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Zoos Victoria

A conversation with David Methven

Director of Digital Engagement, Zoos Victoria

Zoos Victoria Director of Digital Engagement, David Methven, shares his thoughts on the value of liberating data from the confines of spread-sheets and making it more visible across the organisation.

T: David, can you tell us a little bit about Zoos Victoria?

DM: Zoos Victoria is a not-for-profit conservation organisation dedicated to fighting wildlife extinction. We are a large, diverse and complex organisation operating 365 days across three zoos, hosting more than two million visitors per year.

T: The sheer volume of visitors and the wide range of environmental programs you run must make data a very vital component of the zoo's lifeblood. What was the catalyst for deploying the Tableau data analytics solution?

DM: Like most organisations, our data was spread across a multitude of spread-sheets

making it difficult to gain true visibility across the data and use it in the ways we felt would benefit the organisation. So, it was really about making the data more accessible and presenting it in a way that clearly demonstrated the impacts and outcomes that various initiatives had on the business.

T: How are you using analytics today and how do you see that evolving in the future within Zoos Victoria?

DM: The dashboards are being used for management planning right across the business. They enable us to monitor what is, and what is not, working in terms of the various strategies we undertake to drive our key metrics of visitation and membership.

We have put a lot of effort into creating dashboards that transform the data into a visual assessment of where we are as a business; giving a clear view of the impacts our various business initiatives have on our actuals. Additionally, as a result of having greater clarity on what is happening in the business, we can take more immediate corrective action when we see the dashboards alerting us to potential issues. And lastly, and possibly most importantly for us as a business, the dashboards provide us with an accurate view of the likely outcomes that certain activities and campaigns will have on our key revenue drivers across the three zoos.

T: It's clear that Tableau has brought a lot of practical value to the business David, but how do you see the interplay between technology and people at Zoos Victoria?

DM: For us, technology is an enabler, as it has helped us achieve our key goal of making the data more visible to business users right across the organisation. The key is to enable people with the right information from which to take the right set of actions with confidence.

T: What role do you believe that analytics bring to the table in terms of providing organisations with game changing insights?

DM: Having the ability to take data out of spreadsheets and using it to provide a very visual view of the organisation and the impacts key decisions and actions have on your core business is a game changer in itself.

Tableau has really helped us transform the way we use data to drive the business, enabling us to present information and metrics in ways that are visually attractive and simple for everyone to understand and take action on. Tableau has allowed us to take a whole lot of information and present it back to the business in terms of trends, impacts and outcomes against key initiatives.

T: Can you tell us a little bit about Tridant's role in all this and the value you believe they brought to the process?

DM: One of the things that Tridant have been very good at is producing reports that fit our specific requirements – they really understood what we needed and built reports that reflected those needs.

They have also been fantastic at helping us identify ways in which we could be extending Tableau's value to our planning process. For example, helping us focus our ideas around ways of minimising the impact of things we cannot control (like the weather) and helping us focus more on those things we can control and amplify their impacts.

T: We have talked a lot about the value data analytics have provided to the business but what impact would you say it has had on the way your customers experience Zoos Victoria?

DM: I think the key element is that we are now in a far better position to understand what our visitors find appealing and which of our offers and programs are of most benefit to them, which ultimately provides a better overall zoo experience for everyone.

T: And finally, what advice would you give to companies who are about to commence their Data Analytics journey?

DM: Just make a start. The key thing is to start to bring the data into the light. Simply by making it more visible it becomes more useable and as a result more valuable to the decision making process. ●

