DATA DRIVEN DECISION-MAKING FOR UTILITIES

BETTER, FASTER, AND CHEAPER

April 2020 | By Kevin Hade and Patrick Miller

With an ever-increasing number of systems and volume of data, utilities need insights from data to make smart business decisions and compete in modern business now more than ever before.

A 2018 survey of ours found that only 32% of utility respondents strongly agree their organization is highly adept at leveraging data for insights, predictive outcomes, and business growth. Utilities need strong data insights to help them look beyond conventional cost reduction to uncover novel opportunities amid more stringent regulation and pressure from customers. Data enables utility leaders to take a fresh, objective look at areas of the business that are building value and those that are creating waste. It reveals whether technology is enabling or hindering the processes it is supposed to be supporting. This data-driven performance management is the linchpin of profitable, high-growth businesses.

Utilities understand data is the way of the future. However, many utilities are data rich but insight poor. Since the advent of AMI, many utilities have still barely tapped into the plethora of data generated from smart meters aside from using it to generate bills. This is often due to the inability to foresee with certainty the value that can be delivered from implementing an analytics solution. Typical reporting projects are associated with large, up-front time and cost investments to prepare and integrate data before getting value in return. This has led many utilities to hold off until they know the solution will work with their own unique sets of data.

But what if utilities could drive to insights and data-driven decisions quickly while avoiding months of up-front investment?

HOW RAPID INSIGHTS HELP

Many utilities realize they need improved reporting and analytics but still struggle to get value from them. They may be overwhelmed by the quantity of unstructured and disparate data they collect, or they may lack trust in the results of that data, sometimes deriving different answers to the same question based on different data sets. Company silos can prevent insight sharing or interdepartmental analysis, and insights are understood differently by different tribes within the organization.

The result? Companies deploy such systems that don't effectively harness insights from their data and, thus, can't effectively compete.

West Monroe uses a proprietary Rapid Insights solution to overcome these challenges. Rapid Insights enables businesses of all data maturity level to harness fresh, relevant insights in just weeks. Its speed and versatility make it particularly valuable for utilities sharing data across siloed departments or operating companies. If done well, this can be accomplished in six to eight weeks, four times faster than traditional approaches.

The approach works at the speed of modern business – energizing stakeholders, increasing the stickiness of

the analytics initiative. One of the largest barriers to the long-term success of most analytics initiatives is successful adoption by end users; by letting the business lead and delivering tangible value in weeks, we create champions of the initiative that drive further adoption.

Of course, to fully realize the benefits of contemporary analytics over the long term, organizations must improve data literacy, help people understand how to make better decisions with data, and maintain their analytics systems. Rapid Insights can jump-start the proficient data use that is so vital for growth and success in the marketplace. The approach makes it much easier to get started and dramatically boosts the likelihood that the organization will attain a strong return on their analytics investment.

Given the power, flexibility, and cost advantages of Rapid Insights, we advise companies to review their analytics needs to determine whether current approaches are effectively and efficiently delivering the insights they need at the necessary speed.

THE IMPACT OF RAPID INSIGHTS – UNLOCKING A UTILITY'S ABILITY TO UNDERSTAND THEIR NEW DER SYSTEM

As a utility was implementing a new DER platform to streamline and replace several legacy systems, it needed to understand the data that was available in the new system to answer new questions while maintaining existing analysis from the old systems.

Using Power BI and subject matter experts of the new DER system, we worked with the business stakeholders to understand their needs and translate them to actionable reports in days. After seeing these initial reports, the business understood the expanded potential of the new platform and we were able to generate dozens of reports, unlocking new insights that were never looked at in the old system and reports.

Contact us to explore the option of implementing the Rapid Insights solution into your utility.

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