Data Culture Boosts Self-Service Adoption

Companies achieve more business value from data when people across the enterprise are enabled to work with data for analytics and find their own insights. Scaling analytics to a broader "enterprise-scale" is much more than providing tools and access; it requires fostering leadership organizations focused on data culture and restructuring processes to supplement traditional data management responsibilities. Re-imagining analytics strategies to enable and empower more people to work with data for business agility often begins with people who cultivate thriving data-driven groups that can lead and drive self-service adoption.

An adoption strategy is an essential component of the data and analytics strategy, and the plan to cultivate a culture of analytics requires an ingrained mindset of data enablement. Focus on changes that enable responsible self-sufficiency for end users to allow them to confidently and intuitively work with data for business insights to make quicker decisions. This requires guiding principles and metrics of data and analytics to encourage growth and fuel business impact throughout the organization. These efforts often start small as business units and small groups share success stories, tips, and techniques to increase visibly of what can be done with data and how to do so. As this takes root, develop a more orchestrated rollout of supporting programs and processes to easily onboard new users. Increased adoption of self-service tools, techniques, and mindsets can be done through three primary areas: culture/community, governance/processes, and technology.

Foster a Vibrant Data Community

Based on Radiant Advisors' research across many industries and organizations of various sizes, the data culture of a company is a leading factor in driving enterprise adoption of self-service analytics. It is vital to establish an organizational mindset that supports and nourishes an inclusive data culture that is focused on improving communication, collaboration, processes, and technologies that increase data literacy, comfort, and confidence in working with data.

The starting point often begins when a passionate, creative person who experienced successes with self-service data analytics initiates outreach to others who may also benefit from having a sounding board. This "you're not alone – see what is possible" kind of message can take place informally over coffee or lunch and learns, but the key to communication is consistency to keep people engaged and demonstrate ongoing community commitment.

Once a few people are involved and excited about the potential of what can be done with data, it is time to create formal meeting groups and perhaps even establish "data schools" – all with a welcoming, inclusive atmosphere to help people learn and become confident and even certified with analytics tools and platforms. These formal organizations are key to helping people develop data literacy and confidence within a company. The focus should be the basics of data exploration and discovery, responsible data use, data visualization, and communication of insights. Within these groups, natural leaders will emerge and serve as go-to resources who enjoy the opportunity to support beyond the group environment. These identified leaders and evangelists often pursue certifications and other forms of recognition, which serve as "badges of honor" or "rock star" status to inspire others in the data culture and highlight successes of the community.

Build Momentum to Broaden Scale

When more people are involved and excited, the community and data culture will continue to gain traction. We have defined four stages of growth based on inflection points in the community to continue scaling and address specific needs:

1. **Stage one** is when the initial set of users begins to conquer their data prep and analytics challenges with self-service, often with the use of a desktop tool, such as Alteryx Designer. Tool training and data literacy on business projects are the keys to business impact during this stage.

2. **Stage two** occurs when the initial user group has been actively and steadily building and deploying analytics workflows from their desktops, spreading recognition and interest as more people wish to be involved. The user group matures from reporting and management to more advanced analytics, which also attracts more analytic workers to become involved. The community possibly doubles in size, and coaching with the tool and workflows takes place within the group. A centralized platform server to orchestrate and monitor the increasing number of workflows will likely be necessary.

3. **Stage three** takes place as the data community spans departments and even geographies. Community functions must be more distributed to support more users and sustain efficiency with workflows and reviews, but data-driven decisions remain at the fingertips of decision-makers throughout the organization. This is widely a transitional period that may last a few years as sub-communities develop to widely spread the data culture.

4. **Stage four** is when the data culture and community become part of the fabric of the company and the majority of people are comfortable working with data and excited about not only the business impact for the company, but also the career advancement and opportunities created through increased data literacy. Self-service data analytics and data science will include data architecture and data governance strategies.

Throughout the course of developing critical analytics capabilities across the business, governance, data management, and analytics processes have all been in place. While data governance was initially looser and focused on in a more localized manner, once maturity reaches stages three and especially four, these must be prioritized processes to ensure data is used correctly throughout the analytics lifecycle.

The self-service data analytics platform should facilitate collaborative governance with a combination of user feedback mechanisms for reviews, ratings, and usage information that assist in selecting the appropriate data sources for their work. Data governance processes by key individuals or groups can still be extended to certify certain data sets and analytics workflows as accepted. Importantly, for any self-service environment, governance must ensure that data security is inherited from all data sources and access is properly and appropriately given to users.

Technologies that Encourage Adoption and Sustain Growth

Technology plays a key role in driving – or deterring – enterprise adoption of self-service data analytics. The self-service data analytics architecture and environment must facilitate everyone's data work to provide efficiency and increase tool use.

There are important technology components and aspects that are needed to encourage business adoption and sustain growth throughout the lifecycle of analytics. The tools themselves need to work as part of an ecosystem, or preferably a platform, to facilitate the users' journey of working with data, beginning with a data catalog and collaboration features to help them find and understand data and the governance of that data. The user experience must be highly intuitive, always making their work easier, and within a single interface to avoid time-wasting switches to other interfaces and tools. Users will be most comfortable with desktop experiences and local data work (for example, they're typically familiar with Microsoft Excel) but will need to schedule and monitor their data jobs to a server for centralized execution and management. It is important for IT and operational services to safeguard the user experience by providing the always-

on and ready data infrastructure. Radiant Advisors recommends that this infrastructure should be planned to look ahead a minimum of 12 months in order to anticipate the needs of accelerated growth.

Adoption Metrics for Recognizing Progress

Key results indicators should set expectations and reinforce program focus for monitoring and measuring growth in alignment with the data culture and overall data and analytics strategy. The goal is to establish and increase measurable momentum in three primary areas as more people are enabled to work with data and analytics:

1. **Organization:** Focus on metrics that show engagement. While licensed users may initially seem like a logical indicator, the number of licenses does not always represent the number of people actually using the tool. Instead, consider defining the metric as a ratio of business impact and licensing cost. This metric will focus on the value and outcome that can be delivered with a certain number of licenses. Another metric is the ratio of certified users and data school participants or graduates to licensed users. This metric shows engagement and commitment to proficiency with the platform.

2. **Process:** The key here is to optimize the modern analytics lifecycle to identify inefficiencies or roadblocks that may be addressed to speed analytics work. These may include wasted time finding data, identifying subject matter experts to work with the data, review for approvals and publishing, etc. Measure improvements in these pain point areas as additional help and resources are assigned to streamline the processes.

3. **Technologies:** Technology metrics of engagement will be apparent based on the number of workflows executed in production and by measuring usage in data access, discovery, and data analytics publishing. In this area in particular, stay attuned to the goal of IT making data more available to users and enabling them throughout their analytics processes.

Conclusion

Cultivating a thriving data culture in an organization requires time, commitment, contagious leadership, education to build data literacy and proficiency, and consistent communication to continue the momentum of successful data and analytics work. The key is to establish an inclusive environment to create interest and provide resources and support for anyone who is interested in working with data, regardless of their role or experience. As people in the data community work together and IT enables self-service analytics, more people will become empowered to uncover insights to deliver business value.

For more recommendations and techniques to scale adoption of self-service data analytics across the organization, please read the detailed white paper, "Boosting Enterprise Adoption of Self-Service Data Analytics."

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