



AI LEADERS PODCAST #47: LEADING ANALYTICS TEAMS IN CHANGING TIMES

AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

Lori Bieda [00:00:00] Both sides have to speak the language of business and analytics for us to compete analytically and become analytically driven companies.

Krish Banerjee [00:00:16] Hello, everyone. Welcome to yet another episode of AI Leaders podcast. This is Krish Banerjee, managing director, and I lead our Accenture's data and analytics business in Canada. I'm so happy to have with me Lorie Bieda, the Chief data and analytics Officer, Bank of Montreal's North American Personal and Business Banking. And we are looking forward to a great conversation. And Lorie, I'd like to ask you a few questions. And, you know, before we jump into that, thank you again for joining us at this podcast.

Lori Bieda [00:00:51] Yeah, sure. You got it. Thank you. It's my pleasure to be here. I'm Lorie Bieda, the chief data and analytics officer for BMO North American Retail and Business Bank. At BMO, we see data and analytics as business fuel, and that's a core strategic enabler to our growth. So, each day we get up and power our business segments, channels, product teams with fast facts and predictive insights that help us create a superior customer experience and outpace our competition. We operate as a centralized function and our Data and analytics Center of Excellence oversees the environments in which our data sits in the management and governance of that data. All data and analytical

tooling that helps convert data into insights. And finally, all forms of analysis that we derive from that data from Basic BI all the way through to machine learning and AI. And we do that work for all of our sales forces, our virtual channels, our product teams. The conversations we have with customers in all forms of business and market analysis.

Krish Banerjee [00:01:44] Wonderful. I think it's an amazing job that you have to connect between technology, between business and able to also run a team. So really kind of, you know, excited to talk to you about your experience and what you're seeing in the space. And from my kind of, you know, working with different organizations, I've seen that there are different models of data and analytics team that I've seen different organizations use. Can you share something about how you are doing it and how you are operating between, you know, different models like services or consultancy, your hub and spoke? I would like to get your thoughts on that.

Lori Bieda [00:02:25] Sure. Yeah. And I have over the years, in my 30 years as a data and analytics practitioner, had a chance to work with data and analytics teams around the globe. And what I would characterize and we've done some research on this in a prior life, but at the furthest end of the spectrum, we have what we call a service provider model. And here you'll find



companies that tend to assemble a set of technical experts who are really called on for their domain expertise. They're measured by things like speed of output and accuracy of work. And there's sort of these standard SLA's that are often in place to govern their deliverables that they have to give to business, to the business. And they're often not highly funded. Right. And they're seen as an expense item on the PnL. And often these teams are found reporting up in the support functions like T&O, Operations, strategy, even finance groups. I've seen them in various organizations and typically in organizations who are not as far along on their analytical maturity. And in the middle zone, we've found this kind of consultancy model, and that's where data and analytics professionals are recognized as a set of experts who are really brought to bear and into the conversation when the business needs to target customers or have a model build or move some data around and they tend to be measured by their quality of output, their lift in a particular solution that they create, even their innovation around a particular business problem. And the business really calls the shots in this kind of model, and they're there to support in the confines of a predefined strategy. But they carry the weight as experts in the space and they're really relied on for their expertise. And finally, at the furthest end of the spectrum, where you find often about a quarter of the banks and a quarter of organizations that I've seen globally in this more advanced state, where their data and analytics is a business driver. And in this model, data and analytics is seen as a strategic lever of growth. Their KPIs dominantly reflect that. They carry with them the metrics that the business has, you know, be it market share growth achievement, but also, they're measured by the dollars they find in the data. They're hunters, things like incremental revenue generation, lift period over period, or how well they optimize for factors like risk return, for example, in an effort to achieve overarching business growth metrics. But in order to have, I would say, that level of business and technical savvy, these teams are most often nested in the business. You find that they report up into business heads, they have a seat at the senior leadership table and they're well-funded. And when you're in a crisis as a business, they're often the teams brought to the table to ideate on solutions. Along with those business leaders,

they're expected to govern and remediate data and issues for sure as table stakes. But they thrive and are defined by the monetization of that data. Hence, they tend to attract business analytics hybrids and the nature of the analytical work that you find there is both broad and deep.

Krish Banerjee [00:05:19] It's a great point you brought up about the business and analytics hybrid. I think I like the term. I will be using that going forward. So, among all these models you mention, I'm sure there are like pros and cons to each of them. Like I've seen some of them working in some situation, maybe some in others. Which model does your team use and is there anything that you can share in terms of pros and cons of these models?

Lori Bieda [00:05:45] Yeah, it's such a good question. You know at BMO; I would say we believe so fully in the power of data as a strategic weapon to compete and in some cases were smaller than other organizations. So, it is our weapon, as you will, and we see these functions as business drivers. We're nested in the business, we report up into the business and we're part of the senior leadership table, and we work to keep the analyst knowledge fresh and make sure that they're paired with business partners so that they can go deep and fully understand the PnL and its nuances. And I have worked candidly over the years, having been in this space for almost 30 years, in every model, in the service provider, in the consultancy model, and in the business driver model. And what I have found leading analytical teams in all three of those spaces is that the analysts are most happy in that business driver model. They like solving problems, they like being part of the issue. They like to be able to ideate. And also, the business outcomes tend to be stronger. The aggregate business outcomes tend to be stronger. Now, it's very difficult when you're running centralized teams where every single analyst and every data professional is in one spot to understand all the PnL nuances. So, these hub and spoke models where you have centralized area of expertise where analysts can come and learn an ideate and share best practices is a best practice that I have seen. But then they need to be really adjacent to the business to understand, right. And feel the heat when the businesses feel the heat. So, we run



this kind of hub and spoke model, but in a centralized format. And it seems like speaking out of both sides of our mouths. But in the end, I've found that those models tend to work best. The analysts are happiest, the businesses get the outcomes that they're searching for, and then you have that flexibility where the technical expertise is kept really, really high for those analysts. They have that technical mastery that you want them to have and they understand levels of coding and their proficiency is very strong. Well, at the same time they're relevant, then you create those business analytic hybrids most rapidly, most often, and you retain them in those types of models. In areas where I've seen in the service provider and consultancy, they're okay, when you start up a business and maybe there is a level of infancy in the progression of those businesses, but the analysts tend to churn a little more in those models. And we're in a privileged state where we have some of the best retention rates and winning culture scores in the industry. And I ascribe a lot of that to good leadership from the teams as well as just how we're set up so those analysts can thrive.

Krish Banerjee [00:08:22] That's a great point. And I think the point you brought up about talent and retention of talent is an extremely important one. And you having been in the unique position where you are sitting on the line of business, you are the chief data analytics officer for BMO's personal and business banking like, do you see this as a unique position in terms of kind of managing the agenda and tooling the agenda for BMO's business analytics and working with other parts of your optimization, including technology and, you know, different groups as well?

Lori Bieda [00:09:04] Yeah, I do see it as unique and I've not seen a model that is quite like it in this scale in size and the depth. It's not that they're not out there, but it's unique in the sense that we create a strong voice for the analysts to have at the table. The reporting lines are simplified in the sense that there's very few steps from us to the most senior leaders in our own organization. So, I have the privilege of working for an exceptional leader named Ernie Johannson, and she is our group head for our retail and business bank across North America. And she reports directly into Darryl White, who heads up our bank. So, there's not a lot of steps

for us to get to a point where we need funding, where point, where we need to be able to remediate an issue or we just need assistance. And that is a reflection, I think, of the organization's desire to compete analytically. And what I would say in the situation that we are in were drivers and enablers of the strategy. So sometimes we're coming to the table saying, hey, we found something and we think there's something in it. We're not quite sure, but we're looking at this trend. Can you ideate with us to figure out how we can monetize this? And in other situations, the business is coming to us and we're together doing mental gymnastics. To figure out a solution to that issue. And it works both ways. But when you create that incubator for analysts and the people specifically to thrive, you get amazing outputs. And people have skin in the game. They run it like it's their own business, which you want, right? And we're in a global analytics talent drought, so the greater you can hang on to those analytical individuals and keep them in your organization and focused on your business problems, the less issues you have with continuity and you just it's a reel that keeps running and it's great. It keeps the business humming.

Krish Banerjee [00:10:48] Yeah, Run it like your own business. I love that. Like I always say like, you know, you need to kind of I've got this as your own coffee shop right now. Run your own coffee shop. Think of this as your own business. So, I completely agree with your comment there. And that's kind of where I think the topic around talent comes in. Like, you know, I often find that talent that we are trying to kind of grow the next generation, they need to have that ownership of running your own business. So, I know you are, you know, a big supporter of women in technology and a big passionate about our talent as well. So, we'd like to hear from you about any initiatives that you are doing with your team or anything that you know you're building a more inclusive team. So, I would like to kind of hear some of those thoughts from you as well.

Lori Bieda [00:11:38] Yeah, I guess first up, the motivation for analysts and folks who find themselves in this space inclusive of myself is you're like a lifelong learner. And so, to the extent to which organizations can create a p



platform for analysts to perpetually learn they will succeed. And so to that end, about ten years ago and I've done it in a couple of places, but we've done it at BMO, it at Scale has created an analytics university, and this is for the technical skills most definitely to make sure that our analysts are well-trained in an area that they need to be in a space that's growing like crazy, but also on thinking, working and relating skills, teaching them how to think and how to ideate and how to unpack a problem, looking at it in a structured way, making sure that they can process it in a way that can be explained aka relating to others. And then the working skills is just how are you going to plan? How are you going to manage the barrage of work that is headed your way on an ongoing basis and what are the skills you need to compete? We also aim to train very deeply our analysts on the businesses that they support, the PnL drivers, the structures of those businesses, not only the data pieces, but the translation of those into things that make sense for a customer. And so, we spend an inordinate amount of time and resources on educating analysts and providing a platform for analysts to educate each other. I think that we are surrounded by brilliant people in the analytics space and they need often a forum to unleash those talents and share them with others. So, we've created a lot of infrastructure to allow that to be true. And then it has then since taken off and become the culture. And it's a place where young analysts come to learn and grow, and it's a place where mature analysts find that they can perpetually find their next fun problem to solve. So that's the first thing I would say is learning development in a platform. And on the other piece, no question from a diversity perspective and inclusion, it's definitely an area of passion for me, and I think we're all familiar with the stat, that women comprise 50% of the global workforce and probably know and we also feel that there's a global analytics talent drought where demand far outpaces supply and it has for years, but the world is simply not producing enough analytical talent. Despite advances in automation and AI and ChatGPT and all the rest analysts themselves as people are still very sought after resource. And so, there's a long and short of it is we need to take every analyst we can get right and create an environment where they can thrive so that they stay right. So, it shouldn't surprise

us that if we ignore or disadvantage 50% of the workforce, a.k.a. women, we will no doubt face increased labor shortages and we can't afford it. We just simply cannot afford that. And then if you look at the field of STEM in particular, senior women are less than 5% of that boardroom table, yet an entry level positions, we're neck and neck. So, the data shows indeed that over the last 30 years we have made progress and trends across all categories for women in STEM are up, but yet they're softening and computer workers and mathematicians. And that is a trend we cannot afford. You do that. You have an even bigger problem than what you have now. So, the punch line for me is that each of us needs to make it our work collectively to create an inclusive workforce and help women in stem thrive and get the support they need along the progression curve.

Krish Banerjee [00:15:00] I think those are absolutely valid points. And the topic you mentioned about kind of, you know, getting all analysts to learn and get that skill. And it's a great point around how do we democratize this knowledge about data and analytics? And I think this is one of the topics that, you know, our technology vision that we just recently published. We call it generalize AI. Like you know, typically pick that topic not to call generative AI, which is, you know, everyone's talking about it, but how do you generalize AI, how to make it more, you know, broader and democratically available to everyone? So great point about the talent, the retention, the woman in the workforce. So, I love that discussion. So, in closing, Lorie, just any thoughts in terms of business leaders who are playing this role between lines of business technology, different groups, analytics and data? Any thoughts in any kind of words of advice for how to be successful, how to kind of navigate and what's how to keep their heads up?

Lori Bieda [00:16:11] Yeah, got it. Well, what I see is that we can work really hard to skill up an analyst and to keep them happy and avoid the disruption. But if we don't work equally hard to have our business partners be conversant in the technology, language and the analytical speak, and to think analytically, it's forever going to be a really unhappy dance between business and technical. And I think while the world has fallen in love with ChatGPT with A.I., their knowledge



of it at the business level can still be rather superficial. And there is an opportunity for the analysts and the analysts community to educate the business leaders. And then relatedly, for the business leaders to educate the analysts. And in the process of doing so, what you have is just really smart business driving relevant outputs in a way you're not it's not science experiments. They're not stuff just for general R&D. It's things that change the lives of customers that help them make financial progress in ways we've never seen before, that enable and empower front lines and sales forces to do what they've never been capable of doing before. And where I've seen a massive change over the last 5 to 6 years is in each of those groups having a greater appreciation for what the other knows and then devoting the time to cross-train each other. And the truth is, there isn't enough data analytic hybrids. Some folks call them purple people because they're so unique. I call them translation layers. There is not enough of them. And the analysts themselves, if they become conversant in business, is not going to make up that gap. Both sides have to speak the language of business and analytics for us to compete analytically and become analytically driven companies.

Krish Banerjee [00:17:55] Thank you so much, Lorie. I learned a lot and really the points around running as your own business, the hybrid model that you talked about, the advisors around talent and women in workforce and how to be successful in a unique role that has so many intersections between the different kind of, you know dimensions of an organization. Thank you so much. I really appreciate.

Lori Bieda [00:18:20] My pleasure.