eBook

The Fundamental Role of People Analytics in Organization Design

How to move from data wrangler to strategic partner

Visier®





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The Organization Design Blind Spot That's Costing Companies Millions

How does your company handle organization design? In most businesses, it goes a little something like this:

Following a strategy shift that spurs a workforce restructuring, the people analytics team is asked to send over some data, and then hears nothing more. When the org design plan finally launches two months later, it's not only outdated but also contains a minefield of risks, leading to execution surprises in the months ahead that no one saw coming.

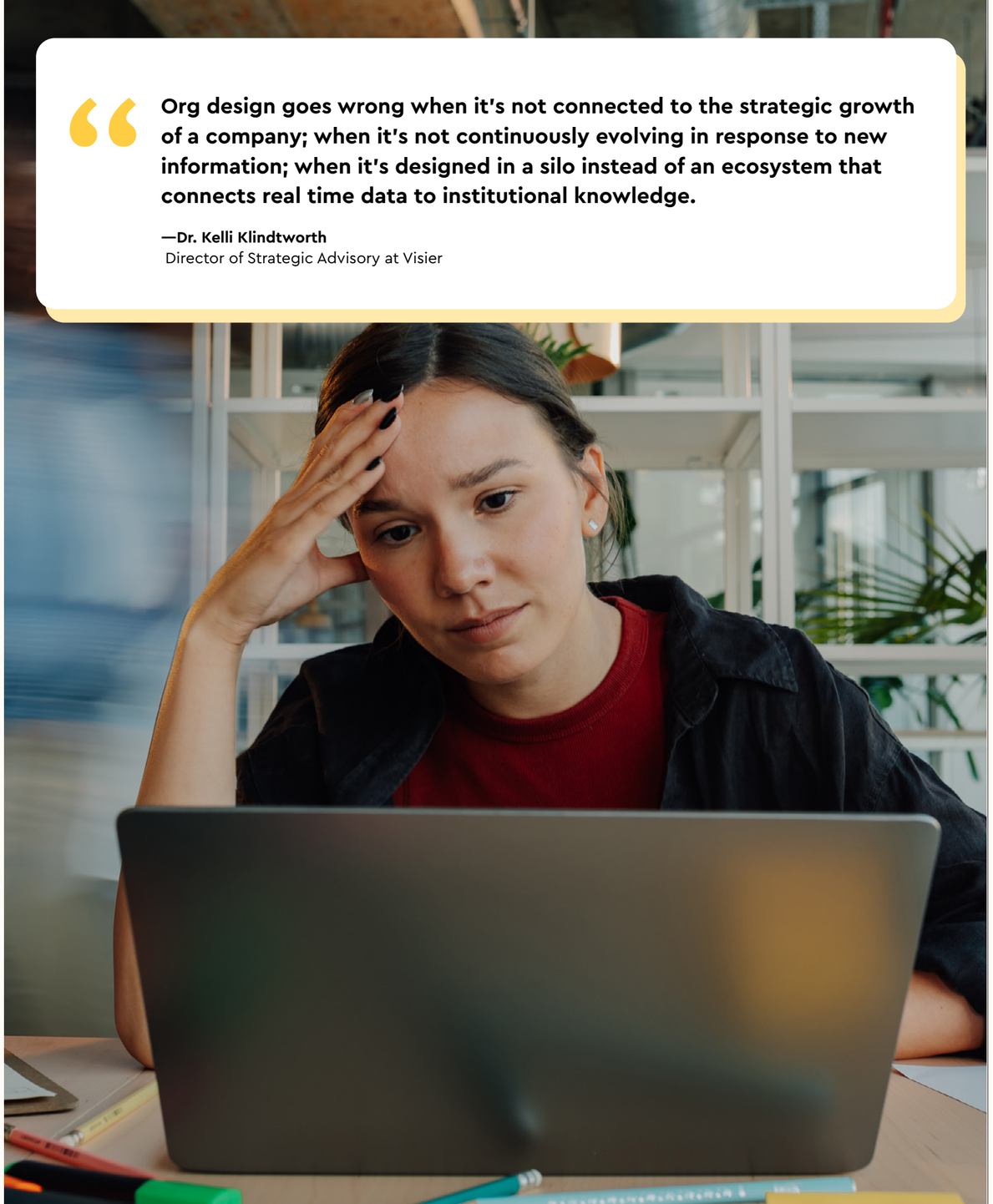
Except, of course, the people analytics team, which then gets the call to help clean up the mess—even though it could have provided the insights for a winning org design all along.

Why was the org design so ineffective? Because its generic, blue-sky theory and unrealistic frameworks were founded on aging data and assumptions. Because it missed important context and nuances of the people data. Because it gathered people into ineffective teams, failed to advance star performers, and laid off essential groups. Because the bespoke org charts and spreadsheets guarantee execution challenges that only increase.

People analytics can guide and de-risk organization design. The people analytics team curates this data every day, ensuring it's unified, up-to-date, trusted, and complete. It provides the labeling, structure, and context that give it meaning, and understands the nuances that should not only inform a successful org design but guide its use.

More often than not, though, people analytics leaders are treated like data wranglers rather than the strategic experts they are.

This guide is designed to help people analytics leaders better understand the gaps in traditional org design, learn how to fill them, and position themselves as strategic partners in workforce planning and org design.



> **Org design goes wrong when it's not connected to the strategic growth of a company; when it's not continuously evolving in response to new information; when it's designed in a silo instead of an ecosystem that connects real time data to institutional knowledge.**
>
> **—Dr. Kelli Klindtworth**
> Director of Strategic Advisory at Visier



> **Organization Design is not a one-off activity, but a strategic way of mapping the organization to the business reality.**
>
> **—Julien Legret**
> Global HR Digital and Data Director, Richemont

Embracing Agile Workforce Planning and Organization Design

Thankfully, a number of factors are making companies realize the missed opportunity in people analytics, hopefully making this scenario last year's news.

What's behind the urgent need for effective org design?

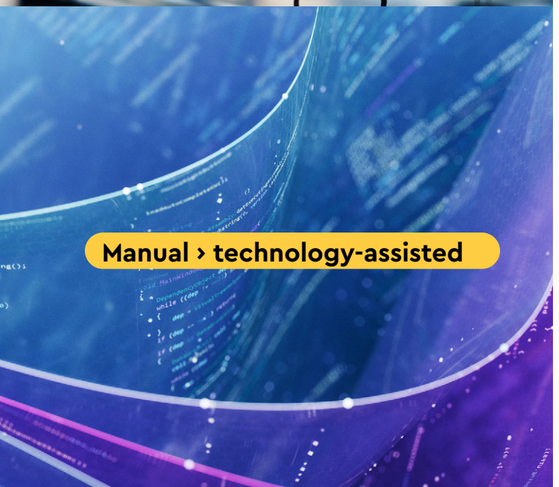
1. The heightened speed of business
2. The need for solutions to prove themselves in shorter cycles
3. The rise of AI in nearly every task
4. The opportunity and availability for in-house people analytics
5. Embracing the move to agile workforce planning and org design

For most of us today, workforce planning happens annually or bi-annually, proceeding department by department. From time to time, a major event like an acquisition or leadership change triggers a transformation, sometimes painful but always necessary. Today, organization structures are becoming more agile to respond to volatility, and workforce planning and org design are shifting to more continuous cycles.

If this "always-on" transformation sounds exhausting, it can be—if not carried out deliberately, with specialized roles dedicated to the task using a solid foundation of connected, accurate in-house data and a tool that makes it easy to take baselines, model and test scenarios, track progress, and evaluate strategies in real time.







Four Critical Gaps in Traditional Organization Design Approaches

The world of org design is undergoing a triple transformation: from cyclical to ongoing, from outsourced to in-house, and from manual to technology-assisted.

And while the new world demands new approaches, old school org design persists, often carried out by different teams with people analytics brought in inconsistently, if at all. Analysis and planning are still being done on unreconciled, out-of-date, or incomplete data. Scenario planning is happening manually in disconnected spreadsheets. Final decisions are only partially informed by in-house data. This is resulting in four key gaps:

Decision-making is slow when speed matters

The world of work moves faster every day. Slow decisions inevitably lag the speed of business, with one caveat: speed is nothing without confidence. Slow decisions are still better than fast decisions that quickly go sour.

Organizational structures are out-of-date and reinforce silos

Org design can often be reactive, simply documenting structures with static org charts that quickly become inaccurate. These people-in-boxes diagrams make it hard to clearly see roles, understand departmental dynamics, break down silos, and work effectively.

Hidden execution risks emerge as the reorg proceeds

Organizational designers without insight into critical factors like employee skills, pay competitiveness, and seniority expose the organization to significant risks and mistakes. With no forward thinking or post-execution preparedness, unplanned and unfortunate consequences can crop up 60-90 days later, such as lost institutional knowledge, missed financial targets, or even claims or lawsuits over wrongful dismissal.

Organization design results in only surface-level changes

Ill-thought-out reorgs fail to capture the nuances of each person's contributions to the messy reality of work dynamics. Instead of placing each person in the right role to leverage their skills, networks, and ambitions, and instead of creating the right teams to produce results, these superficial org design plans can easily overload or slight people, causing burnout, disengagement, attrition or even resignation.

What's more, unsuccessful org design can bring on the need to rehire laid-off employees. Yes: Boomerangs.

Avoiding the expensive boomerang hire

A full 5.3% of employees in the workforce today are "boomerangs": laid-off employees rehired six months later when employers regret the skills gap they created. How do you avoid the expensive boomerang? Gain a deeper understanding of who you intend to lay off and why, ensuring you're not leaving gaping in-house knowledge and skills holes you'll regret later.



The Best Organization Design Plans are Based on People Analytics

Research from Visier's recent report "The New DNA of Organization Design[1]," drawn from over 170 enterprise organizations representing more than 7 million employee records, reveals how companies actually restructure when headcount changes. The findings challenge some of the most commonly held assumptions about org design:



The "Great Flattening" is a myth

Only 10% of organizations create fewer and larger teams as they grow or reduce headcount.



56% "grow by staying small"

Of businesses adding headcount, most add teams while keeping them small to encourage agility and speed.

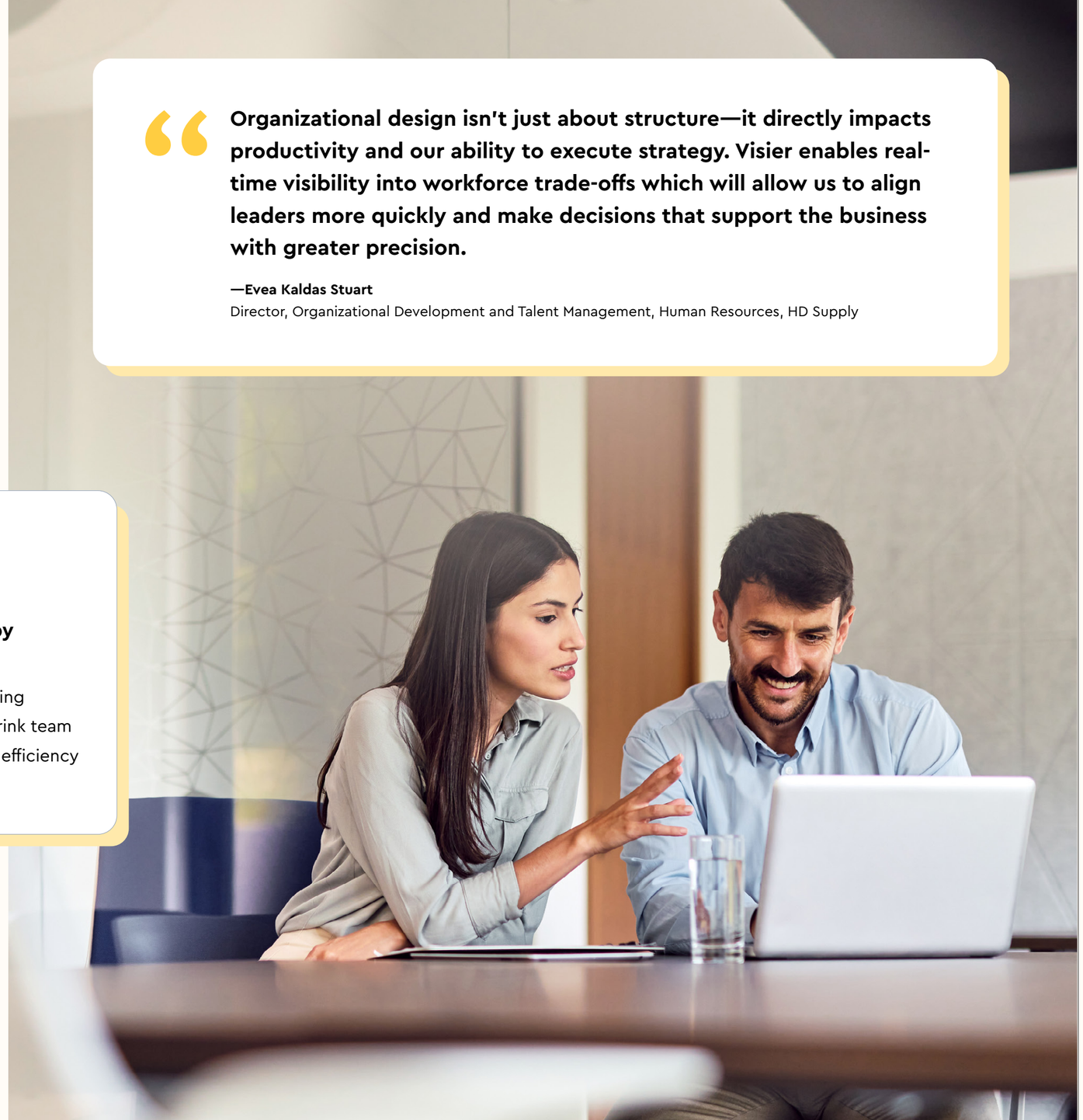


44% "downsize by thinning"

Of companies reducing headcount, most shrink team size and number for efficiency and focus.

These findings also point to a clear opportunity for people analytics leaders to drive better outcomes by getting involved early. Rather than acting as data wranglers, they can focus on surfacing the insights, trends, and patterns the business isn't yet thinking about—with trusted data already at their fingertips.

1. https://www.visier.com/lp/the-new-dna-of-organization-design/



> **Organizational design isn't just about structure—it directly impacts productivity and our ability to execute strategy. Visier enables real-time visibility into workforce trade-offs which will allow us to align leaders more quickly and make decisions that support the business with greater precision.**
>
> **—Evea Kaldas Stuart**
> Director, Organizational Development and Talent Management, Human Resources, HD Supply



What Can People Analytics Bring to the Organization Design Process?

Effective org design doesn't usually fail because people weren't trying. It fails because the right data, tools, and people weren't connected at the right moment. For people analytics leaders, that gap is the opportunity. Here's what it takes to close it:

Data that offers a trusted foundation

High-quality, real-time data gets you to the starting line, but it's not enough. Your people analytics team may already have that foundation, but the real question is if they're in the room when decisions are being made. The right solution makes that possible, uniting and reconciling data to work through scenarios with minimal manual processes.

Tools that help inform, create, and decide

Intuitive tools make it easy to access real-time baseline information about your workforce, compare it with the new vision, test the feasibility of different restructure scenarios, make decisions, and track progress against goals. On top of that, workforce intelligence offers an early warning system to proactively surface needs and flag issues that might otherwise stay hidden to anyone but the most astute human user.

The right collaboration across HR, finance, and the business

Organizational design is a team sport. HR, finance, and business leaders each have a role to play, and the job of people analytics is to surface the patterns and insights that help everyone make better decisions. With the right foundation in place, people analytics stays focused on analysis to support strategic decisions.

What People Analytics Brings to the Organization Design Table

Data

- Trusted numbers
- Connected and aligned data sets across the corporation
- No need for inefficient manual reconciliation or spreadsheets
- Drill down into details in real time

Tools

- Analyze your workforce in multiple dimensions
- Quickly model and test scenarios in real time
- Make confident decisions based on trackable underlying assumptions
- Monitor progress against goals, failing early then pivoting quickly before decisions are finalized

Guidance

- People analytics provides strategic advice to organizational designers
- Answer unknowns, uncover risks and support faster, more confident decisions
- Ready to activate in tighter implementation cycles
- Proactive planning with scenarios and risk mitigation
- Reactive to solve issues quickly when called upon

When the right minds are fueled by the right tools and data, faster, more confident workforce decisions become possible. A workforce intelligence platform is what gives people analytics leaders the ability to move from reporting on what happened to anticipating what's next. That's what earns them a real role in guiding the business.





Don't pay the price for ungoverned data

Organizational design stakeholders are often making consequential decisions with disconnected tools and incomplete data. They don't always know what they don't know. People analytics has the ability to change that, stepping in as a trusted partner with the numbers and context that turn gut-feel org decisions into defensible ones. In organization design, the cost of bad data is building the wrong structure with confidence.

The Critical Metrics for Effective Organization Design

Most org design teams are measuring something. The question is whether they're measuring the right things. Visier's "The New DNA of Organization Design" report lays out a practical framework for the moments when it counts most. These are the 10 metrics to track:



Getting People Analytics Leaders in the Room Long Before Decisions are Made

When organizational designers lack a trusted data springboard, it's not a technology gap: it's a positioning gap. And you're uniquely placed to close it.

The data you have access to connects talent decisions to real business outcomes—revenue, growth, profitability—in ways other functions simply can't.

This is where you come in. Teaming up with HR leaders is a powerful way to show the important role you can play. The up-to-date, accurate, and complete foundation you bring lets you marry information and vision, link the what with the how, and support goals with trusted insight. It offers you the opportunity to not only be in the planning room but gain a permanent role in strategic decisions. **So how do you get involved?**

Five tips to elevate people analytics to strategic planning partner

1. **Start with understanding**

   Get a sense of what information organization designers already work with. What data are they pulling? Where is the slowdown coming from? What are some cause/effect scenarios that data could help mitigate?

2. **Demonstrate the power of people analytics**

   Show organizational design leaders how they can save time, energy, and cost during design by drilling down on each employee in real time to see role, department, critical specialized knowledge, corporate memory based on seniority and number of roles held, salary within pay band, comparison to market—everything that can contribute to decisions.

3. **Demonstrate your expertise**

   Show you can be a subject matter expert and decision guide in design principles and customization. While people analytics leaders will not become organizational design experts overnight, your insight will immediately contribute to the conversation.

4. **Bring some recommendations**

   Demonstrate you're a valuable collaborator with insights and options on org design, from highlighting risks to developing career paths for skilled employees.

5. **Link your work to corporate strategy**

   Better org design means talent is deployed where it matters most, driving the business outcomes that matter to leadership. Your work will speak for you.



For people analytics leaders, the benefits of elevating your role to a strategic and indispensable partner in workforce planning are many. Not only do you leverage your hard work and trusted data to make critical corporate decisions, but you also gain more satisfaction, respect, and maybe even a promotion when your insight leads to an org design plan that drives value.

Case Study

How Organization Design is Closing the Gap Between Data and Action

Major global financial company rethinks org design using people analytics and AI

With AI deeply impacting productivity across workflows, a people analytics leader at a major financial company asked how AI could also help structure a workforce that drives value.

"Static job descriptions collecting digital dust are going away," he said, "As workflows evolve, AI and technology are letting us unbundle skills taxonomies and rebundle them into dynamic just-in-time job architectures that roll up into a responsive OD."

To answer new challenges at the company, all people partners can access the Visier Workforce Intelligence platform to share data, monitor an organizational health dashboard, drill down on teams and roles, visualize org charts—whatever is needed within the context of the demand.

What the team might have spent weeks or months creating is now available instantly, right there in the meeting.

"This is a game changer," he says. "We're playing, testing scenarios together with leaders and decision-makers. We could not do that even last year." Instead of outsourcing this strategic work, organizational design calls in the people analytics team. "We've always delivered insight, but now we're closer to the action."



Four Solution Must-haves for Effective Organization Design

1. A governed workforce intelligence layer that is the single source of talent truth
2. The ability to assess and explore multiple scenarios, and see immediate impact on defined metrics (spans, layers, headcount, cost, etc.)
3. The ability to define design principles to ensure that that designs stay within defined guardrails
4. The ability to drill down into the details to understand the risks and impact of decisions

Design your org with confidence, powered by insights & AI

View Org Design



From Data Retriever to Strategic Partner

As AI takes on more and more fundamental tasks at work, it's no longer enough for us humans to play the role of data supplier. We have to bring more: more insight, scenarios, strategies, vision, and collaborative planning.

Your company has the people data that will help it make faster, more confident organizational decisions—and no one understands it better than you. **As a people analytics leader, you have not only the data but the skills to query it and coax accurate, nuanced insights that leadership can trust to guide their planning**. What matters the most to and about your people? Do you have a great leader who wants to take on more responsibility? A brilliant expert who seeks more challenges?

You're decision ready and your input is valuable across the organization. Through insight, people analytics can support the creation of a winning organization design that puts every person in the right role, team, and network to perform and succeed.

The moment for people analytics leaders like you to step up in organization design is now. The data is there. And with the right solution, the rest will follow.



> **The future of work requires us all to create exceptional organizational design and remarkable experiences for employees. Nothing positions a company better than de-risking decisions through leveraging data and designing organizations with intentionality.**
>
> **Dr. Kelli Klindtworth**
> Director of Strategic Advisory at Visier

Plan at the Speed of Business with Visier Workforce AI

Organization design decisions now arrive faster, under more scrutiny, and with less time to build the case for them. The processes most teams rely on were built for a different pace. Data gets pulled out of trusted systems every time a structural question comes up, scenarios get built manually. The friction compounds. The process becomes the bottleneck, and the downstream implications of the decision aren't always clear.

Visier Workforce AI removes the friction. As part of the Visier Workforce Plans suite, Organization Design:

- Connects workforce intelligence and structural modeling in one place so more options get explored
- Makes tradeoffs visible before decisions are made
- Delivers trusted numbers for leadership to act on

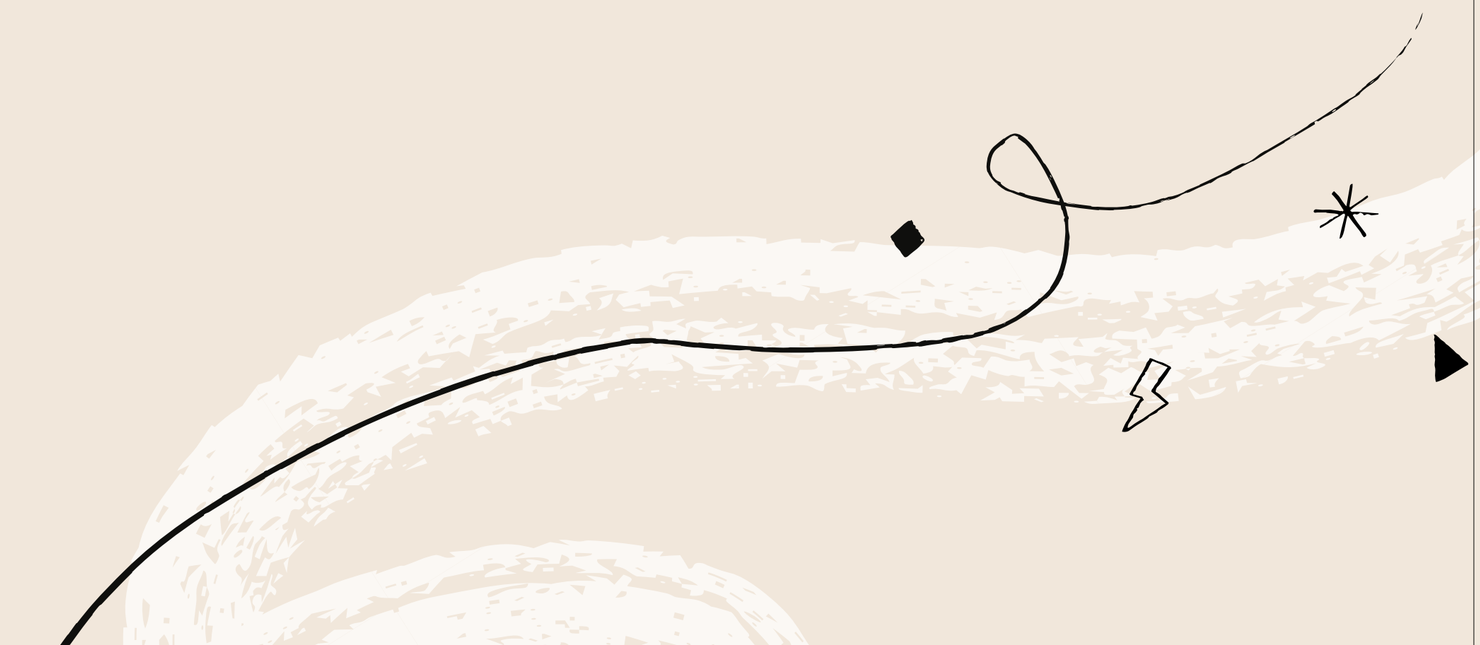
Faster decisions. Fewer surprises. Recommendations that hold up when it counts.



About Visier

Visier Workforce AI is the context foundation for talent management. The Visier Workforce Intelligence Platform turns scattered, sensitive people data into one governed understanding of the entire workforce, so organizations can understand, plan, and activate all of their talent priorities in one place. More than 85,000 of the world's most complex organizations, including Ford Motor Company, eBay, Experian, and Domino's Pizza, rely on Visier's over 16 years of workforce domain expertise, ranked #1 in vendor satisfaction and user experience for three consecutive years by the Sapient Insights HR Systems Survey.

Learn more at Visier visier.com.





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