

the
Viewpoint

business

Questions to Ask Before Buying Big Data Tools

Q I'm not in IT, so why should I care about big data analytics?

A In my experience, there are many business questions that go unanswered. More times than I can count I've heard senior business people say, "I wish I knew." Big data analytics offers insights into aspects of your business so you can make better decisions.



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Q OK, but what if I ignore big data analytics?

A Do so at your peril. In today's environment of sequestration and increased citizen demands, big data analytics can help you "compete." You can more quickly identify threats to your program and discover new opportunities to improve. You can drive citizen satisfaction and better identify patterns that suggest errors, fraud, waste, and abuse.

Q I'm convinced. Now what?

A The first step is to understand your desired outcome. Why does your program exist? What does success look like? What challenges are you facing? Who is affected by success or failure? Do not make the mistake of immediately jumping to the technology; there will be plenty of time for that later. Next, identify gaps in your knowledge. What questions would you ask that would offer better insights and drive more effective decisions? Think deep and stretch. Remember, the biggest value in a big data analytics project comes from answering the previously unanswerable. One last step before heading over to IT is to be able to articulate how you and your team will engage with information. For example, would your project or program benefit from the ability to iteratively ask questions, allowing your team to explore in new directions, or are your needs more focused on generating reports? Or do you need both?

Q I went to IT, and their answer was Hadoop. Is that a good answer?

A Hadoop is a great tool when deployed properly. Is it the right answer for your project? That depends. Responses to the questions above are useful in determining if Hadoop is appropriate. Our experience shows that many fully-realized big data analytics projects include Hadoop as part of the tool kit. Other candidates for inclusion are an integrated data warehouse (IDW) and a user-friendly discovery platform that allows a wider audience the ability to interact with data.

Q What kind of results can I expect from an investment in big data?

A You can expect to affect costs, time, productivity, satisfaction, and many other factors. Here are a few examples we've discovered:

- According to state officials in Michigan, their project is saving the state \$365 million annually.
- Citizens of Michigan are also directly benefitting. For example, the state reduced the number of lead poisoning cases by 35 percent from 2003 to 2007, and increased the number of Medicaid-enrolled three-year-olds screened for lead from below 50 percent in 2003 to 72 percent in 2009. Also, the state increased family reunifications by 34 percent among temporary court wards over a nine month period.
- The U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates big data analytics are helping prevent approximately \$95 million in improper payments per year for one program alone.
- Big data analytics is responsible for providing the state of Missouri with more than \$2 million a month in increased revenue.

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For more information on big data analytics, watch video
www.asterdata.com/gartner_video.php