Why Data & Analytics?

There's no denying, we live in an increasingly data-driven world. With 5 billion people today calling, texting, tweeting and browsing on mobile phones worldwide, data volumes are exploding. In fact, more data has been created in the past two years than in the entire previous history of the human race. Clearly, data & analytics is going to be an area of growth for young people contemplating a career in technology.

Challenging Perceptions

Presently, the realm of IT still tends to be skewed towards males. Much of this stems from perceptions around what jobs in IT involve with focus typically on core technical roles, which don't necessarily have broad appeal. As a female - led business, we were naturally delighted by the opportunity to collaborate with St. Peter's Collegiate Girls' School on a Data Analytics and Visualisation Project to help dispel some of the misconceptions of what a career in IT looks like; illustrating to young female students that there's a whole range of facets involved, including business acumen, understanding the customer and conveying a solution through the use of visualisations.

We're also a proudly owned and operated South Australian business and passionate about keeping young people here in our state - so what better opportunity to show them first-hand what our work involves here in SA on a daily basis!

The expose team facilitated an 8-week project for Year 11 Business and Enterprise students with girls forming two teams. Each team was given a customer representing industries which the girls could relate to (Music, Travel, Retail, Events), a business problem, customer data and 8 weeks in which to present a solution to their customer using Power BI visualisations. Each student was given a role within the "consulting firm" and they were required to provide deliverables throughout the course of the engagement. The project comprised three stages; Discovery (understanding the business problem), Design & Develop (analysing the data and designing the solution) and Implementation & Handover, where the girls were required to present their respective solution to their customer as well as all the standard deliverables one would receive from a professional services business. Each team was allocated with a customer and an Exposé technical subject matter expert to help them throughout the project.

> *"Collaborating with exposé on this project has allowed me to bring industry into the classroom to mimic team work, project delivery and management and communication. This was an opportunity for my business class to experience the impact of technology and how data can be used to make better business decisions. Although this project could have worked in a Technology class it was important to expose those not studying technology the impact it was having."*
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> *- Monique Green, Digital Technologies & Coding Teacher, St. Peter's Collegiate Girls' School*

Real-world skills development

Aside from gaining a working knowledge of Power BI, the girls were required to develop a thorough understanding of their respective business, customer and industry. Throughout the process, girls were faced with real-life concepts such as stake-holder management, requirements elicitation (analysis, analysis, analysis!), managing expectations and dealing with conflict. The teams learned the importance of communication within a team and had the opportunity to hone their documentation writing and presentation skills as well. Planning, process and quality is a significant part of any real-world project scenario and the girls were not exempted from this either, applying themselves to problem solving, project management, quality assurance as well as process improvement.

The one point that was highlighted to all involved, was the fact that both teams "thought outside the box" with regards to problem solving. They asked questions about how data external to their customer's business (such as weather and socio-economic data) could impact and help them solve the problem. The solutions delivered were advanced, professional and above-all, thought-provoking. They challenged us as a business and it was interesting to note the different ideas they young ladies had when compared to the solutions Exposé created to show them alternatives.

Looking to the future

Successful customer outcomes from the group projects were indeed a huge achievement. But what the girls took away with them was far more valuable. With the door now open to an exciting and varied career possibility, the girls were inspired to consider working towards a future in data analytics. We measured success based on whether the girls looked at IT (or STEM) differently after the project. It was both empowering and amazing to know that we not only opened their eyes to how they perceive IT, but one of the students has shown interest in a career in Data and Analytics (there's a job waiting for you with us!)

"I didn't really know much about business intelligence before this project but now I am considering a career in data/ business intelligence because of the project. It was also really good working with Kelly"

- Rose Pittman, Year 11 Business and Enterprise Student, St. Peter's Collegiate Girls' School