

Optimising the benefits of HR analytics:

A qualitative root cause analysis

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Foreword Dr. Andrea Derler

People analytics can provide data-based support for strategic decisions within a company. I see every day how the right use of employee and business data contributes to business success because people analytics provides insights into otherwise invisible dynamics between the company and its employees.

However, as this study shows, the reality in many less mature companies is different. The discipline of people analytics is often not yet able to realise its full potential. One of the main reasons for the rarity of predictive analyses (e.g. Who will quit next?) or strategic insights (e.g. How will skills shortages affect our competitiveness in the next quarter?) is the lack of system integration. As the report points out, the manual merging of different data sources is rightly recognised as time-consuming and error-prone, which is why the focus is on simple, descriptive analyses and the potential added value of people analytics falls by the wayside. It doesn't have to be this way. The right technology is the key to overcoming these challenges and realising the full potential of people analytics. Solid and secure data integration can also speed up the use of AI and automation by reducing time-consuming manual processes and making data preparation more efficient.

Investing in suitable technologies and building interdisciplinary teams is crucial to taking people analytics to the next level. This is the only way for companies to gain data-based insights that optimise HR processes and support strategic decisions.



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with Visier's team of data
scientists, people analytics
experts and HR professionals
to provide data-driven
and actionable insights for
organisations.

Foreword Herbert Burri

What has long been established in marketing, sales, production and finance remains a challenge in HR. Some organisations can look back on a successful introduction of HR analytics and are continuously increasing the benefits generated. However, a number of HR departments are still at square one when it comes to this topic. Others have taken their first steps and are at best making initial progress. What makes the difference between these companies? Which paths lead to success and which lead to a dead end?

Both as President of the association and as an independent entrepreneur in this field, I have experienced how central a holistic approach is to the successful utilisation of HR data. In addition to strategic anchoring and the right technologies, it is also about narrowing down to relevant issues, building methodological expertise and a data-driven culture. All of this requires courage, resources and cooperation.

As Swiss HR Analytics, it is important to us to obtain data-based answers to our own questions. This motivates us to promote research in general and this second study in particular. We want to lift the veil and better understand what favours successful data analysis in HR and how the greatest benefit can be generated from it. As an association, we also offer our members the opportunity to network, learn from each other and develop concrete practical approaches from the study.

My special thanks go to the three authors of this study, who did some of the intensive work free of charge. I am convinced that with this study we will jointly create a further basis for advancing HR analytics beyond Switzerland and thus generating real added value — for organisations, their employees and the economy as a whole.



Herbert Burri is managing director of HR Data Team GmbH and president of the Swiss HR Analytics association. He helps organisations to quickly and effectively get the greatest possible practical benefit from HR data analysis.

Table of contents

1. Introduction	1
1.1 Initial situation and background	1
1.2 Goals of the study	2
2. HR Analytics Skills	8
2.1 Personnel backgrounds characterise the emergence and maturity of HR analytics	8
3. Work organisation/Division of labour	12
3.1 Structural and process organisation are levers	12
3.2 Interim conclusion	14
4. Technology, AI and Good Practices	16
4.1 Interfaces and changes to the system landscape are challenges	16
4.2 AI has potential for automation, data analysis and interpretation	17
4.3 Good Practice sata quality, standardisation and corporate culture	18
4.4 Interim summary	19
5. Implementation of measures and impact measurement	22
5.1 Unclear responsibilities make it difficult to implement measures	22
5.2 Evaluation (still) not within reach	23
5.3 Interim conclusion	24
6. Case studies	26
6.1 Transa Backpacking AG	26
6.2 BLKB	28
6.3 Balgrist University Hospital	30
6.4 Bedag Informatik AG	32
6.5 Helsana Versicherungen AG	35
7. Conclusion and recommendations	38
7.1 Conclusion	38
7.2 Recommendations for optimising the benefits of HR Analytics	40
7.3. Limitations	42
7.4. Outlook	43
8. Bibliography	46
9. Index of images	47
10. Index of tables	47
11. Category system	47

1. Introduction

1.1 Initial situation and background

Swiss HR Analytics was founded in 2022 as a non-profit association with the aim of providing all interested parties with access to knowledge and networks relating to HR data analyses. In 2023, an initial study was conducted to better understand the maturity level of HR analytics in Switzerland as a basis for discussing the direction of the association.

The results of this study made it clear that the hoped-for benefits of HR analytics in corporate practice are offset by rather sober results (Gerber et al., 2024). Why is there (still) a gap between the ambition and reality of HR analytics in Switzerland? Why is it that the benefits of HR analytics cannot be better realised in practice?

The findings described are not new. Recent studies have come to similar conclusions (Margherita, 2022; McCartney & Fu, 2022; Thakral, 2023). Reviews give an impression of the degree of maturity of a topic area, but remain superficial and provide little guidance for action. Recent studies have looked at impact factors and the capabilities (competences) required for HR analytics (Dasari & Devi, 2024; Korherr & Kanbach, 2023; Minbaeva, 2017). This shows that data quality, proof of benefits and stakeholder management are important success factors for successful HR analytics.

In line with this, the qualitative responses from the initial Swiss HR Analytics study provided initial indications of opportunities to optimise HR analytics. At the beginning of 2024, Swiss HR Analytics decided to conduct a second study to analyse the problem in more detail. The focus was to be on identifying the (possibly hidden) causes of the HR Analytics problems. This was based on the assumption that effective improvement measures can only be taken once the problems are better understood.

1.2 Goals of the study

The non-profit association Swiss HR Analytics is committed to professionalising the field. One limitation of the first study was the sample. This was primarily made up of very large companies (as is the case with many studies on HR analytics). However, such a sample in no way represents the totality of companies in Switzerland.

In addition to the lack of benefits of HR analytics, the aim of this second study is therefore to investigate the issues using a structurally different sample (see section 1.3) and thus to obtain relevant findings for larger parts of Swiss corporate practice.

Against this background, this study pursues the following overarching question:

What is the potential for optimisation with regard to the benefits of HR analytics?

Based on the results of the preliminary study, an in-depth problem analysis was carried out to look for causes in the areas of "person" (skills, abilities), "organisation" (work organisation, division of labour) and "technology" (tools) (see Fig. 1).

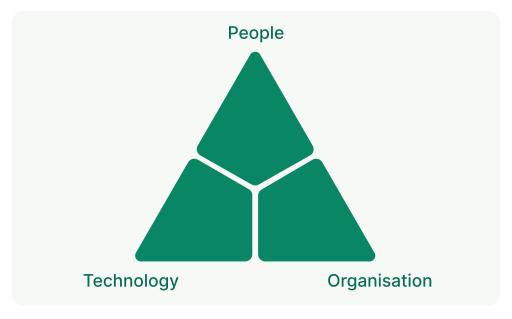


Fig. 1: In-depth problem analysis along the themes of "person", "organisation" and "technology"

In addition, the potential of artificial intelligence and good practices for smaller companies was analysed. Based on the findings of the initial Swiss HR Analytics study, separate questions were also asked about the reasons for the lack of implementation and evaluation of measures. The following questions were therefore the focus of this study:

Question 1: What role do **personnel backgrounds** (skills and abilities of those involved) play in the current and future maturity and effectiveness of HR analytics?

Question 2: To what extent does the **organisational structure** (work organisation) influence the maturity and effectiveness of HR analytics?

Question 3: What role does **technology** play in the current and future maturity and effectiveness of HR analytics? What potential is attributed to artificial intelligence with regard to HR analytics?

Question 4: Which HR analytics **good practices** can be transferred to SMEs?

Question 5: What are the reasons why HR analytics measures are often not implemented and evaluated?

This study pursues an exploratory approach. The aspects of HR analytics examined in depth as part of the study are understood as **possible causes of problems**. These are selectively chosen aspects that deepen the results of previous research, in particular the preliminary study from 2023. Specifically, the possible causes of the respective topics were analysed 'thinking backwards' and repeatedly. It is not possible to predict the extent to which optimising the identified aspects will have an impact on increasing the benefits of HR analytics. In addition, there are many other possible levers for improving HR analytics.

A special feature of this study is the in-depth case studies (see Chapter 6). These were developed following the interviews. They serve to further deepen and vividly illustrate the insights gained there.

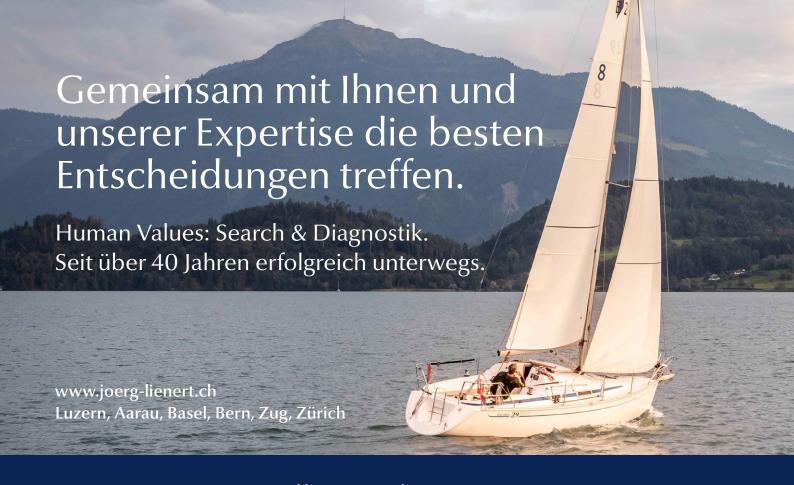
1.3 Methodology, sample and structure of the study

A qualitative approach with semi-structured interviews was chosen to answer the questions. This interview form makes it possible to compare the content of the answers and to respond flexibly to individual responses. The average duration of the interviews was 30 minutes.

The sample (see Table 1) comprises a total of 14 Swiss companies. When selecting the companies, care was taken to ensure that the company size was between 250 and 4,500 employees. The interviewees were selected based on the criteria that they play a key role with regard to HR analytics. A kind of 'maximum variation sampling strategy' was pursued, in which the questions are examined from many perspectives (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The deliberate selection of cases enables a detailed description of the phenomenon, while the transferability of the results is of secondary importance (Schreier, 2010).

Person	Function	Employees	Sector
P1	Talent Acquisition Lead	300	Marketing
P2	Specialist HR Analytics	1400	Transport
P3	HR Specialist Recruiting & Employer Branding	500	Retail
P4	Head of HR Services & Controlling	1200	Industry
P5	Specialist HR Controlling and Projects	1200	Energy
P6	Head of HR Services	950	Finance
P7	Head of HR Steering & Systems	1000	Finance
P8	Data Scientist	4500	Insurance
P9	HR Data Expert	2500	Retail
P10	Employee Development Specialist	3300	Insurance
P11	Head of HR	450	IT
P12	Head of HR & Member of the Executive Board	1400	Health
P13	HR Business Partner	900	Energy
P14	Controller	2500	Retail

Tab. 1: Properties of the sample



JÖRG LIENERT

The interviews were analysed according to Kuckartz and Rädiker (2022). Core categories were deductively derived and categories were inductively formed. The categories were formed in parallel by two experts. After an initial run-through of all interviews, they were coded again and the existing categories were revised. In addition, the quality of the coding was validated using interrater reliability. This resulted in a category system with 52 categories and 193 assigned text passages (see Chapter 11).

In the second part of the study, detailed case studies were developed. For this purpose, five people were interviewed a second time on the basis of the first 14 people interviewed. The aim was to present the key findings from the first interviews to the reader using exemplary, non-anonymised case studies (see Chapter 6).

The **structure** of this report is based on the questions formulated. Chapter 2 sheds light on the personal history of HR Analytics and analyses the role of the skills of the people involved. Chapter 3 examines the work organisation of HR analytics, with a focus on analysing the effects of task sharing and organisational anchoring

on the maturity and effectiveness of HR analytics. Chapter 4 deals with the challenges of technologies for the benefit generation of HR analytics as well as the potential of artificial intelligence and good practice experiences that large companies have made in this area. Chapter 5 analyses the reasons for the rare implementation and impact measurement of HR analytics measures. Chapter 6 presents five in-depth case studies, while Chapter 7 summarises the most important results and derives recommendations for action.



2. HR Analytics Skills

This chapter examines the question of which skill sets the people involved in HR analytics bring with them and which are necessary for a higher benefit creation.

2.1 Personnel backgrounds characterise the emergence and maturity of HR analytics

A key element for the development of HR analytics is the professional background of the employees entrusted with HR analytics. The interview results show that in many cases, employees from areas such as controlling or finance take on HR analytics tasks. These specialists contribute statistical and analytical skills that are valuable for the HR department and thus also enable an interdisciplinary perspective on HR-specific issues.

y I slipped into this role, originally coming from the international goods trade and bringing with me expertise in statistics. What I lack, however, is HR expertise.

However, it is clear that these specialists often lack a sound understanding of effective HR analytics beyond traditional HR controlling. This skills gap can be an obstacle to the further development of HR analytics. In order to achieve the required depth of HR analytics expertise, continuous training is crucial, providing both technical knowledge and the practical application of HR-specific tools and methods.

Often those responsible have not consciously applied for an HR analytics-specific position, but have grown into this responsibility over time. The fact that the HR analytics function is perceived very differently from company to company seems to depend, among other things, on the individual skills and interests of employees in HR analytics. This is therefore often not a conscious, strategic decision, but results from the specific personnel situation in the company.

2.2 Skills mix is essential

The interviews make it clear that the further development of HR analytics is limited by a lack of specific technical and HR analytics-related expertise. Although extensive data is often already available, the use of this data tends to focus on descriptive reporting rather than more in-depth, potentially more effective analyses. What skills are needed for the further development of HR analytics?

Some interviewees pointed out that programming knowledge and database skills are required to perform more complex data queries, which currently often has to be delegated to IT specialists. Furthermore, it is necessary to familiarise oneself with the possibilities and functions of AI-based tools in order to fully exploit their potential. A comprehensive skills mix also includes knowledge in the area of data protection (see Fig. 2).



Fig. 2: Professional background and skills-mix influence the maturity and effectiveness of HR analytics

In addition, the ability to create strategically relevant use cases is considered fundamental. The ability to interpret data and derive measures as well as the ability to translate these into the working reality of the customer are of central importance.

n addition to the technical and methodological aspects, dealing with results and follow-up are key. This requires good communication skills and perseverance.

In order to achieve a higher level of maturity, specific competences appear to be central, without which many companies will probably remain stuck at a descriptive level.

2.3 Interim conclusion

Overall, it can be assumed that the professional background (training, wealth of experience) of employees plays a key role in the maturity level of HR analytics. Specialists from Controlling or Finance contribute valuable analytical and statistical skills, but they often lack HR competences for more effective HR analytics.

A broad skills mix that includes both technical and HR-specific skills is necessary to take HR analytics to a higher level of development. The creation of strategically relevant use cases, data interpretation and contextualisation as well as the translation of findings into the working reality of decision-makers are key components of a successful skills mix. An in-depth understanding of the business and its challenges is particularly important for the creation of use cases. Stakeholder management also requires the ability to communicate with different people across disciplines and hierarchies in an understandable way and at eye level. This requires an openness to continuous training in the field of HR analytics, as this is essential in order to realise its potential benefits.



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3. Work organisation/ Division of labour

This chapter takes a closer look at the work organisation of HR analytics. Based on the findings to date and the interviews conducted, the aim is to show how different approaches in the development and organisational anchoring of HR analytics affect the implementation and benefits of the analyses in corporate practice.

3.1 Structural and process organisation are levers

The organisational structure may play an important role in the success of HR analytics. The interviews show that the location of HR analytics within the company structure varies greatly. In some cases, HR analytics is located in controlling, which leads to a strong focus on descriptive analyses. The long-term vision of implementing predictive analyses often remains a subordinate priority.

In many cases, a single person is responsible for data analyses and reporting, which limits the potential benefits of HR analytics. In individual organisations, specialised teams are formed to carry out analyses in a more professional and structured manner. Companies with centralised data and IT departments often rely on external IT specialists, as the technical expertise or necessary tools are often lacking internally.

Overall, the distribution of responsibilities ranges from individuals to complex team structures involving multiple departments to ensure comprehensive coverage of topics such as absence management or salary analyses. It is recognised that a clear division of work and defined responsibilities can significantly increase the added value and efficiency of HR analytics. In almost all organisations, HR analytics is not very strategically oriented and results from the reporting task or reactively due to situational requests from the line.

Think it is valuable that we have decided which KPIs to select from a large number and have clarified the responsibilities.

In terms of process organisation, the interviews show that there are interfaces in the HR Analytics process that may impair its effectiveness (see Fig. 3).

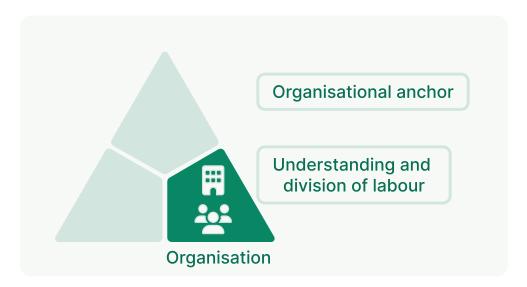


Fig. 3: Organisational anchoring as well as the understanding and division of labout influence the maturity and effectiveness of HR analytics

In several cases, there is a division of labour between data preparation, data analysis and data interpretation. Process losses can be observed at the interfaces. The fragmentation of the HR Analytics process across different people appears to be an obstacle to creating greater benefits. The respective persons have a corresponding understanding of their role: their own task ends at the interface to the next person in the HR Analytics process.

The understanding of roles characterises the implementation of tasks.

In some organisations, a single person takes on the analytics tasks, while in other cases central data teams have been established to ensure more comprehensive use of the data. Nevertheless, HR analytics often remains project-based, is resource-dependent and often does not sufficiently support strategic decision-making processes, which limits development.

3.2 Interim conclusion

The degree of maturity and impact of HR analytics are significantly influenced by its organisational anchoring. The organisational structure and process organisation shape the existing division of labour with regard to the HR Analytics process. The HR Analytics function is often located in Controlling, characterised by a single person and with a strong focus on descriptive analyses. In other companies, responsibility for HR analytics is spread across several teams. A high degree of fragmentation often leads to an unclear understanding of roles, which is a major obstacle to greater value creation. At the individual interfaces, a clear understanding of tasks and roles is therefore key to translating data analyses into concrete actions and thus greater impact.



4. Technology, Al and Good Practices

The interviews also asked what challenges exist in the area of technology and what potential is seen in AI for HR analytics. The interviewees were also asked what good practices they suggest for small and medium-sized companies when introducing HR analytics.

4.1 Interfaces and changes to the system landscape are challenges

The interviews show that modern technologies can significantly increase the maturity level of HR analytics. Some companies report success with predictive analyses, but these are often still in their infancy and remain primarily descriptive. The technological possibilities have so far only been used to a limited extent to gain deeper insights and create predictive analyses.

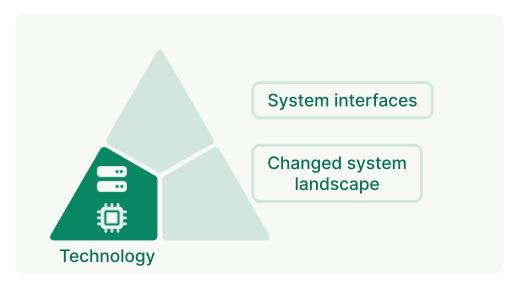
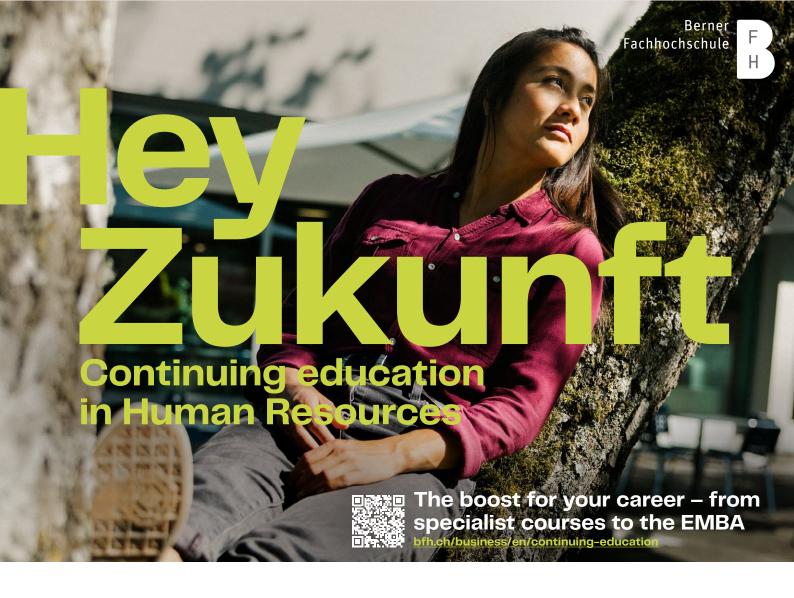


Fig. 4: System interfaces and changing system landscapes influence the maturity and efficiency of HR analytics

However, the interviews also show that companies are currently focussing in particular on creating interfaces between different systems. A lot of time is lost in the current manual merging of different data sources. This poses challenges for those responsible for analytics due to limited personnel resources and prevents rapid further development. Major changes in the system landscape pose a further challenge. Although replacing a standard tool can make sense in the longer term, in the short term this primarily means that analytics managers are very busy with the system change and therefore have little capacity for additional analyses. As a result,



limited human resources often do not allow for more than pure reporting.

combined manually, leaving little time for the actual analysis.

4.2 AI has potential for automation, data analysis and interpretation

The latest developments in the field of artificial intelligence indicate that its importance in various HR areas will continue to increase in the future. The companies surveyed see a wide range of potential and use cases that can help them to improve their analysis activities and make data-based decisions to optimise HR processes. Currently, companies hardly use AI for HR analytics activities. Uncertainties regarding data protection, a lack of expertise and resources prevent its use. However, the future potential is estimated to be very high.

The focus is particularly on automation and increasing efficiency. The respondents assume that the use of AI will reduce time-consuming manual processes and that data preparation and cleansing can be automated to a greater extent. This automation makes it possible to process large volumes of data quickly and without errors, which forms the basis for future analyses.

Je believe AI will be superior at recognising patterns in the data.

Another expected use case is the automation of reports and dashboards. By using AI, reports and dashboards can be updated in real time in the future, making the data more accessible. The simplification of data visualisation through AI-supported tools makes it possible to present complex data clearly. Even people without strong data analysis skills have the opportunity to work more databased and compensate for their skills gaps. Another expected benefit of AI in HR analytics is the ability to recognise patterns and trends. This benefit was most frequently emphasised by companies.

4.3 Good Practice data quality, standardisation and corporate culture

Some large companies have been working on the implementation of HR analytics for some time and have gained important insights that they can pass on to smaller companies as good practices.

One of the most important lessons learnt from the experiences of large companies is the importance of data quality. Only with accurate and reliable data can well-founded decisions be made. Smaller companies should therefore invest in systems and processes that ensure high data quality. Centralised data management helps to keep data consistent and accessible. Large companies have recognised that the centralisation of data sources is crucial in order to obtain a comprehensive and uniform view of HR data. Smaller companies should take care to consolidate their data sources as early as possible.

Another key to success is the standardisation of data and processes. By using uniform data formats and standardised processes, companies can ensure that data can be compared and analysed. Small companies should define clear guidelines and standards for data collection and processing. This can start on a small scale by systematically monitoring certain key figures. In general, a data-

driven corporate culture should be promoted step by step. Smaller companies should start by consistently integrating data into their strategic decision-making processes.

figures, but to collect them thoroughly and regularly and review them together in dialogue with the line management.

Another important aspect is the training and sensitisation of employees. Smaller companies should promote training to ensure that their employees have the necessary knowledge and skills to use HR analytics effectively.

4.4 Interim summary

In terms of technology, interfaces between different systems and the current manual merging of different data sources pose particular challenges. Major changes in the system landscape represent a further hurdle. These challenges tie up resources for additional analyses and the further development of HR analytics.

The interviews clearly show that the use of AI in HR analytics offers great potential. From automation and increased efficiency to databased decision support and the recognition of patterns and trends, AI is likely to change the way HR analytics is carried out. There is also hope that limited human resources can be utilised in a more targeted and effective way with the support of AI.

In terms of good practices, data quality, the centralisation of data sources, the standardisation of data and processes, the integration of data into strategic decision-making processes and a data-driven corporate culture are decisive factors in ensuring that HR analytics is also successful in smaller companies.





5. Implementation of measures and measurement of effect

The fifth chapter shows the challenges that exist when implementing HR analytics measures in practice and evaluating their impact. The focus here is on the extent to which measures are derived and tracked based on analytical findings and whether there are systematic approaches for evaluating the effectiveness of these measures.

5.1 Unclear responsibilities make it difficult to implement measures

The implementation of HR analytics measures proves to be challenging in practice. Although extensive data is often available, there is a lack of clear processes for deriving specific measures from it and tracking them consistently.

In some cases, for example, hypotheses are developed about certain trends, such as internal mobility or time to promotion, which are then verified by analysing time series data. Such measures are often derived on an ad-hoc basis, based on key figures such as absenteeism or fluctuation rates.

A targeted approach is crucial. In particular, it is important to consistently focus on strategic use cases and to support these with targeted data analyses and derive binding measures from them. It is also important that it is clear who is responsible for the measure and its impact measurement and actively monitors it. This is because unclear responsibilities hinder implementation.

Another example is the use of **key figures** to evaluate absences, accident rates or long-term absences, whereby companies set targets and introduce measures to improve these values. These processes often take place at an operational level and usually remain within a descriptive framework. In order to understand the causes, however, more in-depth correlation analyses would be necessary.

We do not find causes with descriptive statistics.



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However, some organisations succeed in implementing specific preventive measures, such as reducing accident figures or improving resilience through workshops. However, the implementation of measures is often reactive and less strategically anchored.

5.2 Evaluation (still) not within reach

Although measures are derived, there is often no systematic evaluation of their impact. Many companies find it difficult to measure and evaluate the impact of the measures. In most cases, individual feedback or gut feelings are used to assess whether a measure was successful. Structural analyses and comparisons are rarely carried out and there is insufficient retrospective evaluation of effectiveness. For example, there is often a lack of systematic comparisons of key figures before and after the implementation of a measure. One of the reasons for this is the lack of standardised processes.

Some interviewees stated that the impact of measures in their companies is only analysed on the basis of the development of target values over time. No additional surveys or more comprehensive evaluations are carried out in order to more accurately record the causes of changes. This approach makes it difficult to determine the actual effectiveness of measures and assess their long-term impact on the company. In addition, the measurability of the effects of complex issues such as absenteeism or employee engagement is often limited, which further increases the challenge of evaluation.

not found out with data. Therefore, if you don't know where the cause comes from, you have to measure the effect and then somehow read the crystal ball.

5.3 Interim conclusion

The implementation and evaluation of HR analytics measures are not yet systematically established in many companies. Although measures are derived on the basis of data, the monitoring of success often remains superficial and is rarely accompanied by a structured impact measurement. Evaluation methods are often limited to simple time series or individual feedback, without in-depth analyses. Evaluation is simply still out of sight in many companies. Descriptive statistics make it difficult to derive targeted measures. Cause and effect-orientated thinking, clear objectives through specific use cases and a common understanding of responsibilities can make a decisive contribution to implementation. In order to systematically measure the impact of measures, controlled field experiments could be carried out, for example.

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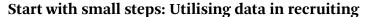


6. Case studies

6.1 Transa Backpacking AG

From a focus on recruitment to a holistic HR analytics strategy

Transa Backpacking AG initiated its HR analytics journey in the area of recruitment in order to create a data-based foundation for deriving measures. The process, which was originally initiated as a small sub-process, has since developed into a strategic initiative that covers the entire HR life cycle. With pragmatic approaches, a focus on collaboration and the continuous improvement of methods, Transa strives to make data-driven decisions and achieve a long-term impact. This case study highlights the steps from the initial focus on recruitment metrics to the implementation of relevant metrics along the entire HR lifecycle.



Transa entered the world of HR analytics with an initially pragmatic approach to recruiting. As a first step, the team defined various key figures, including the number of unsolicited applications, time-to-hire and the performance of individual recruitment channels. Analysing the recruitment channels led to some surprising findings. A significant proportion of the budget was spent on platforms that only generated a small number of qualified applications, as HR specialist Jasmine explains. As a result, inefficient channels were deactivated and the available resources were strategically reallocated to more effective channels. The initial success demonstrated to the team the value of data-driven decisions and laid the foundation for a broader implementation of HR analytics.

From sub-process to systematic integration

The positive experience with recruitment led to the desire to expand the use of HR analytics to other areas of the company. The team developed a candidate and employee journey that covers the entire HR lifecycle from recruitment to onboarding, support, development and offboarding. The aim was to identify at least three meaningful key figures for each stage of the HR lifecycle. Examples include the absence rate, the number of re-entries and the part-time rate. Responsibility for these key figures was deliberately distributed among several team members in order to promote a broad awareness of data analyses.



Name: Jasmine Lüthi

Function:
HR Specialist Recruiting
& Employer Branding

Employer:
Transa Backpacking AG

Employees: 500

Developing and analysing the key figures together not only deepened our understanding, but also improved the processes.

The challenge: data quality and automation

While initial progress became visible, a central challenge became apparent, namely data quality and integration. Data is collated from different systems, which takes a considerable amount of time and requires manual corrections. The data is then stored in a simple Excel dashboard to visualise the development of the data over time. In the future, automation and a better understanding of IT systems will be crucial.

The potential of AI has also been recognised, particularly for deriving possible measures and generating ideas. Transa is still at the beginning of this development, but is aware of the importance of gradually building up expertise in analytics and IT in order to work more effectively in the long term.

Conclusion: From small to large — building a sustainable strategy

The case study of Transa Backpacking AG impressively demonstrates that even medium-sized companies can develop a data-driven HR strategy with small steps. The focus on recruiting as an entry point not only resulted in immediate successes, but also paved the way for a more comprehensive use of HR data. The systematic approach, broad involvement of the team and clear objectives were crucial to progress.

Despite existing challenges, such as data integration and automation, the example demonstrates that a sustainable HR analytics strategy can be developed through patience, pragmatic approaches and an iterative approach. With its vision to be data-driven and its willingness to continuously learn, Transa is on a promising path.

6.2 BLKB

From HR controlling to HR analytics

In the dynamic world of HR, HR analytics is becoming increasingly important and Basellandschaftliche Kantonalbank (BLKB) is taking the step from HR controlling to a data-driven approach. As Head of HR Services at BLKB, Jonas Stampfler is leading his team into a new era of data analytics to make informed, forward-thinking decisions. In this case study, we highlight the challenges and successes to date of the shift from reactive data processing to a predictive analytics strategy at BLKB.

From a one-man show to data-driven decision-making

The transformation started almost from scratch and, after switching to SuccessFactors in 2021, initially focussed on setting up descriptive reporting. In a further step, the new system was then to map more complex relationships and enable use cases that went beyond pure data visualisation.

In order to gain a more comprehensive picture, the Tableau platform was used, which links HR data with other company information. The connection to the Data Hub was only recently activated so that specific use cases can now be developed in order to continuously expand HR analytics activities.

On the way to data-based use cases and sustainable measures

A crucial part of the new approach lies in the identification and application of use cases that bring concrete benefits to the bank. However, these are not easy to find: A use case often begins with the consideration of how a certain problem can be recognised earlier in the future.

A use case often starts by saying, how can we recognise this problem earlier in the future?

BLKB has recognised that it is not just data collection that counts, but also the formation of hypotheses and a well-founded selection of indicators that deliver real added value. An illustrative example is the linking of performance data from individual branches with absence rates, although this poses data protection challenges and requires careful consideration.



Name: Jonas Stampfler

Function: Head of HR Services

Employer: Basellandschaftliche Kantonalbank (BLKB)

Employees: 950

The challenges of implementation — cooperation and data quality The transformation poses new challenges for organisation and collaboration. The hub-and-spoke model is proving to be both advantageous and challenging. In particular, collaboration with the various departments and data analysts is very enriching. However, the effort involved is high if each "spoke" has to learn how to prepare the data and use the tool and carry it out themselves.

Fixed capacities from the hub to support HR analytics simplify and speed up the implementation of a use case.

Another challenge is ensuring high data quality.

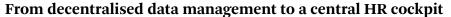
Conclusion: a data-driven future

BLKB is facing an exciting phase in which HR analytics is being developed from a pure reporting instrument into a strategic tool for forward-looking HR management. Jonas Stampfler and his team have already taken decisive steps to set the course for data-based decision-making. However, the journey from HR controlling to comprehensive HR analytics is only just beginning and promises a promising future.

6.3 Balgrist University Hospital

From decentralised data responsibility to strategic HR analytics

Balgrist University Hospital is in the process of strategically aligning its use of HR analytics. The previously selective and decentralised structures are gradually being transformed into a centralised and systematic HR analytics model. The aim is to utilise data-based findings to support strategic decisions in HR management. This case study presents the organisation of the transition from operational data management to a strategic orientation. The development of an HR cockpit and the prioritisation of the People Agenda are discussed.



The current HR data landscape at Balgrist University Hospital is characterised by decentralised data responsibility. Data on salaries, absences and personnel costs is collected and managed in different systems, which often leads to siloed data that causes duplication and additional individual work.

In order to overcome the fragmentation of the data landscape, the clinic has identified the creation of a central HR cockpit as the first step. The aim of this cockpit is to consolidate all relevant HR key figures and make them available to management in an easy-to-understand format. The aim is to promote data-based decisions and enable managers to address important issues at an early stage.

From selective measures to strategic approaches

Up to now, the focus has been on implementing measures in individual cases, for example analysing absences or fluctuation rates in certain teams. Although this selective approach generated immediate success in many cases, it remained limited to operational issues. With the introduction of an HR cockpit, the clinic is aiming for a strategic approach. This includes linking absence and fluctuation data in order to recognise patterns and develop preventative measures.

The aim is to establish a system that makes both areas of development and best practices visible.

Anchoring data-based decisions in the strategic management process is a key milestone along the way.



Name: Patrizia Seifert

Function:

Head of HR & Member of the Executive Board

Employer:

Balgrist University Hospital

Employees:

1400

Skills development and use of technology

The transition to a strategic HR analytics model requires not only technological advancements, but also the development of expertise within the HR team. In addition to the ability to think analytically, it is crucial to present complex relationships clearly and comprehensibly in order to promote a constructive dialogue between HR and managers. In terms of technology, the clinic relies on the use of existing systems, such as the payroll accounting and time recording system. They are also planning to introduce an HRM platform and use AI-supported tools to increase the efficiency of data analyses. In particular, the potential of AI to integrate different data systems and derive valuable hypotheses for analysis is emphasised.

Conclusion: A strategic change in HR data work

Balgrist University Hospital demonstrates how a strategic change in HR analytics work can be successfully implemented. The transition from decentralised data responsibility to a centralised, strategic approach forms the basis for a sustainable and effective People Agenda. The example illustrates that the implementation of small, targeted measures, such as the introduction of an HR cockpit, can form the basis for the realisation of more comprehensive strategic initiatives. Through the targeted development of competences and the use of modern technologies, the clinic creates the conditions for integrating data-based decisions into its HR strategy in the long term.

6.4 Bedag Informatik AG

Strategic insights instead of reactive reports

Bedag Informatik AG, a medium-sized company with 470 employees, faces the challenge of not only collecting HR data, but also using it strategically for future-oriented decisions. The path from a pure controlling mentality to a data-driven approach in HR analytics is accompanied by structural, cultural and technological hurdles. The case study emphasises the importance of an HR analytics flagship project and the significance of an overall understanding of the HR Analytics process.

Between key figures and culture

Bedag Informatik AG regularly collects a large number of HR key figures such as fluctuation rates, absences, engagement index and data from employee surveys. However, this data is used largely descriptively and reactively. Measures are often based on historical data, which means that the strategic significance of these numerical analyses remains limited. A key stumbling block is fragmented data responsibility: payroll accounting, HR and external providers provide data that is not always uniformly understood. This leads to inconsistent data quality and makes coherent analysis difficult. In addition, there is a lack of a company-wide culture that sees datadriven decisions as an opportunity and not as a control. This is particularly evident in the critical attitude of employees, especially with regard to data protection. At the same time, a corporate culture is evident that aims to promote both the potential and weaknesses of employees while respecting the limits of what is possible. This approach, which focuses on the individual, is referred to as a humancentered corporate culture.

From reacting to acting

A more strategic focus of HR analytics is to move from pure past analyses to predictive and proactive measures. A concrete example is the analysis of demographic developments. With an average age of 42, Bedag is faced with the challenge of identifying age-related departures at an early stage and taking timely measures.

y We need operational systems, but also a culture that enables data-driven action.



Name: Daniela Burkhard

Function: Head of HR

Employer:
Bedag Informatik AG

Employees:

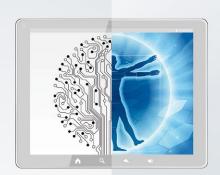
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This trust should promote the transition from a reactive to an active HR department.

Closing the gap: data integration and overall understanding

A key obstacle is the fragmentation of processes. Different people and systems are involved in the collection, processing and analysis of data without anyone taking overall responsibility. This not only leads to process losses, but also prevents a holistic view of the data. Daniela Burkhard puts it this way:

Nobody has the overall understanding, everyone only contributes their part.

An HR analytics showcase project could support this change by creating clear responsibilities and demonstrating the added value of an integrated approach.

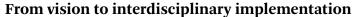
Conclusion: Change through trust and a human-centered culture

The Bedag case study shows that the path to effective HR analytics depends not only on technological factors, but also on cultural and organisational factors. Anchoring analytics in the HR strategy and promoting a data-friendly corporate culture are key to moving from reacting to acting. Such a culture places great importance on the individual. A specific pilot project that specifically demonstrates the benefits of analytics could initiate the necessary cultural and structural change. Looking to the future - instead of just the past - is becoming a prerequisite for positioning HR as a strategic partner in the company.

6.5 Helsana Versicherungen AG

Interdisciplinary collaboration for data-based HR decisions

With a central vision for people analytics and an interdisciplinary working group, the company is pursuing the development of a databased HR culture. Helsana relies on the systematic development of skills, the use of modern technologies and the exchange between HR areas in order to translate data-based findings into practical measures. This case study highlights the path from descriptive analysis to multivariate approaches as well as the challenges of cross-departmental collaboration.



Helsana has anchored people analytics as one of the main goals in its HR strategy. Responsibility for implementing this initiative lies with an interdisciplinary working group made up of experts from various HR areas and the "Analytics and Systems" team. The setup described ensures that topics such as fluctuation or absences are not viewed in isolation but holistically.

The first step was a status quo analysis and the formulation of concrete goals, such as greater support for the line through data-based decision-making processes.

not lie solely with a small team, but must be anchored in the entire HR day-to-day routine.

Multivariate analyses and new skills

Helsana is currently focusing on descriptive analyses with the aim of increasingly analysing multivariate relationships. For example, the absence rate is related to factors such as workload or demographic data in order to identify potential levers for reducing absenteeism. Helsana is combining HR data with external research findings. A key aspect of progress is the development of new skills within the team. The use of programming languages such as SQL and the integration of AI-supported tools for data preparation are identified as key skills for the next steps. At the same time, it is emphasised that the use of AI must be carefully planned and controlled in order to ensure ethical standards and data protection.



Name: Angelika Kornblum

Function: Employee Development Specialist

Employer:
Helsana Versicherungen AG

Employees: 3300

Promoting a data-based corporate culture

One of Helsana's key goals is to establish data-based approaches throughout the company. A self-service dashboard for managers serves to create transparency and promote acceptance of data-based decisions. The dashboard is continuously being expanded to make the most important HR metrics such as diversity or absences easily accessible. Successful people analytics does not depend solely on technological advances, but on a culture of exchange and collaboration.

The implementation of data-based solutions and regular dialogue between HR and the line contribute significantly to strengthening this culture.

Conclusion: From data to recommendations for action

The Helsana case study demonstrates that an interdisciplinary approach and a precise vision can form the basis for a data-based HR strategy. The focus on multivariate analyses, the targeted development of skills and the establishment of a data-friendly corporate culture are key elements of success. Helsana is still in the early stages of its development, but with a combination of pragmatic approaches and strategic vision, it has laid the foundation for sustainable progress. The next challenge is to systematically measure the impact of measures and further integrate data-based solutions into the organisation. With this focus, Helsana is well positioned to fully exploit the possibilities of people analytics.



7. Conclusion and recommendations

7.1 Conclusion

The study "Optimising the benefits of HR analytics: a qualitative root cause analysis" shows the diversity and complexity of the topic of HR analytics. Through the in-depth problem analysis in the area of personnel backgrounds, organisational framework conditions, technological possibilities as well as the implementation and evaluation of measures, central causes were identified that explain the current implementation status of HR analytics in companies.

The figure below summarises the factors identified in the study from the areas of people, organisation and technology that influence the benefits achieved with HR analytics.

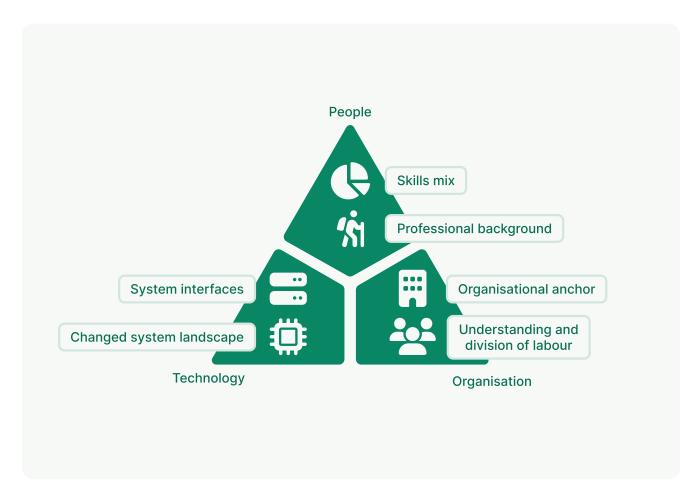


Fig. 5: Factors that influence the maturity of HR Analytics

It was found that the professional background of the employees involved has a significant influence on the level of maturity of HR analytics. The individual skills and interests of the individuals involved strongly influence the way in which HR analytics is implemented. Specialists from the areas of Controlling and Finance have analytical expertise, but there are deficits in terms of specific HR knowledge and the ability to translate results into the organisational context. The lack of ability to form strategically relevant use cases, i.e. a use case relevant to the business, is a common obstacle in companies (Dasari & Devi, 2024). A lack of knowledge in the area of databases and automation are further challenges. In order to drive the development of HR analytics, a broad, interdisciplinary skills mix is required, which in particular includes business understanding, data interpretation skills, deriving measures and translation into the language of the customer (McCartney & Fu, 2024; Rasmussen, Ulrich & Ulrich, 2024). HR analytics is not about the HR department. HR analytics is about the business.

The analysis of work organisation and division of labour makes it clear that unclear role allocations and fragmented processes can significantly impair the added value of HR analytics. This is due in particular to the loss of interfaces and the concentration of responsibilities on individuals, which means that data-driven decisions often remain reactive and less strategic. A clearer allocation of tasks, a shared understanding of HR metrics and a strong strategic approach could significantly increase effectiveness (Kulikowski, 2024).

While technological advances are opening up new opportunities, their potential is often not realised (Dasari & Devi, 2024). This is due to challenges such as manual data collation, lack of integration and the need to update systems, which prevent deeper analysis and delay the transition to predictive approaches.

The application of artificial intelligence and the consideration of good practice experiences illustrate the considerable potential of AI for increasing efficiency and improving the quality of HR analytics. At the same time, it is clear that smaller companies could benefit from the experience of larger companies, for example by standardising data and processes or promoting a data-driven corporate culture.

The investigation of the lack of implementation of measures and impact measurement reveals various challenges. Exclusively descriptive statistics are often not sufficient to identify cause-and-effect relationships. Clearly defined use cases and a common understanding of responsibilities can significantly promote the implementation of the findings obtained. Evaluation is often limited to descriptive key figures and individual feedback, which makes it difficult to generate long-term learning effects and strategic conclusions. The consistent evaluation of measures is simply still out of sight in many companies, as attention is currently limited to data preparation and analysis.

The concluding case studies emphasise the great value of practical insights into the reality of companies. They show how specific challenges - such as the fragmentation of data, the development of expertise or the use of AI - can be successfully overcome. At the same time, it becomes clear that a data-driven HR strategy requires not only technological progress, but also organisational and cultural adjustments.

The case studies impressively illustrate how companies can increase the benefits of HR analytics with different approaches and at different levels of maturity. It becomes clear that small steps, such as the introduction of dashboards or the definition of clear use cases, can have a major impact. Particular emphasis is placed on the role of integrating people, organisation and technology in an iterative, strategic process that enables sustainable change.

7.2 Recommendations for optimising the benefits of HR Analytics

The recommendations presented are based on the knowledge gained, but do not claim to be exhaustive. Companies are advised to always review the proposed measures on a company-specific basis and adapt them to their individual circumstances. The case studies listed also offer valuable inspiration and starting points for your own practice. They represent good practices that can serve as orientation for companies, but are not easily transferable.

Further development of HR analytics skills

- Promote both the (financial) technical and HR analytical skills development of people in HR Analytics. In particular, the focus should be on 'reading' and 'translating' data into the companyspecific context as well as understanding the business and creating strategic use cases
- Implement interdisciplinary teams to cover the necessary skills mix

Optimise the organisation of work

- Clarify roles and responsibilities along the entire HR Analytics process
- Focus on strategically anchoring HR analytics in order to maximise its contribution to achieving the company's goals. For example, create use cases with a focus on the company's strategic goals

Invest in technology

- Prioritise the integration of existing systems and the automation of data preparation and cleansing in order to free up resources for further analyses
- Be aware that system changes place a heavy burden on the limited time resources of those responsible for analytics, meaning that less time is available for the further development of analytics projects

Use of AI

- Use AI in a targeted manner to recognise patterns and trends in HR data, compare them with benchmarks and make more informed data-based decisions
- Train employees in the use of AI tools and their possibilities, paying particular attention to data protection, ethical standards and integration into existing processes
- Create transparency among employees about how their data is processed and what benefits they can derive from it themselves

Implementation of measures and evaluation

- Develop standardised processes to derive measures from HR analytics findings and systematically evaluate their impact
- Think 'backwards': What impact do you want to achieve with HR analytics? What are your assumptions regarding the relevant influencing factors (causes)? Consult the existing specialist literature to identify possible influencing factors
- Use both qualitative and quantitative methods to comprehensively evaluate the effectiveness of measures and generate learning effects

Adopt good practices

- Draw on the experience of larger companies, particularly with regard to data management, standardisation and the development of a data-driven corporate culture
- Start with basic key figures and gradually work on expanding the depth of analysis

Promote a data-driven culture

- Sensitise and train employees in the use and interpretation of data to promote data-driven decisions at all levels
- Promote an understanding of key business figures in HR and link these to HR key figures
- Communicate the benefits of HR analytics clearly to increase internal acceptance and commitment

These measures offer companies a pragmatic introduction to the optimisation of HR analytics and create a basis for long-term professionalisation.

7.3. Limitations

The present study has several limitations that necessitate a cautious interpretation of the results. For example, the sample size is small, which limits the generalisability of the results. A combination with quantitative methods could have supplemented the results and made them more robust.

One person per company was surveyed. The assessments of the implementation of HR analytics in the company are therefore based on **individual opinions**. Particularly in the case of decentralised responsibilities, additional perspectives from other stakeholders would be valuable in order to obtain a more comprehensive picture. In addition, the study focussed on Swiss companies, which may limit the transferability of the results to other countries with different legal, cultural and technological frameworks.

The exploratory approach focusses on specific cause areas, but does not claim to be exhaustive. Furthermore, the limited benefits of HR analytics could also be due to other factors not considered in this study. It remains to be seen to what extent and to what extent the optimisation of the identified aspects actually contributes to

increasing the benefits of HR analytics. There are other potential levers for improving HR analytics that were not addressed in this study.

7.4. Outlook

This study provides an insight into possible reasons why companies have only benefited from HR analytics to a limited extent to date.

It is certainly important to continue working on a common understanding of HR analytics within the company. This includes a common understanding of the tasks and roles of HR analytics.

Another task is to increasingly identify business-relevant use cases for HR analytics and to develop the necessary skills and business understanding.

A better understanding of individual differences in the readiness and acceptance of HR analytics technologies could contribute to a more effective introduction (Bentvelzen, Boon & Den Hartog, 2024).

In addition, the question arises as to which technologies - especially in the field of artificial intelligence - are suitable for which business environment and for which use cases. Smaller companies sometimes have different requirements and resources than large companies, which is why future studies should take these differences into greater consideration.

The next concrete step could also be to develop clear guidelines for measuring success (evaluation). This would primarily involve concrete measurement tools or key figures (e.g. on employee satisfaction or the effectiveness of certain measures) that companies can use in a fairly simple and standardised way to evaluate the current benefits of their HR analytics projects.





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9. Index of images

Fig. 1: In-depth problem analysis along the themes of "person", "organisation" and "technology"	2
Fig. 2: Professional background and skills-mix influence the maturity and effectiveness of HR analytics	9
Fig. 3: Organisational anchoring as well as the understanding and division of labout influence the maturity and effectiveness of HR	
analytics	13
the maturity and efficiency of HR analytics	16
Fig. 5: Factors that influence the maturity of HR Analytics	38

10. Index of tables

Tab. 1: Properties of the sample ______4

11. Category system

2. HR Analytics Skills

Quote	Subcategory	Category
«was mir persönlich noch ein wenig fehlt, ist die Datenanalysefähigkeit.» «Wie übersetze ich das in die Linie, wie stelle ich das dar, was sind die Kernaussagen - da fehlt sicher noch Kompetenz in der Breite»	Training needs and skills development	Expertise and background of the persons responsible
« was mir allerdings fehlt, ist das ganze HR Know-How.» «sie hat keine spezifische Ausbildung in dem Thema aber hat sich über die Jahre hinweg auf das Thema spezialisiert.»	Non-HR-specific backgrounds	Expertise and background of the persons responsible

3. Work organisation/division of labour

Quote	Subcategory	Category
«wir machen so vereinzelt Zusammenhangsanalysen, aber ich würde sagen, der Grossteil der Sachen, die wir anschauen, ist deskriptiv»	Transition from reporting to analysis functions	Organisational anchoring and structure
«Ich war die ganze Zeit allein in dieser Funktion und habe versucht, das alles ein bisschen strukturierter aufzugleisen, was man bisher schon gemacht hat, plus eine gewisse Weiterentwicklung einzubringen.»	Initial introduction by key personnel	Organisational anchoring and structure
«in unserer HR-Strategie ist das Thema, Analysen vorantreiben und datenbasierte Entscheidungsfindung eines unserer Hauptziele»	Strategic decision by the management	Organisational anchoring and structure
«Gerade um Analysen zu machen, bin ich auf das Controlling angewiesen, aber auch auf das Rechnungswesen»	Cooperation with other departments	Origin and historical development
«da haben wir jetzt neu auch eine Datenanalystin mit drin, die wirklich auch das Thema nochmal im Team weiterbringen soll»	Creation of specialised functions	Origin and historical development
«Wir haben eine HR-übergreifende Arbeitsgruppe zum Thema People Analytics aufgebaut.»	Integration into the HR department	Origin and historical development
«Wir haben die Zahlen, aber oftmals geht viel Zeit verloren beim Zusammenfügen von Zahlen. Ich muss eine Liste hier ziehen, eine Liste da ziehen und dann das irgendwie zusammenbasteln.»	Technological resources and tools	Available resources and capacities
«Mir fehlt im Moment die Zeit und die Ressourcen, das wirklich so zu pushen, wie es vielleicht toll wäre umzusetzen.»	Limited financial and human resources	Available resources and capacities

4. Technologu, AI und good Practices

4.1 Interfaces and changes to the system landscape are challenges

Quote	Subcategory	Category
«Wir sind aktuell dran, eine neue Systemlandschaft aufzusetzen, sprich unser Standardtool wird ersetzt, mit der Hoffnung, dass wir dann auch Cloud-basierte Dashboards für die Linie zur Verfügung stellen können.»	Integration of new technologies	Use of technologies and tools
«Seit etwa vier Jahren konnten wir die meisten Daten in unser Data-Warehouse einspielen.»	Utilisation of existing systems	Use of technologies and tools
«Ich glaube nicht, dass ich mehr FTE brauche für HR- Analytics, ich glaube, was es braucht, ist Vereinfachung von Automatisierung»	Automation of processes	Use of technologies and tools

4.2 AI has potential for automation, data analysis and interpretation

Quote	Subcategory	Category
«als Hilfestellung, um die Datenqualität zu verbessern und dann wirklich gute Daten zu haben, ist für mich der grösste Nutzen.»	Automated data preparation and cleansing	Automation and increased efficiency
«Überall, wo du halt mit vielen Daten arbeitest und daraus eine Zusammenfassung oder ein Management Summary erstellen musst»	Automation of reporting and dashboards	Automation and increased efficiency
«In der Mitarbeitergewinnung lassen sich Menschen teilweise von Emotionen leiten, KI kann zum Beispiel mit einem Persönlichkeitstest Fakten schaffen»	Optimisation of HR processes	Improving data analysis and interpretation
«sehe ich Potenzial, dass man Zahlen eingibt und dann die Künstliche Intelligenz dies visuell darstellt.»	Facilitating data visualisation	Improving data analysis and interpretation
«Also wirklich die Analysephase beschleunigen, sodass die internen Ressourcen sich darauf fokussieren können, Massnahmen zu bearbeiten.»	Recognising patterns and trends	Improving data analysis and interpretation

4.3 Good practice data quality, standardisation and corporate culture

Quote	Subcategory	Category
«man müsste das Ganze eher zentralisieren.»	Centralisation of data sources	Focus on data quality and centralised data management
«Mein Rat wäre da wirklich mit den Basis-Kennzahlen zu beginnen, diese aber in aller Gründlichkeit und regelmässig erheben und im guten Dialog mit der Linie anzuschauen.»	Standardisation of data and processes	Focus on data quality and centralised data management
«Kultur versuchen aufzubauen, dass man erst mal schaut, was haben wir denn an Fakten /Informationen und darauf basierend entscheiden.»	Integrating data into strategic decision-making processes	Promotion of a data-driven corporate culture
«wegen der Kennzahlen oder eher der Umgang damit oder die Möglichkeiten, die man hat, um diese mit den Mitarbeitern zu besprechen.»	Training and sensitisation of employees	Promotion of a data-driven corporate culture

5. Implementation of measures and impact measurement

5.1 Unclear responsibilities make it difficult to implement measures

Quote	Subcategory	Category
«Hypothese bei uns ist z.B., es dauert x-Jahre, bis jemand befördert wird und dann schauen wir uns die Daten an, um das zu überprüfen, ob die Hypothese stimmt.»	Hypothesis-based objective	Definition and setting of goals
«Beispielsweise Absenzen. Da haben wir auf Unternehmensebene eine Kennzahl, die regelmäßig überprüft wird.»	Targets for specific key figures	Definition and setting of goals
«Wir hatten früher eine geringe Durchlässigkeit bei der internen Besetzung von Führungspersonen. Es wurden Massnahmen abgeleitet und die interne Mobilität konnte verbessert werden.»	Optimisation of work processes	Derivation and implementation of measures
«überall wo wir rot sind, ergreifen wir Massnahmen und prüfen das dann auch regelmässig / quartalsweise.»	Taking preventive measures	Derivation and implementation of measures

5.2 Evaluation (still) out of reach

Quote	Subcategory	Category
«nicht so strukturiert, wenn dann wird das anhand von individuellen Feedbacks zurückkommen. Aber da ist auch ganz viel Bauchgefühl drin.»	-	Methods and challenges of success control
«Das Ziel liegt in den wirklich kritischen Kennzahlen, dass wir dort Massnahmen ergreifen und dann diese auch überprüfen.»	-	Data-based decision-making

SWISS HR ANALYTICS

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