: Dashboards enable us to present KPIs. However, by using dashboards, we can't answer the question: Why?



Why do you need both?

Practically, both People Analytics and HR dashboards deal with Performance. However, each practice has a different approach: Dashboards enable us to present various KPIs and answer questions: Did we reach our goals? How far are we from achieving our goals? However, by using dashboards, we actually can't answer the question: Why? For that purpose, we need People Analytics, which enables us to understand the factors that drive those KPIs presented on our dashboards. We can do so with different levels of Analytics: Descriptive, Diagnostic, Predictive, and Prescriptive². In other words, the company needs both dashboards and People Analytics practices because it must be aware of its KPIs, and it also needs to understand how to improve those exact KPIs.

Let's take an example to demonstrate how dashboards and People Analytics are complementary. Many organizations deal with the challenge of employee retention. Suppose that we have a dashboard that contains a yearly employee attrition rate. This KPI presentation separates voluntary and involuntary turnover, includes some comparisons between employee sectors, displays metrics trends, and even points to outliers. A People Analytics solution for the employee attrition challenge may be a predictive model that enables one to point to specific characteristics of employees who are prone to leave or stay in the organization. Such insight may lead to different approaches toward different employees, resulting in better outcomes in the long run.

HR leaders prefer Dashboards first

When my prospects understand the distinction between dashboards and People Analytics, they usually express enormous curiosity about the second. For example, many of them are fascinated when I describe how to predict employee attrition³. However, when we get to the more practical ground, we go back to discuss dashboards to start a project. Although HR leaders are very interested in gaining insights from People Analytics, their immediate need is usually a tool that integrates data from multiple sources and displays them uniformly and clearly to monitor and control their operations. After all, dashboards have become an essential part of other business departments, and HR should not be different in that sense.

An effective HR Dashboard

HR dashboards are just like any other BI dashboards. When well designed, they can tell a whole story at a glance. They connect data and analysis most needed to specific business questions, i.e., KPIs, simply and clearly. Their layout and data visualizations enable the users to access the data they need to get answers from and get precisely those answers — wholly and correctly.

However, HR dashboards are distinctive. They are not created only for HR leaders but rather for business leaders in the organization. Business leaders and HR leaders should cooperate to define the right KPIs and monitor the correct data aligned with the company strategy and goals. Effective HR dashboards provide a concise and clear display of that workforce KPIs relevant to business performance and assist in decision making. They rely on meaningful data, which can be linked to future actions. It challenges HR to fit a dashboard to each line of business. HR must understand the unique workforce needs of every unit and then determine what metrics to present. For example, if a dashboard shows that top performers in one sector are found via LinkedIn, and at job fairs in another industry, recruitment can be planned, executed, and measured accordingly.

To conclude, let's remember that since business questions constantly evolve, HR dashboards are, and will always be, developing tools. It is crucial to make sure, once in a while, that the HR dashboard still provides actionable information.

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