

You Don't Need Big Data — You Need the Right Data

Maxwell Wessel

Abstract: *In the ever-advancing world of technology, there is an ever-growing volume of available data, this data often referred to as Big Data; Big Data is at the centre of a growing hype. However, it is not about the amount of data that you can collect, more about the type of data you collect. Big data is useless to an organisation if it is not relevant, small pieces of the right data will go a lot further towards success. Arguably this means that the ability to collect and use the right data is more important to an organisation than Big Data itself.*

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Name: Heather Jackson

Subject: Data handling and Business Intelligence

Student Number: 1704024

Main Findings

Main theory

The main issues highlighted by Wessel (2016) is that Big Data is not always the be all and end all when gathering information, rather it is imperative that an organisation gathers the right data, that is, data relevant to that organisation's operations. Wessel (2016) argues that it is not in every organisations best interest to harness mass government, social, or weather data, for them to predict what their customers are likely to do next. Wessel (2016) uses Uber (Technologies Inc.) as an example, stating that uber are to be considered an innovative company that took advantage of the shift towards harnessing customer data to use as a competitive advantage. However, uber did not need to gather masses of information, for them to pick up a passenger it is not relevant for them to use the weather forecast to predict what might happen to their service that day. Wessel (2016) continues that before uber optimised computerised technology to collect and process their data, taxi drivers had to do this collection and processing themselves, scanning streets looking for a person stood on the end of a pavement with their arm stretched out. Uber have only used data to make this process more efficient, and therefore more cost effective, the only data that uber really need to collect is, who needs a ride, and where they are. Wessel (2016) continues to state that what uber do is not a use of Big Data, but the use of relevant data, data that is crucial for them to obtain in order for them to carry out their daily operations. Stating that there is no doubt that Uber capture a wealth of information, however it is the small relevant data that is the biggest contributor to their success.

Wessel (2016) continues that to find the data that is most relevant to an organisation, it is crucial to identify the organisations greatest area of waste, what it is causing this waste, and finally, what can be done to reduce this waste. Answering these questions identifies the most important data that an organisation should be seeking to gather and then process. Wessel (2016) finishes by stating that once this data has been collected allowing for these questions to be answered, then and only then, can decisions be made for the effective daily operations of an organisation.

Main Findings

Relevant Literature

Due to significant and long-lasting hype about Big Data and its suggested benefits to customer profiles, and customer relationships, others hold differing views to that of Wessel's (2016) theory. Dawer (2016) argues that using Big Data allows an organisation to create value for a customer, rather than just the ability to target a customer using relevant data. Continuing that creating value for a customer is likely to create longer lasting customer relationships. Using uber as an example, it may not be essential for uber to collect data concerning music preferences per demographic; However, if Uber collect this data and implement it to make their 'riders' experience more comfortable they are likely to become a repeat customer. Chan (2014) has a similar view point on the topic, highlighting the importance big data has in creating the extra added value for a customer, as well as helping significantly with customer knowledge, management, and relationships.

There is literature to support Wessel's (2016) theory that Big Data is not essential to an organisation, but relevant data is. Ross, Beath and Quaadgras, (2013) argue that most organisations will not need Big Data, stating that very few organisations make back their investment into Big Data, warning that smaller organisations should be cautious to avoid getting swept up into the Big Data hype. Kaser (2013) refers to small data as 'beautiful' and big data as sometimes 'useless', with so much data being produced that it far exceeds the ability for human absorption, meaning that it is still imperative that organisations are selective in the data they choose to collect and use.

While it is easy to criticise Wessel's (2016) theory it is important to consider that there is extensive literature that supports his view that the right data is more important than big data, that it is imperative companies are careful when selecting what data, they want to harvest. Keeping in mind when possible, organisations should take advantage of their ability to collect and learn from Big Data as well.

Main Findings

Final Evaluation

Wessel's (2016) article dismissing the need for Big Data, and the importance of small data, shows a reasonable view of Big Data, while he recognises that Big Data has importance in some instances, he makes it clear that for the most part he feels Big Data is of little use. His article does support one side of the Big Data argument and it could have been beneficial for him to have provided a more rounded view of the topic before he went on to present his view point. Wessels theory is supported by more modern literature, while the opposing literature is a few years prior, this indicates that our knowledge of Big Data has developed, and perhaps it is starting to become clearer when Big Data is a necessity and when it is a luxury to an organisation. Wessels clear use of case study's and examples, made it easier for the reader to pick up on the context of his paper.

In comparison to the other literature used Wessel (2016) lacked supporting evidence in his article, with little supporting literature or research used to demonstrate the credibility of his concepts and argument. Wessel's authoring style was concise and easy to follow, his article was to the point and relatable, making it an easy read for the average small to medium sized business owner.

References

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