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Merck KGaA: Visier Fuels Advanced Analytics to Retain M&A Talent

Merck KGaA is a leading science and technology company in healthcare, life science, and performance materials with over 56,000 employees across the globe. The people analytics team adopted Visier to mature its analytics practices. Now it is expanding reach, the depth of analytics for users, maturing its enablement practices, and pursuing advanced analytics activities, including the use of organizational network analysis, all to provide continued strategic value for the organization.

Challenges

- Achieving deeper effectiveness of Visier usage by 3,500 users

- Freeing up people analytics staff resources to do more advanced analytics work

- Identifying key scientific talent to be retained from a recent merger

Key Results

- Effective people analytics ambassadors led to organization-wide data democratization

- Freed time to perform machine learning, strategic workforce planning, and network analysis with Visier as foundation

- Determined which newly acquired scientists to retain as future leaders within merged organization

" **Visier has had a major role in our development into people analytics. We are now extending this foundation to do advanced analytics, which uses very targeted solutions for specific projects layered on top of Visier to get the full spectrum from analytics.**"

Mircea-Stefan Glavici,
People Analytics Insights and Enablement Expert,
Merck KGaA

Background

Overcoming challenges with people analytics

Until 2011, all Merck KGaA talent processes—including recruiting, performance, compensation, and succession planning–were designed and driven by local countries or divisions. The lack of global processes meant that data and associated analytics often varied based on the region from which they were drawn, providing no correlations across processes and locations.

Merck KGaA worked to standardize and integrate its processes and related data to enable a global data view. The team adopted Visier in 2016 and it has since become the foundation for evidence-based decision making at the company. Additionally, their continued use of Visier over the past three years led to achievements such as:

- Linked performance management and team size data, and matched this information with sales outcomes to better understand optimum span of control

- Exceeded their 2021 target of maintaining 30% representation of female employees

- Used Visier to reconcile and aggregate HR data, allowing the people analytics team to build a prediction model on what makes people leave the company in the first year of tenure.

Current Challenges

Building to Expand Adoption

Now that HR and most organization managers have access to Visier, Merck KGaA is working to build its network of people analytics ambassadors and technical champions, who will help the people analytics team test new approaches and share their analytics knowledge with the rest of the HR community.

The team is also focused on leveraging these ambassadors to be go-to resources for questions within the organization and free up more resources to do advanced analytics work, to support M&A employee retention, skills gap analysis, and more. Their focus is on getting the full spectrum from Visier's core analytics and making advanced analytics

CASE STUDY

Merck KGaA: Organization Development Leads the Charge to Achieve Value Through Analytics

View previous case study: How Merck KGaA achieved strategic value through self–serve analysis

Approach

Going deeper with adoption

Since implementing Visier in 2016, Merck KGaA has grown its user base to a network of 3,500 users, which includes the entire management population of business and people leaders, plus the HR function. Line managers make up 3,000 of these users. Rather than go to more users, the people analytics team is working with them to achieve deeper effectiveness of adoption.

This includes leveraging their people analytics ambassadors to evangelize Visier usage and ensure that people take an evidence-based approach to their day-to-day decision making. In addition, they're also developing knowledge champions, who will help the people analytics team test new approaches and share their analytics knowledge with the rest of the HR community.

The HR business partners (HRBPs) are also moving towards a more consultative approach, which requires them to upskill their analytics capabilities and thinking. The people analytics team enables HRBPs to get better at analytics, including development items available in their learning platform.

Items include completing a set of courses and sharing internal case studies that leverage Visier. The HRBP will typically share case studies in HR platforms and be a go-to person for advice on Visier and other analytics platforms.

"We're making sure that people who are enabled are also having fun. We've gotten to a level where everybody speaks the same language in terms of data. Now, everyone can develop into an analytics expert, if they want to," says Glavici.

Making way for advanced analytics projects

Besides stepping up the enablement, Merck KGaA also increased their people analytics capability, tapping into new methods and approaches to data analysis.

With more than 56,000 people in 66 countries, the level of complexity of organizational performance exceeds human understanding, according to Adam McKinnon, Advanced People Analytics Expert at Merck KGaA. The ultimate goal of analytics is to improve employee experience and add efficiency to the HR processes.

Data collection activity to support advanced analytics is often time-consuming, and data cleaning is very time expensive. With Visier as their foundation, providing core people analytics that can be used by all, Merck KGaA now has the ability to delve into these advanced areas.

Recently, they acquired a 3,000-employee organization with specialist expertise and technology infrastructure. To ensure the retention and effective utilization of this acquired organization, the team at Merck KGaA looked at all the patents that had been filed by this organization since 2002. They further used network analysis to identify the most influential scientists within the acquired organization over a three-year period. They looked at the intellectual output of this new organization's people to get a sense of who might be future leaders for Merck KGaA.

Thanks to this patent analysis, the analytics team could quantify the number of academic partnerships people had, how connected they were, the size of their second-degree network, and how influential they were. This information gave Merck KGaA insights on potential leaders that are essential to retain and engage during the merger.

For more on this story's key results, refer to the Analytics Path in the last section of this case study.

Results

Since 2016, Merck KGaA has matured its people analytics practice significantly.

Data democratization freed time for advanced analytics work

By enabling their people analytics champions and upskilling HRBPs, they now have organization-wide data democratization. Visier acts as a single, accessible source of shared truth that can be widely used, creating time for more advanced analytics projects.

Sometimes this means Visier is tapped to develop data for further analytics work. Other times, additional analytics inputs from machine learning, strategic workforce analysis, and organizational network analysis solutions are fed back into Visier for subsequent analysis and controlled distribution.

Uncovered skills and strategic workforce planning opportunities

One of the next exciting projects that the Merck KgaA team has embarked on is to augment an employee's profile of skills and capabilities based on passive sources of text, including job descriptions and development plans. This will be achieved through natural language processing (NLP), a promising concept with good use cases in the people analytics arena.

This project will enable the team to discern the skills and capabilities of employees, which will inform learning and development initiatives. Individuals with similar jobs can then connect and learn from each other.

"It's like automatic organizational dating," says McKinnon. "The plan is to synthesize the complexity of the organization's people performance in ways that make it useful to each individual."

An additional focus on strategic workforce planning will feed data on trending skills to guide training initiatives and the transition into new desired roles.

With an early adoption of people analytics in 2016 and a true ambition to excel in this area, Merck KGaA is determined to increase the trust in the HR function. With Visier as their solid core analytics solution, they can now focus on high-end data modeling to improve each employee's experience.

Identified Most Influential Employees to Retain During M&A

Challenge

Merck KGaA acquired a 3,000-employee organization with specialist expertise and technology infrastructure. The HR and the integration teams wanted to ensure that the right inventors and scientists were retained from the new organization.

Analysis Conducted

The team started an analysis of social influence by taking all the patents that had been filed by the other organization since 2002. Then, they looked at the names of those inventors and analyzed their inventions and patents using network analysis. This provided information on who might be future scientific leaders in the new combined organization. See Figure 1.

Insights

The team used public data to understand who the most influential scientists were within the acquired organization. Now that these inventors are all employees within the new organization, they're able to quantify the number of scientific cooperations people had, how connected they were, the size of their second-degree network, how socially influential they are, and more.

Actions Taken

The team identified which patents and inventions are key to the success of the new integration and who are the people driving these scientific inventions. Using public data and creativity, they could engage key individuals, to retain them in the new structure.

Results

This analysis gave the organization the lens for the future. It provided a full list of scientists to retain as top priority. Once the merger is complete, the team will look at the flow of information between Merck KGaA and the acquired employees to ensure that effective communication is happening and that the rate of integration occurs effectively between the two entities. They will further extract skills and capabilities to inform their learning and development and HR strategy
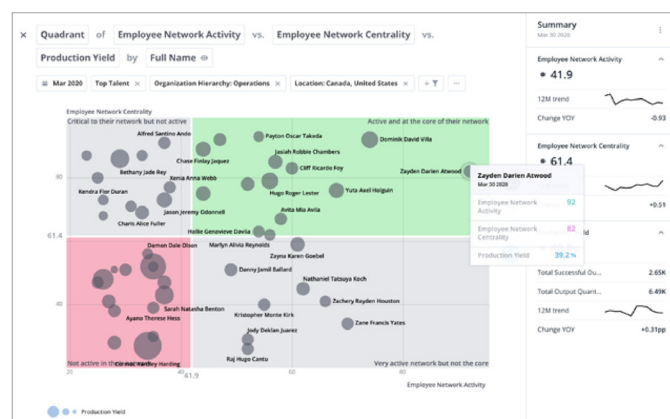
→ **Figure 1.** Visualization showing Network Activity and Network Centrality of Scientists. Visier partners such as TrustSphere can calculate the scores. Fictional data used.

About Visier

Our curiosity, the desire to understand, is inseparable from what it means to be human. But, in the hype of big data analytics, we've forgotten that data does not equal knowledge.

Visier was founded to focus on what matters: answering the right business questions, even the ones you might not know to ask. Questions that shape business strategy, provide the impetus for taking action, and drive better business results.

Visier is dedicated to transforming business analytics, to providing leaders with clear answers to critical business questions—out-of-the-box, without the hassle and cost of data management, statements of work, and development projects.

Visier lets companies say goodbye to data headaches, to complexity, to costly tools, to endless service fees, and to guesswork. A business strategy platform designed by domain experts for business leaders, Visier lets leaders say hello to clarity, to confidence, to meaningful answers—and to better business performance.

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