

Investing in digital transformation: This year's most sought-after data roles



Table of contents:

Introduction	1
Data analysts	2
Data protection officers	3
Customer-focused data roles	4
Compliance officers	5
Data champions	6
Chief data officers	7
Conclusion	8
Methodology.....	9
About Experian	9

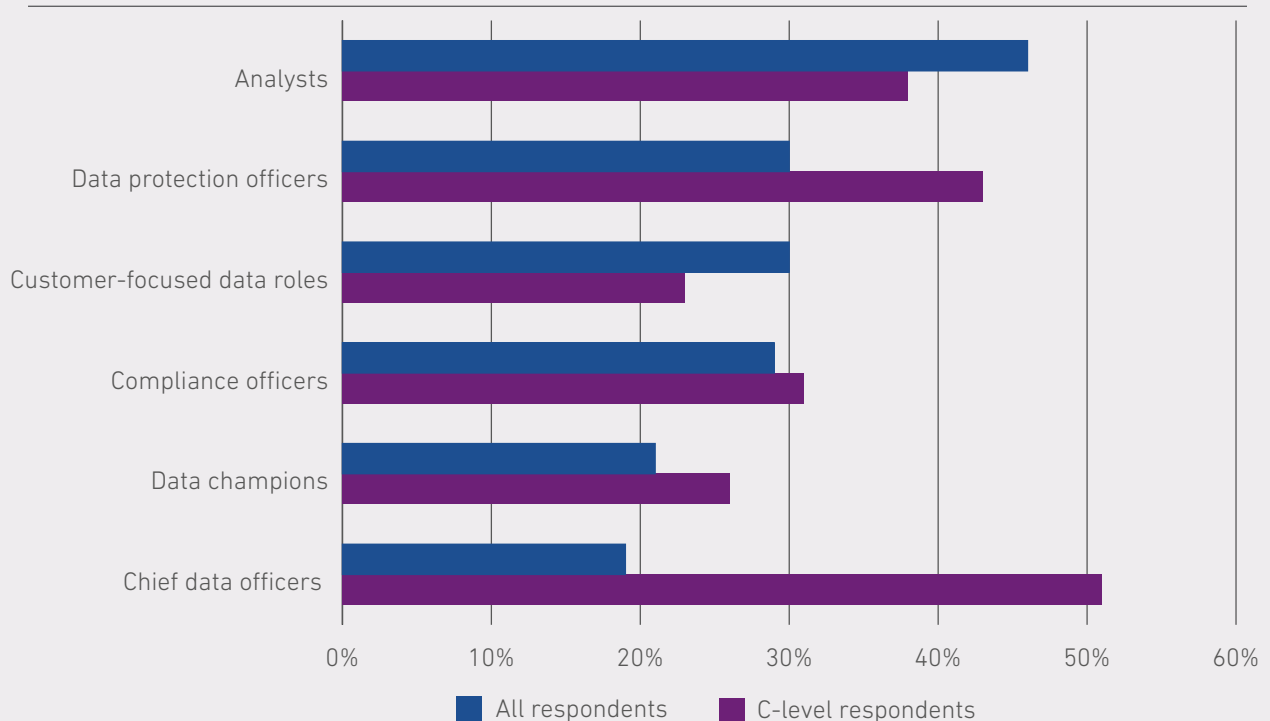
Introduction

Data-driven businesses need two things: data and people who understand data. As organizations work to keep up with the pace of digital transformation, many of them are looking to their information as an opportunity to drive revenue and reduce costs. Yet, having access to a lot of information is simply not enough nowadays. You need to have the right people on your team who can collect, manage, and analyze your data in order to generate true business value.

It's clear that businesses today understand the value of hiring data professionals, but we wanted

to know where they are focusing their investments. As part of our 2017 global data management benchmark report, we asked 311 organizations in the U.S. about the data-related roles they plan to hire in the next twelve months. What we found was an interesting balance of hiring business-focused roles (such as data analysts) and regulation-focused roles (such as compliance officers), reflecting the tension we often see at organizations between driving innovation while also managing risk. **Chart 1** below shows the results of our study broken out by all U.S. respondents and by C-level executives.

Chart 1
Top data-related roles U.S. organizations plan to hire in 2017



Data analysts

There's no doubt that organizations today want to do more with their data than ever before. That's why they are investing in skilled employees who can turn their data into actionable insights. Our research revealed that 46 percent of U.S. organizations (and 38 percent of C-level executives) are planning on hiring data analysts over the next year. While data analysts can sit across many areas of the business, from finance to marketing, the remit of the position itself is the same: to analyze data in such a way that it can be used for business intelligence.

Our research shows that 57 percent of U.S. businesses spend a majority of their time analyzing data, and this role is key to ensuring they're getting the right results. This role works with various departments to define their specific data needs and then uses statistical methods to create reports that are useful for these designed business requirements. These business needs might require the data analyst to assist with the creation of models to identify customer trends or to recommend new ways of saving money. Because data analysts are in a position to understand the business needs as well as the limitations of the organization's data assets, they can help to prioritize these efforts.

Hiring a data analyst

When hiring a data analyst, it's important to first define how granular you'd like to get when analyzing your data. If you're interested in identifying high-level trends, such as user engagement or activity, a potential candidate would need less technical expertise—and be a cheaper resource to recruit—than a candidate who would be expected to analyze vast amounts of data to build predictive models.

With that in mind, an ideal data analyst should have a comprehensive understanding of data science concepts and be comfortable using statistical tools such as SPSS and big data tools like Apache Spark and Hadoop. Because this role is typically business-facing, they should also be a skilled communicator who can break down complex data science concepts into terms business users can understand.



Data protection officers

In preparation for the upcoming European directive known as General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), we are seeing an increase in the number of U.S. organizations looking to hire data protection officers (DPOs). GDPR is designed to safeguard consumer information, and when it takes effect on May 25, 2018, the data protection officer will become a required position for all organizations that collect or handle the personal data of EU citizens.

While the rule affects businesses in the EU predominantly, any business in the U.S. that handles data under the preview of GDPR will need to comply with its requirements—and that means hiring a DPO to oversee the compliance with GDPR. To that end, our study revealed that 30 percent of U.S. companies are planning to hire DPOs over the next year. Further, this number climbs to 43 percent when looking at the responses of C-level executives globally.

Generally, the DPO is responsible for educating employees on the regulation's specific compliance requirements, as well as ensuring that employees receive the proper training for handling data. The DPO is also responsible for establishing audit intervals and serves as the main point of contact for external supervisory authorities who will be checking to ensure that compliance is met.



Hiring a data protection officer

Compliance with GDPR requires a deep understanding of data protection processes and laws, especially those impacting EU citizens, so any potential DPO you interview should be well versed in those areas. In addition, they should demonstrate an aptitude for navigating technical and organizational structures, as they will need to interface with employees at all levels of your organization in addition to the proper regulatory bodies outside of your organization. The ideal DPO should have exceptional management skills and be a skilled communicator able to traverse potentially difficult conversations with regulators.



Hiring a customer-focused data role

When interviewing candidates for a customer-focused data role, you will want to ensure they possess many of the same qualifications a data analyst would be expected to have: Advanced Excel and SQL skills, a level of comfort with statistics tools like SPSS, and a background in big data analytics. Building off of this, an ideal candidate for a customer-focused role should be an excellent communicator and commercially aware, enabling them to identify and assimilate complex information quickly to drive decisions that influence customer experience.

Customer-focused data roles

Customer data is the most widely available information that organizations collect today. It makes sense, therefore, that companies would begin leveraging this data for strategic decision-making. In today's hyper-competitive digital economy, brands need to meet their customers' increasingly complex needs faster and more effectively than ever before—and that means leveraging data to understand them better. With this renewed focus on better understanding their customers, 30 percent of organizations (and 23 percent of C-level executives) say that they are looking to hire customer-focused data roles within the next twelve months.

While many of these positions will likely be considered data analysts or customer analysts, their specific focus on the customer is what makes this particular segment unique. Individuals in these roles will use data to highlight opportunities for increased revenue from their existing customer base, analyze how customers spend across their portfolio, and provide recommendations to business stakeholders based on their analysis. For instance, this role might use data to segment their customer base to determine the types of customers who use their products or services. Based on this analysis, they can work with marketing to develop buyer personas and better communicate with their audience in a more personalized way.



Hiring a compliance officer

Knowledgeable and ethical, the ideal compliance officer will help your organization avoid unnecessary lawsuits, maintain a positive reputation, and manage your risk exposure. When hiring this role, you will want to ensure the candidate is knowledgeable about the legal and regulatory aspects of your particular industry. They should also have a good grasp of your company's values in order to make decisions that go along with your business's ethics. In addition, this role should be able to communicate effectively across all levels of employees to provide training, give advice, and announce changes to regulation as they occur.

Compliance officers

As organizations' demands for data continue to grow, their overall risk exposure increases—particularly when it comes to legal and regulatory issues, which can impose serious consequences if not adhered to consistently. That's why having a compliance officer is a critical part of creating a good corporate governance program. According to our research, 29 percent of organizations in the U.S. (and 31 percent of C-level executives) are planning to hire compliance officers in the next twelve months.

What does the role of a compliance officer entail? The compliance officer works to ensure that national and international laws, industry regulations, and accepted corporate standards are not violated during the normal course of business. They do this by establishing internal mechanisms for controlling risk exposure, such as reporting information to executives and training staff on compliance policies. In addition to ensuring your business practices are compliant with the law, the compliance officer also ensures that your business acts in a way that is consistent with ethics standards.

Data champions

More and more, organizations are beginning to think of their data as an asset, and they are investing heavily in the people and technology to support data-driven businesses intelligence programs. With so much on the line, the need to safeguard data under an established governance program is becoming more important. For this reason, we are seeing an increased focus on hiring individuals responsible for maintaining the integrity of data systems. In fact, our study shows that more than one in five organizations (21%) are planning to hire a data champion in the next year.

While the title of your data champion may vary, we've seen "data stewards" and "data evangelists" most commonly, their core mission is to promote a culture of governance around data processes within your organization and to ensure other business users are following approved practices. This includes developing and executing guidelines for data processes, as well as ensuring that employees are following these guidelines when they interact with company data. Doing so will help ensure that the quality and security of your data is not compromised.



Hiring a data champion

As the guardian of your business's most important asset, the ideal data champion should have a strong background in data governance and be passionate about upholding the integrity of your information. As the outspoken evangelist of data at your organization, they should be both comfortable with teaching others the importance of following data processes and resolute in managing pushback from those who may be resistant to change. In addition, because the role serves as a bridge between IT and business users, they will need to have a good understanding of the business's needs and pain points, as they relate to data.

Chief data officers

Lots of organizations talk about being data-driven, but very few of them have a centralized data program that facilitates access to high-quality, integrated information. That's why we're seeing a renewed focus on hiring central roles that are responsible for the strategy around data, such as the chief data officer (CDO). Our study shows that while 19 percent of U.S. organizations say they plan to hire a CDO in the next twelve months, that number actually rises to 51 percent when looking at responses from C-level executives. Because a CDO would typically be hired by their C-level peers, we believe that the actual number of companies hiring a CDO role is closer to that 50 percent mark—and that makes it, by far, the most sought after position by businesses today.

The chief data officer is a member of executive leadership, and they typically report into the chief executive officer or chief information officer, although some may report into business leaders such as a chief financial officer or chief marketing officer. The CDO is responsible for developing and implementing their organization's information strategy, which includes disciplines such as data security, governance, quality, and management. In addition to implementing the right processes, the CDO oversees a staff of data professionals, and controls a budget for investing in the proper tools to carry out the information strategy. Because the CDO bridges the gap between lines of business and IT departments, their greatest task is to ensure that data assets can be exploited for business value.



Hiring a chief data officer

The ideal CDO is able to facilitate complex, multi-disciplinary data projects to meet the needs of business and IT stakeholders. As a role that spans departments, the CDO needs to have a diverse skillset. In addition to being technically knowledgeable about big data tools and processes, they should also have a strong business acumen with experience in budget planning and resource management. In addition, they need to be skilled communicators, able to distill complex data-related concepts into business-impacts that their C-level peers will understand. Having the ability to collaborate and cut through internal politics is essential for those in the CDO role as overlapping responsibilities with the chief information officer can sometimes be a source of tension.



Conclusion

As businesses today rely on data to drive decision-making and manage risk, the need to recruit and retain qualified staff is even more important. That's why we're seeing such a keen focus on hiring in these areas. By investing in chief data officers to drive the information strategy and data analysts to turn that data into business insight, organizations are sending a clear message that data is a strategic business asset. Yet, we also see a big push toward hiring data-related roles in compliance and regulation. So while innovation is a priority for many organizations, they must balance that against their need to remain compliant with laws and regulations that govern their industry—and data can help with that too.

Hiring the right people is critical to your data strategy—so is giving them the right tools to do their jobs well. Learn how Experian Pandora empowers your business users to make data-driven decisions.

[Learn more](#)

Methodology

Experian has once again conducted a survey to look at global trends in data quality. This study looks at how data practitioners are leveraging and managing their data to generate actionable insight and how data management practices are changing over time.

Produced by Loudhouse for Experian in November 2016, the study polled more than 1,400 people across eight countries around the globe. A variety of roles from all areas of the organization were surveyed, including information technology, data management, marketing, customer service, sales, operations, and more.

Respondents were chosen based on their visibility into their organization's customer or prospect data management practices. Organizations that were surveyed came from a variety of industries including IT, telecommunications, manufacturing, retail, business services, financial services, healthcare, public sector, education, utilities, and more.

About Experian

Experian enables organizations to unlock the power of data. We focus on the quality of our clients' information so they can explore the meaningful ways they can use it. Whether optimizing data for better customer experiences or preparing data for improved business intelligence, we empower our clients to manage their data with confidence.

We have the data, expertise, and proven technology to help our customers quickly turn information into insight. We're investing in new, innovative solutions to power opportunities for our people, clients, and communities. To learn more, visit www.edq.com.



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