



3 Ways to Help HR Practitioners Become More Data-Literate

Data-driven insights have the potential to revolutionize workforce planning, talent acquisition, rewards, and every other aspect of people management. But to realize that promise, all HR practitioners—not just core analytics teams and HR executives—need to be able to exploit the full potential of people analytics (PA).

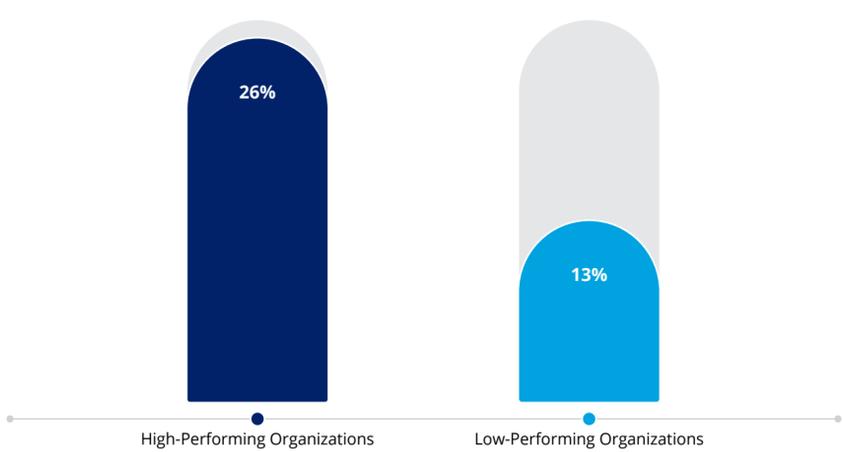
Leveraging the power of PA requires basic data literacy skills. For example, HR staffers should possess the ability to understand basic statistical concepts, such as representative samples; distinguish between correlation and causation and practical and statistical significance; interpret and effectively use a data set based on simple parameters; and identify relevant data sources and formats.

Currently, many HR practitioners lack these skills. Bersin’s High-Impact People Analytics research¹ finds that the basic data literacy skills in HR are considered “very good” in only 5 percent of surveyed organizations. To improve the data literacy of your company’s HR professionals, consider the following three actions.

1. Provide engaging people analytics training.

It’s no wonder that basic data literacy skills are in short supply in HR: as the chart below indicates, the skills set is often not even included in HR job descriptions. But HR practitioners do not need to become quantitative analysts to use PA more effectively—they can gain data literacy quickly and easily with the help of an engaging training curriculum.

Percentage of Organizations That Include Basic Data Literacy Skills in HR Job Descriptions—High-versus Low-Performing Organizations



* This includes organizations that responded with “always” or “very frequently.”

Source: Bersin, Deloitte Consulting LLP, 2017.

Data literacy training content is readily available at little or no cost from external providers, such as YouTube. In addition, many companies are likely to have data literacy courses developed for marketing and other functions that can be adapted to HR. With this content accessible, basic data literacy should be achieved through self-training and can be delivered online in entertaining and engaging ways.

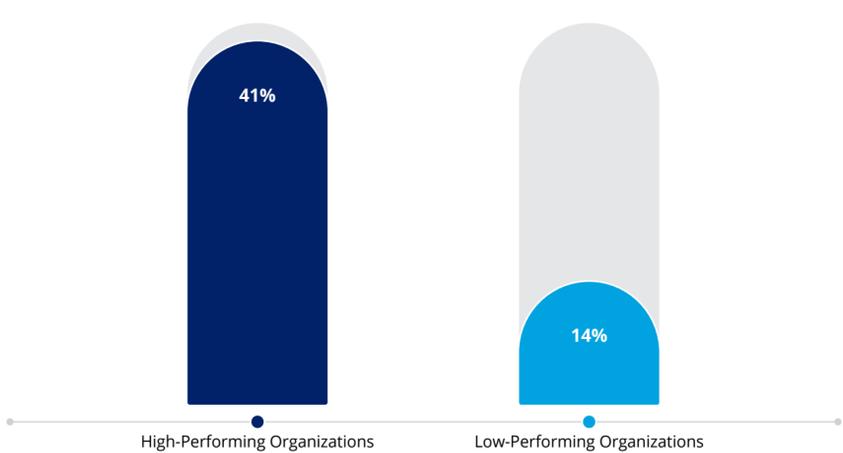
Call to Action

- Use content curation (not creation) to take advantage of the many sources of data and analytics training already available.
- Ground the training curriculum in actual business problems to foster immediate results in performance.
- Make sure your training is focused on the role of data in every HR function, not just in the PA function.
- Use gamification techniques to make training more engaging (e.g., hold a “data scavenger hunt” in which HR staffers compete to track down data and win prizes).

2. Include HR employees in knowledge exchange events.

Peer-to-peer events and interactions are effective and efficient means of enhancing the data and analytics of savvy HR practitioners. These events can be conducted internally (by bringing together HR staffers and specialists on the core PA team) and externally (by offering HR staffers the opportunity to interact with industry or functional PA working groups).

Percentage of Organizations Encouraging HR Staffers to Participate and Engage in External Knowledge Exchanges—High- versus Low-Performing Organizations



* This includes organizations that responded with “always” or “very frequently.”

Source: Bersin, Deloitte Consulting LLP, 2017.

Internal knowledge exchange events offer additional benefits: HR staffers learn basic skills, PA specialists learn how their expertise relates to various HR functions and the business at large, and the event can enhance the overall cohesion of the HR team. External knowledge exchanges not only provide a good place to learn basic skills but also offer a chance to discover how HR professionals in other companies are using PA.

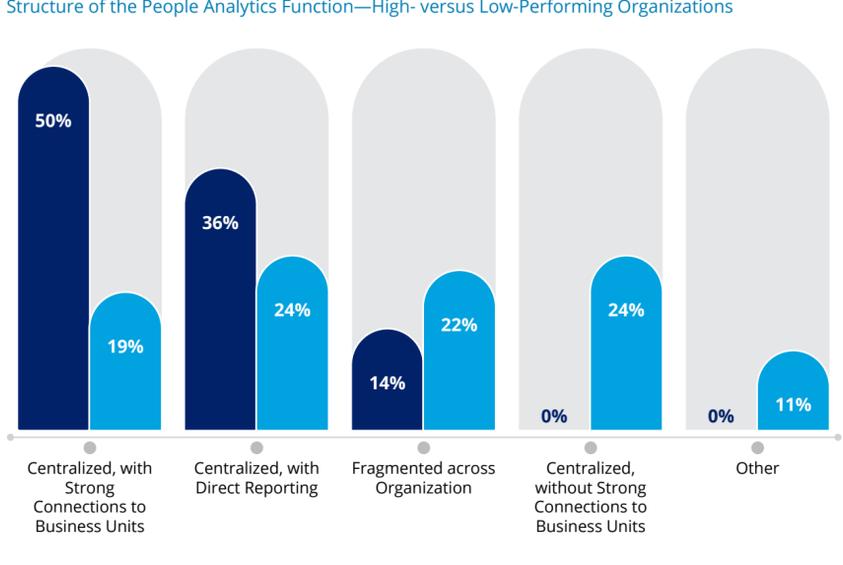
Call to Action

- Focus the agendas of internal knowledge exchange events around a specific data literacy skills set, such as quantitative math, technology or data management, or hypothesis generation.
- Ask subject-matter resources to host and lead internal events.
- Schedule informal events, such as “lunch-and-learn” sessions, to minimize schedule disruption.
- Record internal events and make them available to nonattendees.

3. Embed analytics expertise within HR teams.

Traditionally, HR organizations establish their PA teams in a silo as a separate group of specialists. Today, more and more companies are rethinking HR as an “intelligent platform” and embedding analytics into HR’s functional and business teams (see the following chart). This latter structure facilitates the upskilling of HR employees by enabling them to work alongside data and analytics specialists.

Structure of the People Analytics Function—High- versus Low-Performing Organizations



Source: Bersin, Deloitte Consulting LLP, 2017.

By working with embedded specialists, HR practitioners gain the opportunity to perform data and analytics tasks themselves in the context of the business—a prerequisite for internalizing learning. This helps complete the process of improving data literacy: tapping experiential learning to engage practitioners, using their new skills, and dispersing the benefits of those skills across the organization to improve performance and enhance value for the business.

Call to Action

- As appropriate, make HR teams more diverse by adding people with analytics backgrounds, such as industrial and organizational psychologists, HR practitioners, and analysts from other domains.
- Adopt a “buddy system” that pairs an HR practitioner with a PA specialist to instill analytical thinking and problem-solving into the workings of your HR teams.
- Measure the return on investment of team-based PA projects to determine the value of analytics and make the business case for further investment.
- Reward HR teams that demonstrate a data-first mindset and use them as models for the rest of the organization.

Bersin Recommended Reading

- *Seven Top Findings for Driving High-Impact People Analytics*
- *The People Analytics Maturity Model*
- *Advancing through the People Analytics Maturity Model*
- *Five Basic Principles for Upskilling HR in People Analytics*

¹ High-Impact People Analytics research, Bersin, Deloitte Consulting LLP, 2017.

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