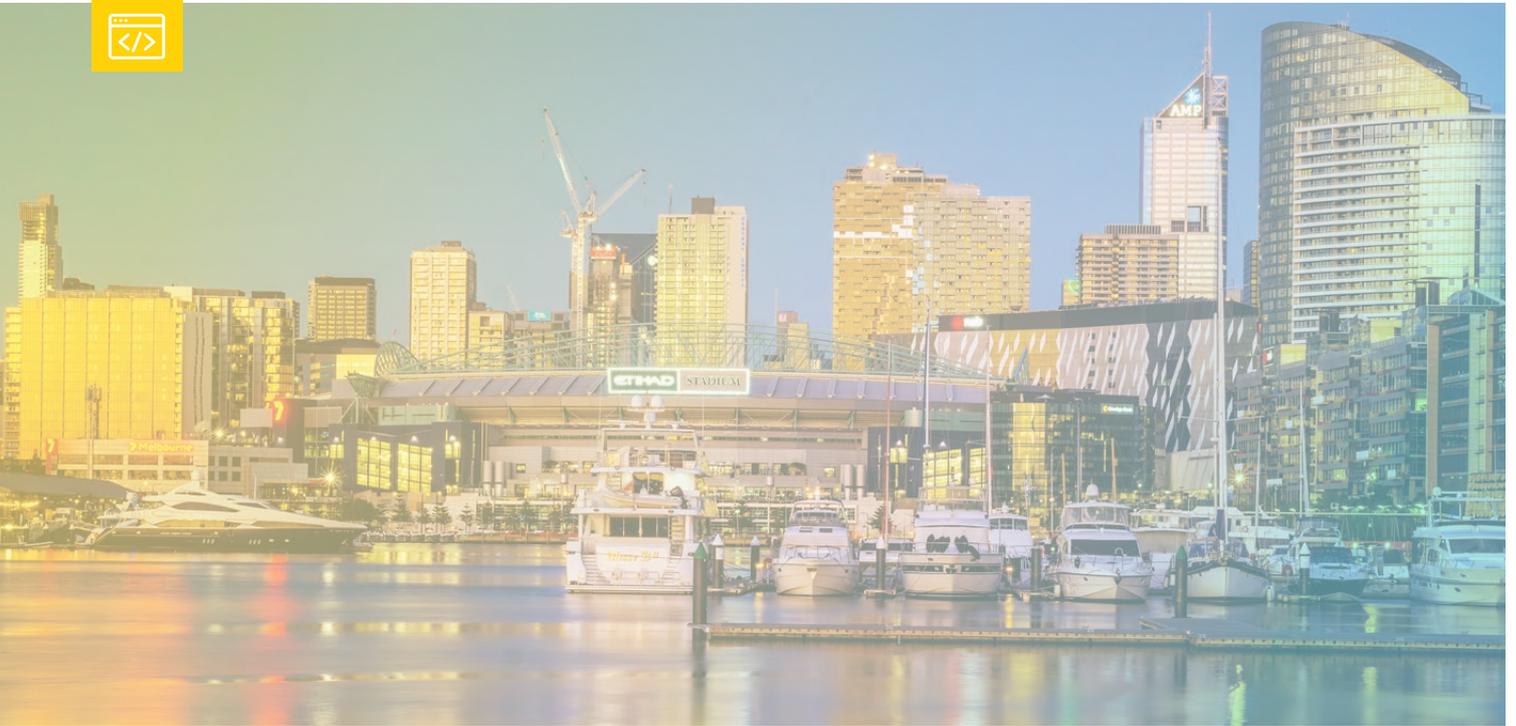


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Chief Data and Analytics Officer in 2017





In September 2017, Australia's leading data, analytics and business intelligence executives converged in Melbourne for the three-day Chief Data & Analytics Officer conference.

As the official Insights Partner, Yellowfin was there in force. For a company immersed in the business of data, we realised this gathering was too good an opportunity to waste.

Throughout the conference we talked to fellow delegates and surveyed their views about the role that data and analytics plays within their organisations. We asked about the issues of most importance to them, the strategies and projects they are developing now, as well as their plans for the future.

The results provide a timely snapshot of the state of Australia's data science professionals in 2017.

STAND-OUT FINDINGS

1. Women continue to be under-represented in the industry.

With the rise of automation, AI and big data, research suggests that organisations are looking to implement proper data analytics and governance systems to ensure data is trustworthy and facilitates quick decision making.

While this trend has driven a demand in jobs in IT over the last few years, the fact remains that females are still under-represented in the data science profession. The imbalance was clearly highlighted by the survey, where 70% of respondents were male compared to 30% female.

However there is reason for optimism. Public discussion about the need to encourage women into STEM careers has gained momentum during the past 24 months. More importantly, the introduction of practical initiatives such as the Data Girls workshops are providing training and encouragement to women interested in data science careers. In 2017 Yellowfin was proud to be a sponsor of the Data Girls workshops in Australia.



The underrepresentation of women in tech has garnered tremendous attention and support of late to the point where the continued existence of the numbers disparity has fostered a nation-wide movement to bring more women into technical fields.

Women in Data, O'Reilly Media



2. The industries most focused on implementing BI and analytics strategy in 2017

While a wide variety of industries were represented at the conference, three sectors stood out. Just under half (42%) of survey participants came from the Financial Services, Government and Non-Profit industries.



Financial Services

This sector remains one of the leaders in BI and analytics adoption. Implementing a customised BI solution allows organisations in this industry to further focus on providing customer-centric products and services through effective customer profiling.

Key BI benefits cited by respondents includes:

- Ability to maintain competitive advantage by offering market leading and customer-specific offerings
- Discovery of new opportunities including determination of profitability
- Customer satisfaction improvements
- Enabling customers to receive insights into their transaction history.



Government

Government data is often stored in silos, with the result that decision-making becomes increasingly complex. A major consideration for many agencies in 2017 has been the continuous search for ways to streamline operations and improve services, all during a time of rising budget cuts.

Those agencies that have already begun their BI journey say they are now benefiting through:

- Reduced costs and new opportunities for innovation
- Expenditure now being tracked for help allocate funds more effectively
- Having the insights they need to introduce new, more effective policies.



Non-Profit

Thanks to advances in technology this century, sophisticated BI and analytics tools are now within reach for any organisation, including those in the non-profit sector. By implementing an analytics and BI strategy, Chief Data Officers (CDOs) and Chief Analytics Officers (CAOs) say they are now able to:

- Use detailed insights to form a clearer and more comprehensive picture of their donors,
- Make more tactical decisions, faster
- Deliver better fundraising results.





4. The customer is at the centre of analytics strategies

Regardless of industry, it seems the customer has been placed in the spotlight when it comes to implementing an analytics strategy.

Respondents revealed that their top three objectives are to:

1. Create and maintain a base of consistent, high quality customer information
2. Evolve their analytics platforms to be able to reveal actionable customer insights
3. Build an efficient data management and governance framework.

Being largely a customer-focused approach, this means organisations are using a data offence strategy to solve their data challenges.

It's an approach that is reflected in the responses of almost every survey participant. Whether the organisation deals with financial customers, local citizens or donors, the customer is at the centre of analytics strategies.



Data offence focuses on supporting business objectives such as increasing revenue, profitability, and customer satisfaction. It typically includes activities that generate customer insights (data analysis and modelling, for example) or integrate disparate customer and market data to support managerial decision making through, for instance, interactive dashboards.

What's Your Data Strategy,
Harvard Business Review, May-June 2017

5. Barriers to analytics implementations

The survey found there are five main hurdles facing CDOs and CAOs as they engage in analytics implementations:

- The difficulty of driving cultural change
- Managing data effectively
- Securing funding for the analytics strategy
- The challenge of obtaining top-management support
- The difficulty of identifying a suitable vendor for the right solution.

How can a CDO or CAO overcome these issues?

When executives believe in the potential of a solution, they are more than happy to provide the capital to adopt the initiative. In the case of analytics, those who are able to communicate the ROI will likely gain this support.

Therefore, it is critical to find a vendor who can easily help you demonstrate this ROI but also offer an easy-to-use solution and short ramp-up times.



2018 CDO and CAO Priorities

Tools and technologies to watch

To understand the projects that CDOs and CAOs will be engaged in during 2018 and beyond, it makes sense to look at the tools and technologies that organisations are currently exploring.

Almost one quarter (24%) of respondents said they are in the process of evaluating data analytics tools. Evaluations of data governance and data integration tools are also on the rise. It's an interesting mix that supports the idea that organisations are keenly looking for ways to use multiple sources of customer data in their data offence strategies, but they are also well aware of the need to do so responsibly and with accountability.

This may be because:

People, regardless of their role, will be empowered to wear many hats, from consuming data on dashboards to performing their own ad hoc analysis, to sharing their findings with others.

Top 10 Business Intelligence trends for 2017, the Australian Business Review

It is quite clear that the impact of data analytics is everywhere. For instance, MLC was Australia's first insurer to track customers' heart rate, sleep patterns and physical activities through smart-watch technology.



Other organisations including GE and Qantas are also introducing apps that will allow their customers to rate their performance to improve their operational efficiency.

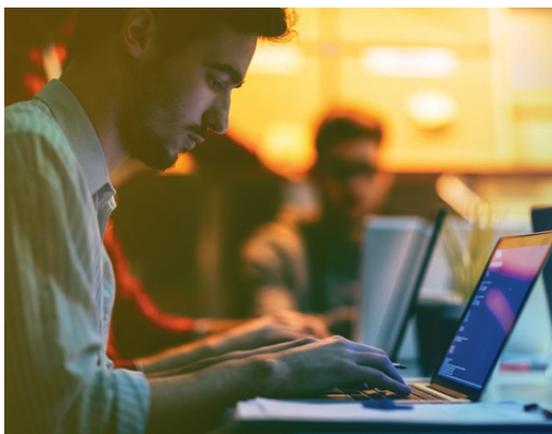
With the influx of data now floating within multiple systems, it's reason enough to start evaluating data governance options, especially if some information gets in the hands of the wrong people.

This can be achieved using a web-based platform, deployed on centralised information architecture that can enable user, group, content and function permissions, to ensure a single source of truth, relevant to each employee.

And data integration?

In order to make use of all the data that has been generated before, we need computers to help us. We could gain a great deal of knowledge by combining existing datasets. But for a variety of technical reasons, it's not so easy to stitch together data from different types of research. Data integration is needed to make this possible.

Integrating data to learn more, Phys.org



Respondents confirmed a 2-5 year timeframe for implementing their strategy, which means 2018 plans are already in place and in having seen the industries these respondents come from, it's no surprise its taking this long.

What Financial Services, Government and Non-Profit organisations have in common is that they are highly complex in nature in terms of regulatory requirements they need to fulfil and cost cutting pressured they are constantly faced.

If you apply certain best practise principles it doesn't have to take this long, despite the industry you belong to.