Expert opinions from industry peers

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Getting the best from Big Data and analytics requires having the right infrastructure, and all industry sectors stand to benefit

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Creating the right infrastructure for Big Data & Analytics

Both public and private sector organizations are mining and analyzing different types of data to find new efficiencies and revenue streams, analyze customer behavior, and innovate their industries.

But whether it's managing Big Data; applying predictive analytics; real-time data generation; IoT sensor-based data; or handling complex datasets - all of these different disciplines require businesses to have the right approach and the right infrastructure.

We asked the experts their views on which areas of analytics are creating the best returns for businesses; and what infrastructures, processes and technologies you need in place to facilitate and simplify the deployment and operations of Big Data and analytics.

The Big Data explosion

Tony Baer, Principal Analyst for Information Management at Ovum, says, **"Big Data has emerged from its infancy to transition from buzzword to urgency for enterprises across all major sectors. The growing pains are being abetted by machine learning, which will lower barriers to adoption of Big Data-enabled analytics and solutions, and the growing dominance of the cloud, which will ease deployment hurdles."**

Ovum says the Big Data market will grow from $1.7bn in 2016 to $9.4bn by 2020, comprising 10% of the overall market for information management tooling. The analyst firm's 2017 Trends to Watch include Big Data, machine learning, IoT, and data streaming.

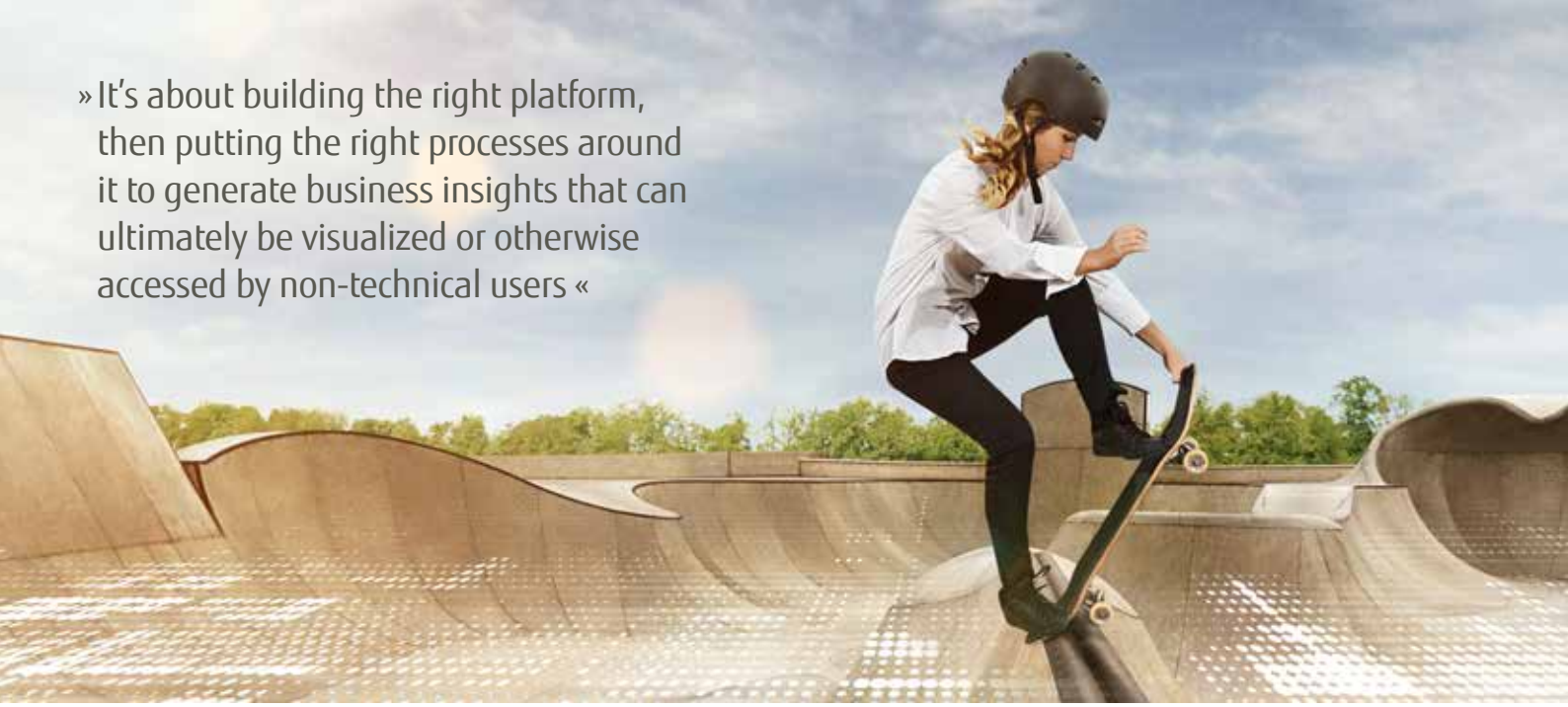
However, the usefulness of these emerging technologies will depend upon how they are applied to the business, comments Tom Lewis, Head of Data Analytics at PwC.

He says, **"When organizations are adapting to relatively new Big Data technologies, there is often more focus on what these technologies are intrinsically able to do rather than what business outcomes they can realistically achieve. Certainly the 'Big' aspect of Big Data can be an enabler of value for some organizations, but the value of scale on its own can be limited."**

He elucidates, **"More value comes in enabling a different outcome. This might be gaining a less transactional, less modular view of business performance by finding the connections and relationships between very different business processes. Or it might be enabling a very different speed of decision based on streams of information and a greater focus on the trends and patterns, rather than on individual transactions or timeframes."**

Big Data market will grow from

$1.7bn 2016 **to** **$9.4bn** 2020



Changing the world through analytics

Dr Matthew Howard, Artificial Intelligence and Cognitive Analytics Director at Deloitte, says analytics are currently creating returns across all industries.

He says, **"We are seeing massive leaps in the capabilities of retail analytics to help retailers get a true 360 degree view of their customers. The automotive industry is being disrupted by the use of continuous analytical and machine learning models to enhance driver assistance and safety systems, such as enhanced cruise controls, and in the future, autonomous driving capabilities."**

Howard adds that combining data from a range of sources including internal forecasts, historical sales data, competitor insight and customer call centers can transform how an organization approaches pricing, supply chain logistics and sales.

Machine learning models can be used to help understand historical sales patterns and optimise future approaches to inventory management and mark downs. **"Such strategies and predictive models have the potential to contribute substantially to an organization's success and even share price,"** says Howard.

Finding the right infrastructure

Cloud-based platforms are growing in popularity, says Mark Darbyshire, VP of Platform & Integration at SAP. **"Cloud analytics continue to rise, providing the most cost effective and efficient solutions for businesses, especially for SAP, as we can leverage the 'single source of up-to-date enterprise truth': HANA (SAP's in-memory RDBMS). This increases productivity whilst reducing the latency of insight."**

But Darbyshire advises: **"One platform needs to be in place for Big Data analytics to be successfully achieved, and that's a digital core. Without this in place, businesses will fall behind on IoT, AI and algorithmic data."**

Dale Vile, Managing Director at analyst firm Freeform Dynamics, warns, **"From a technology perspective, a lot of people immediately think of Hadoop when you mention Big Data, but you are likely to need a mix of technologies to capture, process and analyze large data sets or high-velocity data streams."**

"It's about building the right platform, then putting the right processes around it to generate business insights that can ultimately be visualized or otherwise accessed by non-technical users," Vile says.

It's also important to consider both cloud and traditional infrastructures for Big Data projects, he advises. **"It's natural to think of the cloud when you are looking to get a Big Data pilot up and running quickly, but for those who prefer to keep things in their own data center, a good alternative is find a supplier who can provide a pre-integrated hardware/software solution."**

"Nowadays you can essentially buy a pre-built Hadoop cluster-in-a-box, modestly configured to begin with, but with an ability to scale cost-effectively as the project grows," concludes Vile.

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