

# Democratizing data:

Business intelligence for business users

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## Introduction

Making strategic business decisions is often easier said than done. It requires access to high-quality and relevant information that business users can distill into actionable insights. Having immediate access to corporate data, however, is not always feasible for many organizations.

Warehousing data and managing the data governance policy have largely been responsibilities of the IT department. Historically, data has been stored in servers or in the Cloud, and the IT department was needed to ensure that the infrastructure behind this process ran smoothly.

This IT-centric arrangement, however, comes with its own set of limitations. When a new data report or analysis is needed by a business user, for instance, he or she has to wait in line for IT to generate a report from the data, which can take several days or even weeks. Often, getting the numbers into a usable format requires extensive SQL coding and lots of technical expertise.

This approach to data management can result in bottlenecks and losses to workers' productivity—frustrating business users and creating divisiveness between the two departments.

Although this report-centric arrangement made sense for many years, recently, the needs of the business have changed.

Today, all areas of the business collect data with the goal of using that information to improve internal processes or to better understand customers. For example, today's chief marketing

officer isn't just expected to drive leads, but they're also expected to be the experts on consumers' behaviors and understand them across all marketing channels.

Not surprisingly, our 2016 global data management benchmark report revealed that 98 percent of companies have a desire to turn their data into insight.

For more insights on data management trends, download our "2016 global data management benchmark report."

[Click here](#)

When time is of the essence, waiting weeks for the data to support a business decision can quickly prove burdensome. That's why many organizations have been transitioning to a democratized data management model, allowing business users to have direct access to the organization's information with minimal IT involvement.

By enabling business users to access data with role-based permissions in a sandbox environment, they can gain insights from corporate information with minimal risk to the source data. It's a win, win for business and IT.

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Businesses are transitioning from slow, **report-based** arrangements to faster, **analysis-oriented** approaches.

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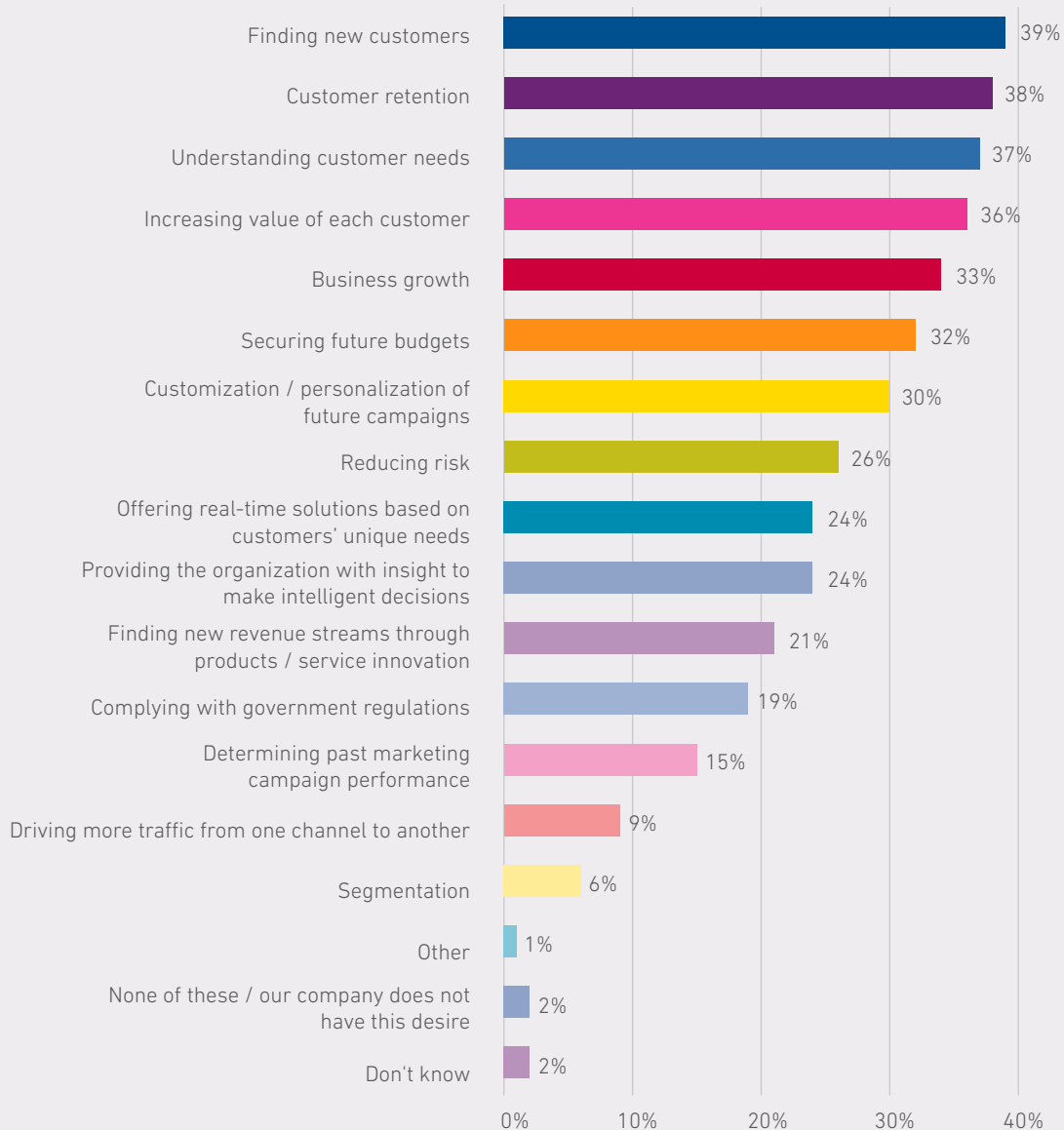
## Companies use data for strategic decision-making—but many struggle

Data is a tremendous resource, and business users are constantly looking for new ways to leverage their organizations' data assets. Increasingly, data is becoming a central focus of business strategies. By 2020, customer data is expected to drive the majority of sales decisions, but organizations are using data for a number of reasons

beyond increasing sales. According to our research, the primary uses for data are finding new customers, improving customer retention, and understanding customers' needs.

The following chart represents the biggest reasons for turning data into insight:

Chart 1  
Biggest drivers to turn data into insight:



Source: 2016 global data management benchmark report

Looking at this, it's evident that business users are focusing on the customer experience as the primary use for the collected data. Even fewer organizations report using their data for the purpose of making decisions: 24 percent of respondents say that they use data to provide the organization with insight to make intelligent decisions, and 21 percent use data to find new streams of revenue through products or service innovation.

Interestingly, when we asked organizations how data can serve to drive key business objectives over the next five years, they had a much more proactive outlook: 90 percent want to use real-time analytics to inform decision-making, and 89 percent want to use data science to inform their strategy. The chart below represents the expected change in usage over the next five years.

From this, we can conclude that while a majority of organizations want to use their data to make more informed decisions, today, many of them do not follow this practice. Oftentimes, when it comes to leveraging collected information, poor data quality or conflicting priorities between IT and business users can create insurmountable challenges.

Although systemic changes take time, providing business users with direct access to corporate data will enable organizations to overcome delays in the decision-making process.

## Self-service business intelligence is on the rise

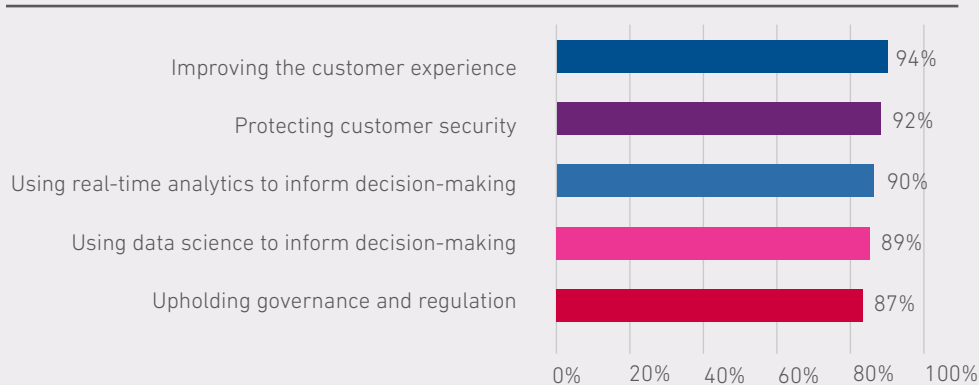
Every company wants to be thought of as innovative, and having immediate access to their data is a prerequisite for making timely, strategic decisions. Encumbered by old ways of accessing and reporting on data, many organizations have sought an alternative in what's commonly referred to as self-service business intelligence (SSBI). According to market research firm Gartner, "global revenue in the business intelligence (BI) and analytics market[i] is forecast to reach \$16.9 billion in 2016, an increase of 5.2 percent from 2015."<sup>1</sup>

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**"The business intelligence (BI) and analytics market[i] is forecast to reach \$16.9 billion in 2016, an increase of 5.2 percent from 2015."<sup>2</sup>**

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Chart 2  
Change in channel usage over the next 5 years:



Source: 2016 global data management benchmark report

Self-service business intelligence democratizes your organization's data by making it accessible to the people who use it most, the business users. The key propositions of self-service business intelligence are two-fold: that business users have access to corporate data and that the data is made available to them in a user-friendly package. A true self-service program should enable business users to evaluate and analyze data without necessarily needing specialized training in data mining, statistical analysis, or business intelligence (although having a background in these areas is certainly helpful).

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**80% of U.S. organizations are hiring individuals into such positions as data analysts, data scientists, and CDOs.**

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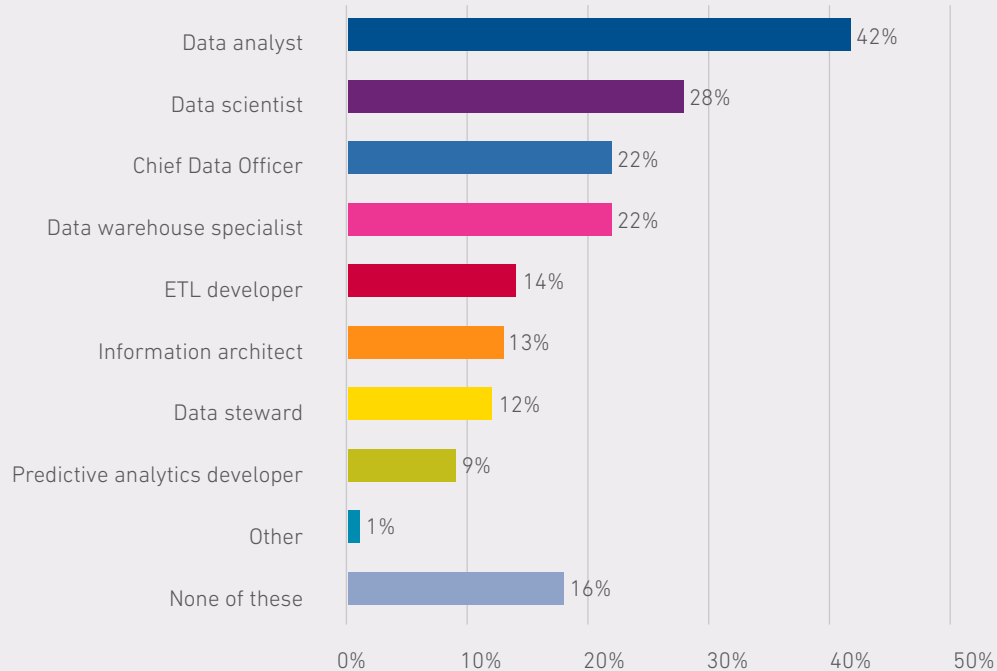
By making corporate data more accessible, both in terms of infrastructure and complexity, the number of users who are able to interact with that data extends far beyond a select number of highly-trained individuals. And this makes your data much more valuable.

### Data-driven business roles are in demand

As analysis-centric approaches continue to tip the scale in favor of business initiatives, organizations will need to ensure they are positioning their people to be successful. As a result of growing data permissions on the business side, we have seen an uptick in the number of data-related roles being created within the business.

According to our research, 80 percent of U.S. organizations are hiring individuals into such positions as data analysts, data scientists, and Chief Data Officers (CDOs). With a focus

Chart 3  
New data-centric roles to support a centralized data management strategy:



Source: 2016 global data management benchmark report

on solving business problems, these new roles will be able to leverage corporate data to build analytical models and algorithms with much greater control over the data's integrity. Bringing their own subject matter expertise, these business users have an intimate understanding of the data's intended use, which enables them to truly determine whether the data they have is fit for purpose.

In addition to the aforementioned roles, we are seeing a variety of data-related jobs being created in the business. The following chart represents the positions we see being developed to support a centralized data management strategy.

By increasing headcount in these business functions, organizations will have the necessary resources to analyze their data with minimal IT intervention, enabling faster and more deliberate business decisions.

### The need for data governance is constant

It goes without saying that data-driven decisions require quality data. Though self-service business intelligence promises to provide business users with the data they need to drive strategic decision-making, inaccurate or incorrect data can severely hinder their ability to take action. In fact, our research shows that on average, 23 percent of customer and prospect data is believed to be inaccurate.

Before giving data permissions to the business, it's necessary to ensure that your data governance process has been clearly defined. Because business users are typically subject matter experts, they know exactly what they're

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23% of customer and prospect data is believed to be inaccurate.

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looking for within the data, and they may be able to identify errors or outliers that would otherwise go unnoticed. Having the proper channels for remediation, therefore, is a necessary prerequisite.

Our research indicates that 77 percent of U.S. respondents believe that the responsibility for data quality should ultimately lie with the business (with occasional support from IT), but we recommend that the governance of data

Download our report to see how the CDO role bridges the gap between IT and business users.

[Download now](#)

remain under a centralized owner, such as a CDO, as they can serve as a bridge between the business and IT. The CDO should help to ensure that the governance policy works in the interests of both departments and that there is a clear process for addressing data errors.

Data governance is a critical component of your business strategy, so it's necessary to recognize that it should be a permanent program within your organization; it's not a one-time project. You should constantly be evaluating your processes to ensure that they fit in with your business culture, and the technologies you use should be reviewed regularly, as well, to make sure they are meeting the demands of your business.

By monitoring and maintaining your data governance program, you can empower your business users with trustworthy and actionable data assets.

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You should constantly be evaluating your **processes** and **technologies** to make sure they are meeting the needs of your business.

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## Conclusion

Today's businesses need to make strategic decisions much faster than ever before to keep pace with growing competition, and having access to corporate data is necessary for enabling such decisions. While old practices of requesting reports from the IT department served the purpose for many years, rapidly changing business needs are putting a strain on this process.

When time is of the essence, your organization cannot afford to wait days or even weeks for the IT department to cull your data and generate an actionable report. That's why many organizations are providing business users with role-based permissions to access data resources directly. By democratizing your data, you can make data easily and readily accessible to the business users who need it most.



It's time to start empowering your business users with the data they need to make timely decisions. Learn how Experian Pandora can help you harness your data as a strategic asset.

[Learn more](#)

Source:

1, 2. Gartner, Inc. 2016. Gartner Says Worldwide Business Intelligence and Analytics Market to Reach \$16.9 Billion in 2016. <http://www.gartner.com/newsroom/id/3198917>. Accessed on July 7, 2016.

[i] The business intelligence and analytics market includes analytic applications, BI platforms, CPM suites, advanced analytics and performance management software.





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