Competitive Advantage and Data Analytics

Robert Forto

School of Business, Liberty University

Authors Note

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Robert Forto. Email: rforto@liberty.edu

By submitting this assignment, I attest this submission represents my own work and not that of another student, scholar, or internet source. I understand I am responsible for knowing and correctly utilizing referencing and bibliographical guidelines.

Abstract

A firm understanding of business analytics allows for the most significant leverage for an organization. An emphasis on values and community should be at the forefront. An organizational structure needs to include a retrospective on past analytics-based decisions, how the reorganization could improve decision-making, and how reorganization redefines the business analytics plan. Business analytics enables differentiation as a driver of change. In turn, business analytics pushes toward competitive advantage by generating economies of scale, scope, and quality improvement. But the question that remains is how do Christian leaders employ tactics that stay true to the faith? Few organizations realize a competitive advantage based on faith and a value system that builds bridges in their communities to better serve employees, society, clients, and customers. A search of the scholarly literature and scripture was conducted to develop a practical solution for businesses contemplating how data analytics and Christian leadership can do the greatest good for the community.

Keywords: Data analytics, decision-making, Christian leadership, business analytics, leadership, corporate data analysis, competitive advantage

Competitive Advantage and Data Analytics

A famous movie quote summarizes where businesses are regarding competition, "if you aren't first, you're last" (McKay, 2006). While the selection talks about professional car racing, it holds when organizations think of how their competition may be gaining a foothold in their industry. It could come from offering better services or products. Still, it is a firm understanding of business analytics that allows for the most significant leverage. Whereas an emphasis on values and community should be at the forefront. Bartlett (2013) proposes that the organizational structure includes a retrospective on past analytics-based decisions, how the reorganization could improve decision-making, and how reorganization redefines the business analytics plan. Business analytics enables differentiation as a driver of change. In turn, business analytics pushes toward competitive advantage by generating economies of scale, scope, and quality improvement.

Taking advantage of the competitive environment is the first way organizations achieve relative cost efficiencies and drive competitive advantage against their competition. Taking advantage of the economies of scope is the second-way organizations achieve relative cost efficiencies and drive competitive advantage against their peers. Bartlett (2013) suggests that organizations employ a robust mapping sequence that allows for judging accuracy and reliability leads to thinking through how to design the solutions better to create effective change. Firms need to focus more on supporting the most critical decisions and the confines of the desired accuracy. In addition, organizations need to consider how to make novel problems more routine and leverage better the infrastructure they have on hand.

But the question that remains is how do Christian leaders employ tactics that stay true to the faith? Most business owners are a combination of top-down authoritarian management, idea-

led, opportunity-led, money-led, or even feelings-led. Still, few realize a competitive advantage based on faith and a value system that builds bridges in its communities to better serve employees, society, clients, and customers. Conversely, it takes a purely profound effort for a Christian leader to put his business on the line and sometimes ignore the numbers-driven data analytics to lead his followers to a path that embodies the Holy Spirit (Krispin, 2020).

Christian Leadership in the Corporation

How a leader chooses to behave, or in more academic terminology, how a leader accesses a repertoire of styles impacts the various stakeholders profoundly (Krispin, 2020). For example, Chaleff (2009; cited in Krispin, 2020) posits that all-important social accomplishments require complex group efforts. Thus, leadership and followership are both necessary in the pursuit of a common purpose. This leadership style inherently forces leaders to emerge, but the type of leader that rises to the top will make or break the organization. By understanding the data presented and the advice gained through scripture, a savvy Christian leader can promote the company's organizational values while remaining true to his faith in the Holy Spirit. But it is not that easy.

Scripture reflects an interest in the development of leaders through stories of numerous leaders (Krispin, 2020). Merida (2015) advances that one of the first tests of Christian leaders is to understand the calling. 2 Kings 2:13 says, "Elisha picked up the mantle that had fallen off Elijah and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan" (*New International Version*, 1978, 2 Kings 2:13). In addition, the Old Testament portrays the development of Moses in the households of an Egyptian pharaoh (Acts 2:8-15), Joshua serving at the side of Moses (Exodus 17:8-11), and Joseph through his experience at Potiphar's house (Gen 39:1-5). However, all this aside, many leaders do not fully articulate the stories and parables found in scripture and have difficulty mapping out a

strategy that incorporates Christian teachings and parlays them into actionable plans to leverage the organization.

A conversant Christian leader will attempt to articulate the data presented and form a collation that allows the organization to lead from within, focus on servant-first leadership, and reflect on how Jesus lives in all of us. Romans 8:14 (NIV) suggests, lead us in everything we do. 1 Corinthians 2:9-11 asks us to search and share deep things with God, and John 16:13 (NIV) guides us in all truths and tells us of things to come. This is data analytics at its biblical core. It can be prodigious to consider that an organization's work in their community can have such an overpowering impact, but it can.

Practical Implications

Bartlett (2013) surmises that introducing any new or novel system, whether in terms of leadership or processes and procedures, is the most challenging undertaking for a business analytics team. It is difficult to gauge the most impactful and essential aspects of innovation, and sometimes trial and error are necessary before a breakthrough can occur. An organization needs to take incremental, albeit concerted steps, to advance to the ultimate goal of serving the clients, customers with trust, humility, and respect.

These three tenants can go a long way in developing a competitive advantage for an organization that sets it apart from other players in its industry. In today's ever-increasing reliance on digital technology, firms need to be mindful of trust as a driving factor in the customer experience. As Ahmed and Pathan (2019) argue, digital trust is paramount to competitive advantage. From the significantly lower level of business to the top, trust is the core tenant in a digital world where personal data is everywhere.

People want to be assured that an organization takes its security seriously. The organization must understand the mechanisms and processes in which big data adds value to the company with any novel technology. It must have a clear picture of the different elements and interdependencies (Mikalef et al., 2020). Through intelligent data management, intellectual property protection, and adherence to a value system, a mindful Christian leader can utilize techniques and strategies to develop a competitive advantage that does not just chase wealth, using the earlier movie quote as an example as a measure of business success.

Conclusion

A business owner needs a focused and coherent plan to leverage data assets to garner a competitive advantage. This author argues that a leader must lead himself before he can lead others and, in turn, be a bastion to his community. This self-leadership comes from within. As Geiger and Peck (2016) suggest, one must have emotional awareness, the knowledge of biblical and practical approaches to conflict resolution, and the ability to speak sensitively in those they are communicating with. This personal and spiritual maturity allows for self-control and awareness to begin to articulate what is needed to move forward to lead in a servant-focused manner in the organization.

This biblical or faith-based leadership model partnered with secular or theoretical models as outlined in Northouse (2018) allows a savvy Christian leader to develop a team that can focus on values-based data metrics that can inform the organization of the best means to measure success and leverage their assets. In addition, the focus on values, collaboration, shared purpose, and citizenship can resonate in both biblical understandings of Christian communities and the community at large that want to conduct business with organizations that they see as ethical (Krispin, 2020). In short, organizational leadership requires a complex and conceptual level of

intellectual skillset to lead the people and activities of an organization (McCauley et al., 2010).

This includes critical thinking skills, which facilitate in-depth analysis of organizational issues

(Seemiller, 2014; as cited in Krispin 2020), and practical problem-solving and decision-making

opportunities that data provides as a testament to procuring a competitive advantage and

leveraging resources within and outside of an organization.

References

Ahmed, M., Pathan, M.K. (2019) Title: *Data Analytics: Concepts, techniques, and applications (1ˢᵗ ed).* ISBN# 9781138500815 (Print), (E-Book): 9780429820908.

Bartlett, R. (2013). *A Practitioners Guide to Business Analytics: Using data analysis tools to improve your organization's decision making and strategy* (1ˢᵗ ed). New York, McGraw-Hill. ISBN: 9780071807593.

Geiger, E., Peck, K. (2016). Designed to lead: The church and leadership development. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group.

Krispin, K. R. (2020). Christian Leader Development: An Outcomes Framework. *Christian Education Journal*, *17*(1), 18–37. https://doi.org/10.1177/0739891319869697

McCauley, C. D., Velsor, E. V., Ruderman, M. N. (2010). Introduction: Our view of leadership development. In The Center for Creative Leadership handbook of leadership development (3rded., pp. 1–26). San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons.

McKay, A. (2006). Talladega Nights: The Ballad of Ricky Bobby [Film]. Columbia Pictures.

Merida, T. (2015). *Christ-centered exposition, exalting Jesus in 1 and 2 Kings* (1ˢᵗ ed). Nashville, TN, B & H Publishing Group. ISBN: 9780805496703.

Mikalef, P., Krogstie, J., Pappas, I. O., & Pavlou, P. (2020). Exploring the relationship between big data analytics capability and competitive performance: The mediating roles of dynamic and operational capabilities. *Information & Management*, *57*(2), 103169.

New International Version Bible. (2011). The NIV Bible. https://www.thenivbible.com (Original work published 1978).

Northouse, P. G. (2018). Introduction to leadership (4th ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.