

SEARCH

Advanced Search

LOGIN

SIGNUP



- Certifications
- Communities
- Webcasts & Events
- HR Genius
- ePubs
- JobStop
- Buyer's Guide
- Store
- Free Stuff
- Mentoring
- Ask the Expert
- LEAD

ePubs > HR Strategy and Planning Excellence Essentials > January 2017 HR Strategy and Planning

LOGIN TO READ, COMMENT AND SHARE

Email Address

LOGIN OR REGISTER

## EXCELLENCE ESSENTIALS ARTICLE

SUBSCRIBE. IT'S FREE!

# The Dawn Of HR Analytics: Will HR analytics be the breakthrough of 2017, or set us back to 1984?

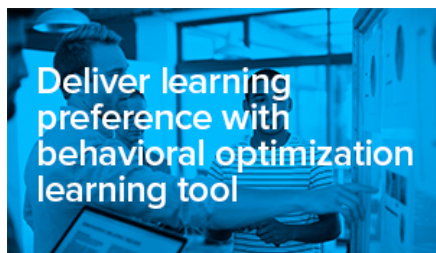
Posted on 01-23-2017, by:



**Kon Leong**  
ZL Technologies, Inc.

0.0 from 0 votes

Employee performance can be a deceptively difficult thing for managers to measure. Some positions naturally have concrete metrics for success, for instance, that of a salesman. But even hard sales numbers can be misleading, and many positions are difficult to quantifiably measure at all. This means that managers often rely on intuition and unwritten rules when giving promotions, according to [John Beeson at Harvard Business Review](#). In fact, [a 2015 study performed by Human Capital Institute](#) observed that 80% of managers make employee management decisions based on gut-feeling.



Find out how >

This can lead to a company's best employees being overlooked for promotions, simply because there aren't using existing metrics to convey their true value, or because they don't "sell" themselves well to management.

Big data is helping to change this, however. With more and more business operations and communications becoming digitized, there is increasing opportunity for data-driven evaluations. In fact, [research suggests](#) that 82% of executives plan to escalate HR analytics initiatives in the near future. With that said, organizations with an eye on analytics initiatives for 2017 should keep a few things in mind.

### Harnessing Communications

Some of the most promising analytics capabilities lie in communications data. By looking closely at a company's email patterns, a bigger picture begins to emerge of who is essential to business operations, and how. Analysis of contact networks and variable word patterns can indicate how your employees perform across a large range of criteria, for instance: Who are the experts on particular topics? Who is most respected? Who is likely to quit? Who has the highest strength ratings with respect to client and employee relationships? Which relationships connect particular departments, or one company with another?

Leveraging correlations between communication patterns and employee outcomes can be an essential tool when making management decisions such as promotion determinations, and alignment of employee strengths with corporate objectives. Moreover, managers can begin to identify behavior patterns in successful employees and encourage them department-wide.

Advertise Here



### Member Content

[Blogs](#) | [Questions](#) | [Events](#) | [HR Groups](#) | [Members](#)

### Events

- Upcoming Events
- Past Events
- Public Events

### Webcasts

More >

- Now in progress, started at 1:00 PM  
[The \\$687B Dollar Question: Is Employee Engagement the Driver of Business Success?](#)
- 1st February 2017, 1:00 PM  
[Understanding HR Certification Exams & How to Prepare for Them](#)
- 2nd February 2017, 1:00 PM  
[Let's Talk About The aPHR Exam](#)

### Virtual Conferences

More >

- 22 February 2017  
[HRIS and Payroll](#)
- 22 March 2017  
[Training and Development](#)
- 28 March 2017  
[Leadership](#)

Advertise Here



## Rethinking Privacy

Email data is among the most highly personalized data that employees create on a regular basis, so it is naturally invaluable as an indication of behavior. However, because of this personalization and its unstructured nature, organizations typically face certain obstacles when implementing email analytics.

The first obstacle is employee privacy. Oversight of electronic communication patterns tends to challenge our modern precepts of privacy. For many, the thought of any entity reading our emails—our employer, government, etc.—carries dystopian connotations. Overcoming distrust and unease in employees, and carrying out HR analytics in an ethical manner is a challenge in and of itself. For this reason, it is important that HR analytics stakeholders set in place controls to enforce clearly defined policies.

In other words, email analytics should not equate to a manager simply reading through employee emails. Rather, in order to ensure the validity and privacy of an email analytics initiative, a clearly defined system should be utilized in which select email metadata and content patterns are processed in a discreet and secure environment. Concrete policies should be in place to make sure employees only have access to the data they need. This way, for instance, the CEO's emails don't end up in the hands of someone from marketing.

Perhaps surprisingly, the majority of value from a company's email volume can be garnered from metadata alone, and most of the rest can be taken from an automated analysis of content. But even so, new information and analytics technologies may force us to readdress the modern definition of privacy. Regulated industry such as finance already accept the surveillance of broker-dealer emails, and regardless of your industry, if you become a custodian in a legal case there is a good chance your work emails will be disclosed. So the question is, do we draw the line at performance evaluation analytics?

The conclusions we reach may depend largely on cultural factors. For instance, answers will vary between EU countries, which put strong emphasis on the privacy of personal data, and the US, which seems to have reached a reluctant acceptance that our data is being constantly leveraged by tech giants.

We might realize that in today's age, privacy does not mean our digital footprint is invisible to everyone but us. Rather, we may redefine privacy as a system in which access to our data and communications is restricted in a responsible manner, and limited to parties with a reasonable and legitimate purpose.

## Managing Big Data

Because any analytics initiative relies on the validity and reliability of data being used, it's important that data is adequately scrubbed before analysis. Ensuring the validity of data samples and meeting ethical privacy standards is impossible without a proper data management infrastructure.

Therefore, the technology that companies choose should be able to bring all corporate data into a centralized environment, to be managed in a definitive and defensible manner. Regardless of the conclusions that corporations reach regarding their stance on employee privacy, they would be wise to assess the data management technology they have before pursuing their Big Data ambitions. **S&P**

---

## Author Bio

**Kon Leong** is CEO and Co-founder of ZL Technologies. For two decades, he has been immersed in large-scale information technologies to solve Big Data challenges for enterprises. His focus for more than 14 years has been on massively scalable archiving to solve records management and eDiscovery challenges for both private and public sectors.

Connect [Kon Leong](#)

Category : [workforce planning and analytics](#)

Tags : [big data](#) [harnessing communications](#) [hr analytics](#)

This article was published in the following issue of Excellence Essentials:

[January 2017 HR Strategy and Planning](#)

Excellence Essentials Publications give you an interactive online experience with access to articles, case studies, industry trends, links to videos and audio clips. You can also receive monthly notifications for each of your favourite publications.

**SUBSCRIBE. IT'S FREE!**

 [Print](#)