

Collection and Management Methods to Keep a Business Competitive

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Abstract

Today's businesses face a diverse collection of management methods to remain competitive in the marketplace, and this paper will explore each in depth. Many companies rely on intelligent business solutions and analytics to make informed decisions that put them in a position to leverage the data collected and manage it in a way that provides utility and accessibility.

Scholarly and biblical literature and scripture provide a framework for critically analyzing a real-world business problem regarding data gathering and implementing a solution based on Christian values. Conversant Christian leaders can utilize tools that focus on servant-first leadership to build a community from within and outward while balancing faith and business based on the available resources, and data management procedures to make the best managerial choices based on the data at hand. All of this is combined with 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 the organization

Keywords: Data analytics, decision-making, Christian leadership, business analytics, leadership, corporate data analysis, people and data analytics, small business leadership, data management

Collection and Management Methods to Keep a Business Competitive

Recently the business world has shifted, more companies face worker shortages, and the job market is in flux in many industries. Many companies must deal with profound changes in how they manage their business, customers, and business models since they are being overrun by a data-driven revolution in management (Raguseo, 2018). Today's businesses face a diverse collection of management methods to remain competitive in the marketplace, and this paper will explore each in depth. As a result, many companies face challenges, and more companies rely on intelligent business solutions and analytics to make informed decisions that put them in a position to leverage the data collected and manage it in a way that provides utility and accessibility (Bartlett, 2013).

For a small business, data is more than numbers and people. Ahmed and Pathan (2019) propose that data-driven decisions are used for predictive modeling, identifying optimal learning patterns, tracking individual information, and research. Essentially, a business needs to understand its customers' and clients' needs to survive in the long term. Essentially a business needs to have an information strategy that allows the organization to answer five questions: who, what, when, why, and how a customer or client is doing something when they collect data.

Ultimately, numbers and statistical analysis are not the only tools for a savvy Christian leader. God gives leadership perspective on what the vision and the values of a corporation should be. Thomas (2018) along with Krispin (2020) suggests that the indispensable mark of a Christian leader is the combined effort of action, plan, and purpose to influence others how a leader chooses to behave impacts the various stakeholders profoundly. Business success must go beyond selling products and services, and a conversant Christian leader will develop guiding principles that help the organization face challenges and remain competitive while instilling a

value system that focuses on servant-first leadership to build a community from within and outward while balancing faith and business.

So how is it done? First, there are resources and crucial components necessary to grow and evolve. Essentially companies hire people to provide analyses to leverage data to support decisions and validate understanding of the business (Bartlett, 2013). Secondly, organizations will develop an analytics-based system that will allow them to understand their customers, behaviors, and inclinations (Heirati and Siahtiri, 2019). Third, data enables decision-makers to decide based on what they know instead of what they think (Shamin et al., 2019). Fourth, business analytics enables differentiation and specialization and pushes a company toward a competitive advantage by generating economies of scale, scope, and quality improvement. Finally, all of this information is brought together with software solutions, algorithms, and statistical analysis that allows an organization to manage its data effectively and solve real-world problems faced by the business.

Resources and Essential Components

As businesses grow and evolve, companies typically hire people or train those within to provide business analytics to leverage data and support decisions that validate the understandings of the business. Bartlett (2013) describes a system of leadership, specialization, delegation, and incentives as pivot points for calibrating the emphasis placed upon analytics. Furthermore, to coordinate data toward improved performance, firms need to acquire and develop a unique mixture of technological, human, financial, and intangible resources, which will be difficult for competitors to imitate (Mikalef et al., 2020). This overall strategy is a typical starting point for a new business to utilize data collection methods. This strategy is typically initiated to exploit opportunities in the light of organizational objectives (Ahmed & Pathan, 2019).

For the business to be effective, this strategy must have the proper structure for the firm to complete its goals and be multi-tiered so that it includes business analysts performing the analysis. Bartlett (2013) suggests that as analytics spread horizontally to other lines of business from business quants to more sophisticated decision-makers, communication remains a crucial component as leadership needs to delegate decision making toward those in the position to make the decision. A vital part of this early-stage data analytics solution is to develop a culture of sharing, collaboration, knowledge, and resource sharing that guides the company. This organizational culture is a crucial component of a Christian-centric organization and will be a focus later in this paper, but collaborative relationships are one of the key tenants.

Dubey et al. (2019) found that collaborative relationships within organizations can excel through exchanging information, knowledge, and resources. Regarding the model outlined in Bartlett (2013) with leadership, specialization, delegation, and incentives in mind, Dubey et al. (2019) found that resources can be shared to meet the company's needs without expending all the resources of the business. The Christian leader's responsibility is to understand the broader mechanisms in which data, the corporation, and collaboration can create value, including the organizational and cultural dimensions. This responsibility lies with a thorough understanding of the analytics.

Analytics

Today data is collected on everything. A person can track their sleep, the number of steps they take in a day, their stress level, blood pressure, calories in an ice cream cone, and much more. Data collection is omnipresent, and it is up to the organization as to what to do with it. There is a saying in business; data is money. Small businesses collect and analyze troves of data which become an imperative asset. Bartlett (2013) expounds that while data analytics supplies

many facts, the problem is that many business leaders seamlessly move from one activity to another without fully understanding the breadth of data that is presented. Sure, an organization can employ resources and hire quants and others to aid in the decision-making process, but what if the business owner is ignorant of their data analytics and does not use it to the fullest potential?

The effective use of data analytics can transform the decision-making approach taken by an organization. But the quality of data-driven decisions does not rely on numbers alone. Janssen et al., (2017) propose that efficient decisions must be linked to strategies employed in the data collection process, analysis, leadership acumen, and competencies held within the organization. For example, the use of data analytics can allow a leader to understand the fundamental concept of connections and relationships (Ahmed & Pathan, 2019) and use tools like dashboards, polls, surveys, and feedback to assess and comprehend the relationships and how they are a critical component that drives the organization.

Decisions

It does not matter how much data is collected if it is not used to make effective decisions for an organization to remain competitive and have a plan to leverage its assets. The scholarly literature is replete with examples of research conducted on how small businesses can become astute decision-makers. Easily, dissertations and doctoral projects can be undertaken to find answers for small businesses that stifle the decision-making process. Manuel (2014; as cited in Abuezhayeh et al., 2021) found that when organizations use technology and apply it to new learning system activities, such as content management or relationship marketing, it gives the company an advantage in the decision-making process. Facts-based decision-making based on a sound data analysis and management strategy can provide a company with task-related

knowledge that leads to the organization's operative processes, performance, and competence in the marketplace (Abuezhayeh et al., 2021).

People and Data

Unless a company is run by robots and provides no products or services, people are the essence of an organization. Aside from the stakeholders inside a company and the organizational culture within, a sensible leader knows that a client is much more than a number or a sale for the company. They are people with behaviors and needs that a cognizant leader wants to understand. That is why we collect troves of data on our customers. Bartlett (2013) cautions business owners on the importance of understanding data personally and practically. Data should be more than graphical representations and statistics (Ahmed & Pathan, 2019). The people part of a data analysis and management strategy should be an ethical component of any small business and allow leaders to guide their stakeholders to serve in their community.

Competitive Advantage

The focus of this paper is to grapple with the essential data collection and management methods to keep a business competitive. Already resources, analytics, people, and decisions were discussed. Bartlett (2013) proposes that organizational structure includes a retrospective on past analytics-based choices, how the organization can improve decision making, and how reorganization defines the business analytics plan. As the saying goes, you can only learn from your mistakes. Business analytics and a comprehensible strategy provide a competitive advantage and enable differentiation as a driver of change. With a firm grasp on the needs and wants of all of the stakeholders within the company and clients and customers, a savvy leader can develop a team that focuses on values-based data metrics that can inform the organization of the best means to measure success and leverage its assets. These organizational values play a

pivotal role in the organization and will be discussed in this paper from a Christian leadership perspective.

Data Collection and Software

Data can come in many forms and represent myriad fashions from spreadsheets, dashboards, polls, surveys, and other software implementations. A small business owner will use data collection and software to understand how data supports risk, marketing, sales, profitability, security, and privacy concerns. Thankfully many technologies provide opportunities for companies to learn about their customers and their needs and regularly engage with them. There are simple tools like e-mail and newsletters, and social media pages to multi-faceted and robust analytical software programs that digest data through application program implementations to provide best practices based on algorithms (Ahmed & Pathan, 2019).

A corporation wants to be judicious in collecting affordable data that meets the business needs and anticipates the data's purpose (Bartlett, 2013). A sound and values-based business will go beyond selling products and services. The organization will develop guiding principles that help them face challenges posed by the company and use data collection methodology and software solutions that allow for relationships to build with its customers and clients. This data collection and software solution will enable solid integrations and unmatched data-centric opportunities from the less informed competition.

Statistical Diagnostics

After the data is collected and the organization has a team in place that can adequately analyze the data, it is essential to include a statistical analysis to arrive at solutions for the company. There is an old saying, go with your gut. While this might ring true with decisions that will be less impactful to the company's bottom line, typically, a company will develop analyses

to extract hidden patterns from basic information to make the correct decision, increase productivity, generate knowledge, and upgrade innovations. A poised leader can lead their team to enhance the organization's performance by improving agility as it increases the speed of the processes to accomplish tasks.

A leader does not need to master high-level statistical software that includes complex coding and forecasted variables. Still, they need to understand the nuances of the diagnostic process. Bartlett (2013) suggests that a conscious leader with the proper training and managerial insight can understand the presented data and communicate it in a way for the organization's stakeholders to comprehend. This can lead to a team's enhanced performance and agility as it accomplishes tasks (Ghasemaghaei et al., 2015). Furthermore, leadership is always about more than impetuous decisions. A well-informed leader will lean on more than their ability to make non-analytics-based decisions and perform their analyses based on the surfeit of information provided (Bartlett, 2013).

Data Management

So, what is an organization supposed to do with the troves of collected data? A well-organized customer-centric database is one building block for competing on analytics and leveraging an organization's resources (Bartlett, 2013). With this management system, a company can gain efficient access to data, ensure data integrity and security, and provide well-organized storage. Furthermore, as part of a more effective information strategy, a firm can manage its current assets and anticipate what information will enable it to compete in the marketplace.

Even though vast amounts of data can become overwhelming, experienced organizations with competent data managers will not lose sight of their objectives (Ramakrishnan et al., 2012).

Small businesses typically put most of their effort into pursuing profitability focused on price, competition, and operational planning with limited attention to strategic planning (Heikkilä et al., 2017). As a result, the small business can quickly lose sight of data security and collection methodology, resulting in high-risk decisions. With an intelligent data management system in place, a company can develop transparent and careful solutions with its data and storing efforts (Maroufkhani et al., 2020).

Christian Leadership

As mentioned herein, there are vast amounts of information in the secular literature to guide an organization on the importance of sound data management and analytical systems to inform the company on how best to leverage its assets to be a competitive force in the marketplace. What is lacking in the literature is a biblical perspective to inform savvy Christian leaders on best practices to make ethical and informed decisions based on a value system and through servant leadership to promote the word of God in its everyday business operations. Merida (2015) postulates that Christian leaders use their skills for the glory of God. Scripture advised Christians that the story of Solomon can be used as a paradox of wise leadership and the fall of an empire.

Thomas (2015) suggests that a Christian leader's first responsibility is to conduct their business along the lines of pleasing the Lord. A leader must not lead for personal aspirations or the prospect of rewards to be received but because there is no other way. Ecclesiastes 2:24-26 (NIV) can inform a Christian leader that business success comes from working and pleasing God. But where does data management come into play in a Christian-led organization? While dynamic client lists, enormous profits, and satisfied customers can be included as a part of success, the true definition of success can be found in what the apostle Paul wrote in 1

Corinthians. The passage says, “whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God” (*New International Version*, 1978; 2011, 1 Corinthians 10:31).

Christian leaders can leverage their resources, time, knowledge, experience, and the analysis of data to impact and influence others directly. Krispin (2020) suggests that Christian leaders lead more than businesses, homes, and families, and to serve their communities. In the eyes of a Christian leader, there is more to the mission of a successful business and things far greater than the business world can offer. A conversant Christian leader will attempt to articulate the data presented to them and form a guiding collation built on trust and ethical values that allows the organization to lead from within, focuses on servant leadership, and reflects on how Jesus lives in all of us.

A Christian leader can articulate the data to make informed choices based on the wisdom of God. A savvy leader is informed by Paul’s concern for Christ’s church to grow (*New International Version*, 1978; 2011, Eph 1:17; Col 1:9). Informed leadership relies on Romans 8:14 (NIV) to lead us in everything we do, and John 16:13 (NIV) guides us all in truths and tells us of things to come. This is data analytics at its biblical core.

It can be prodigious to consider that organizations working in their community can have such a profound impact as a Christian-led, ethically informed, values-based company. Clients’ and customers’ needs are just one facet of a business. Data can be collected to show how they make choices and when is the best time to launch new products and services, but a Christian leader can revolutionize his business from within. A savvy Christian leader can create a community that promotes a values system for front-line workers to strive to worship God in their daily work. Businesses that run on biblical principles understand the data presented and lead their organizations and allow God to direct their steps.

Practical Application

At the start of every course in the Doctor of Strategic Leadership program at Liberty University, this author asks the question, “how can this course provide insight and solutions for problems that he is facing in the day-to-day operations of his business?” It is always amazing that so much perceptiveness can be gained from a search of the scholarly and biblical literature and through scripture that can guide him with the operation of his business. He is blessed to have the opportunity to have a company that he can use as a case study as he moves through the doctorate program.

It just so happened that at the start of this current term, this author’s business underwent massive changes in its data collection, analytics, and management policy. As a result, the organization started using a robust customer relationship management solution that provides previously unavailable opportunities. The company uses a scalable, intuitive cloud-based system allowing integrations and automations to create unprecedented opportunities for its company to act upon its clients’ preferences and needs and ultimately create a stronger, more profitable, values-based relationship with its customers.

Data technologies are making significant strides in a broad range of applications. Ahmed and Pathan (2019) posit that an organization that understands the complexities and the necessities of a corporation’s customers is one of the most crucial factors for many business entities to improve their business. Heirati and Siahtiri (2019) suggest that applications are used to understand an organization’s customers, behaviors, and inclinations by analyzing trends and needs based on collected data. This author’s company is in the beginning stages of learning how all these systems work and developing best practices that provide for data collection and management methods to not only remain competitive in their industry but make significant

investments in time, technology resources, and financial commitments that will take the company to the next level. Courses like this in the doctorate program shed light and excitement of what is to come for the organization and the competitive future looks bright, no matter what obstacles are thrown in the way.

Conclusions

There are many management techniques to leverage and manage data in today's small business. First, there are resources and central components necessary to grow and evolve. Essentially companies hire people to provide analyses to leverage data to support decisions and validate understanding of the business (Bartlett, 2013). Secondly, organizations will advance an analytics-based system that will allow them to understand their customers, behaviors, and inclinations (Heirati and Siahtiri, 2019). Third, data enables decision-makers to decide based on what they know instead of what they think (Shamin et al., 2019). Fourth, business analytics enables differentiation and specialization and drives a company towards a competitive advantage by generating economies of scale, scope, and quality improvement. Moreover, all of this information is brought together with software solutions, algorithms, and statistical analysis that allows an organization to manage its data effectively and solve problems faced by the business.

Through the information gained through the literature, the company can provide intelligent data management and intellectual property protection solutions (Mikalef et al., 2020), and adherence to a Christian-centric leadership model (Merida 2015). In addition, the company can combine biblical and practical approaches relating to communication and servant leadership (Geiger & Peck, 2016; Thomas, 2018; Krispin, 2020). Additionally, biblical, and faith-based leadership models partnered with secular and theoretical models (Northouse, 2018) can be used to create the best managerial choices based on the data at hand. All of this is combined with

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 the organization (Seemiller, 2014; as cited in Krispin, 2020). This will be the future of this small business.

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