

Why companies that use their data to innovate grow more rapidly

Data insights can unlock creative solutions—and growth—for organisations.

Patience is a rare virtue in an increasingly technological world. To keep up with demand, businesses need to respond quickly to the requests that are made of them, whether they come from customers or their own staff. To do this, they must innovate with the data they hold. “I think of innovation as business acceleration,” says Dave Russell, vice-president of enterprise strategy at Veeam, a global data management firm.

Mr Russell believes that a company that can store and access data quickly is both able to respond to demands more rapidly and be proactive in decision making. Having better access to data allows companies to see things that they had not previously considered.

Hyoun Park, founder and CEO of consultancy and strategy firm Amalgam Insights agrees. “There is a real and immediate need for companies to use their data to optimise their operations, improve their commerce and point-of-sale activities, perfect their supply chain and logistics, as well as use the data itself as a potential product, service or service enhancer,” Mr Park says.

One case in point is pizza-delivery service Dominos. In 2010 the brand's shares were worth US\$8.76 each and the firm was stalling. Today they are worth around US\$250. The transformation was helped by innovating through data. By analysing the information that it had already been accumulating, the company realised that customer satisfaction levels were higher when people were buying through its fledgling e-commerce website.

The area was highlighted as a priority for growth, and resources were poured into its development. By 2016 some 400 of the 800 people working at its headquarters were in software and analytics teams. Now the company is experimenting with chatbots, artificial intelligence and real-time delivery tracking to fuel customer demand.

“Companies that do not take advantage of their data to digitise offerings, augment their own business models, or extract additional value from their existing business operations will be left behind by default,” Mr Park warns.



In another example, Telefónica Germany, which has millions of customers, uses Veeam's automated data systems to monitor its own systems. The telecommunications provider was able to merge a new acquisition's data centre with its own for less time and money than legacy systems would have allowed, thanks to the automated systems' ease of use and scalability. In addition, more than 200 different types of warning alarms are available, so Telefónica can easily and quickly discover when issues may arise and predict future problems.

One way to ensure that businesses are able to innovate with the data they have is to ensure that they are able to access it easily. On complex IT systems, Mr Russell says that “we envision a world where there are fewer specialists”. He believes that it should be simple for staff members to access the information they need to complete their work; they should not have to wait for hours for a request to access files to be granted.

Once data becomes simple to access, innovation becomes easier. Veeam's APIs, for instance, allow third-party innovations that leverage Veeam's data and management systems. These offer businesses the ability to easily add new storage and cloud components to their IT infrastructures.

If it is not possible for a business to innovate with the data that they currently have, reliable back-ups mean that the data will still be there when the ingredients for innovation are in place. Mr Russell says that the data systems that exist today need to be future-proofed. It is impossible to predict what technologies will be invented in the future but, he says, data needs to be preserved and kept in way that will always allow its potential to be unlocked.

As customers and employees demand more from businesses, it will be crucial that companies respond by using their increasing volumes of data to stay ahead of the curve. If not, competitors who can keep up—and innovate—will win.