War Stories – The Good, the Bad and the Ugly

There are times when deploying advanced analytics initiatives can feel like you are in a war. It can be a battle to get all the relevant people on board, a struggle to convince senior management to invest or create buy in for change from the end user. Let me tell you about my experience, told as war movies!

Black Hawk Down

Beware resistance on the ground. In becoming an advanced analytics organisation where your data is used successfully to support decision making, there are many potential pitfalls. But the reality is if you don't have commitment from the ground up, you are fighting a much larger battle than is necessary. Planning and preparation are key. That is why we consider the 3 key pillars for successful integration of analytics. They are strategically aligned business opportunities, organisational readiness and data readiness. Reduce the opportunity for resistance by ensuring that the analytical initiatives you are considering are aligned with the strategic goals of your organisation, that you have the data to support the analysis, and critically organisational readiness for change – remember, not everyone likes change.

Enemy at the Gates

Beware the Enemy at the Gates – the stakeholder who may not want to be shown that they can do things better. One of the key constituents of success in any analytics venture is stakeholder engagement. It is absolutely vital that all internal stakeholders are engaged in the project, excited by it and enthusiastic about the potential outcomes. In this example insights were never deployed in the manner that was intended – the organisation didn't realise the full benefit from analytics and in some ways 'analytics' got a bad name for not delivering. But the real reason things didn't go down as planned was as follows: The project sponsor was not the business owner and as a result the business owner wasn't the advocate for the implementation of analytics outcomes. The business appeared enthusiastic but never fully got on board with the initiative. When it was shown that decision making could be better supported with the data insights discovered, the business owner's response was, 'we do all of that already, there is nothing new in this'. This wasn't actually the case but without the business being willing to action the insights in a measurable manner the analytics piece never got off the ground.

A very long engagement aka From Here to Eternity

A very long engagement – the project that appears to be never ending. Beginning an analytics initiative is usually quite exciting for the people involved (if they are not excited or optimistic some alarm bells should be ringing!!). Analysts are excited about exploring new data, interested to discover new insights for their customers or their organisation, and stakeholders are optimistic about the value-add analytics can bring to their processes. Managing all of this is paramount to the success of the initiative. Clearly defined objectives, deliverables and realistic timelines around these are so important. Bear in mind that in the beginning stages it can take some time to consolidate data - an exercise many think should take little time, however, the reality is that this can take up 60% of the overall project timeline. There is generally a sense of urgency around getting outputs which should be factored into timelines and expectations need to be well managed. Remember, data analysts love analysing data and will often continue to do that as long as they are let – so be alert and put in place strict controls to ensure the project moves at an appropriate pace and delivers on its objectives in a timely fashion.
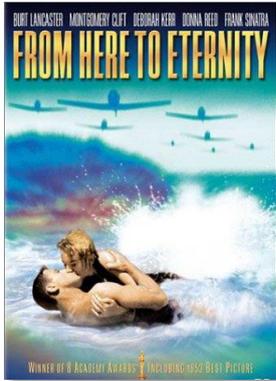
The Thin Red Line

Beware The Thin Red Line and don't end up on the wrong side of it. There exists a Thin Red Line in all analytics initiatives – it's that line between realising the benefit and everything falling flat, and in money terms achieving ROI versus not. How to recognise what that line might be comes down to experience but you can mitigate against it by engaging well with all stakeholders, following process and adhering to strict timelines. In essence, communication is key – ongoing discussions in relation to data discovery; what the next steps are; are deadlines being met etc. – will enable you to ensure you can hit the ground running, maintain control and be well positioned for successful deployment. To ensure you don't end up on the wrong side of the thin red line, it is important to ensure that the initiatives are strategically aligned and to build in regular Go / No Go meetings.
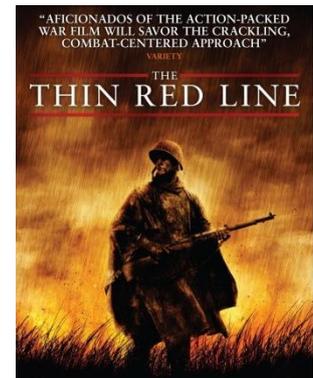
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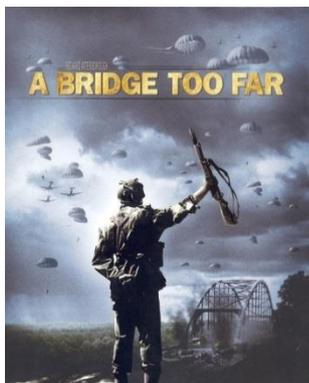
Beware reaching too far on those first initiatives – start with something manageable that can be delivered relatively quickly, deployed and measured on an ongoing basis. 'Think Big Start Small' should be your mantra when starting on an analytics journey. To become a truly analytical organisation takes time and it's important to manage this journey one step at a time, building success stories in your organisation and creating a pull culture across divisions rather than a constant push culture. Inevitably there is push at the beginning but real successful integration is clear when there is a demand from within for analytics. Avoid that bridge too far – build up to the bigger initiatives and beware over-reaching in the first project.

How I Won the War

I don't like to think of analytics journeys as wars but maybe we could imagine each successful deployment of an initiative as a little victory on the road to winning the war! So how do you win the war? We have worked with organisations to build analytical roadmaps over the following 2 – 5 years. This allows us to work to the organisations strengths, identify key areas for improvement around the areas of technology, data and most importantly analytics initiatives that are aligned with business problems that need solving. An end to end framework incorporates all aspects of analytics integration in an organisation and organises bite sized initiatives on a roadmap. In order to ensure the successful implementation of the initiatives on the roadmap, you really need to understand the culture in your organisation. Are you really ready for change or are people paying lip service to the idea of analytics? Are your colleagues really motivated to support you and work with you to deploy the insights discovered? The more engaged the relevant people are, the greater your chances are of winning the war!

About Presidion

Presidion have operated for over 20 years and have been the pioneers in implementing cutting edge Predictive Analytics solutions with top UK and Irish organisations. We specialise in helping organisations leverage their data to deliver tangible practical returns on investment, aligned with their strategies.

Presidion works with both government and commercial clients, currently partnering with hundreds of organisations enabling them to understand what has happened in the past, anticipate what may happen next to take appropriate and timely strategic decisions for their organisation.