

CASE STUDY: Mark Mulvaney

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Mark discusses DWP's use of analytics to better serve the public

What does your organisation do?

In DWP business intelligence is used to understand what different parts of the Department are doing, what its customers are doing and to make efficiencies. Our directorate provides a service to other directorates and we provide the systems and the data to marshal the department's analytical capabilities, whether it's operational research or social research or statistics or economics, it's mostly done on our systems.

We work on behalf of housing benefit, local authorities, the Crown Prosecution Service and we get HMRC data and we merge it all together. We also deliver analytical intelligence, using mostly SAS, and we have about 500 to 600 SAS users.

What would be a good example of the type of work you do?

A good example would be The Pension Service. They are at the leading edge of customer intelligence. They've won industry marketing awards because what they've done is so effective. Just like a public company, a marketing company or a company like Tesco, would analyse your spending characteristics and your financial information and aim tailored products towards you.

We do a similar sort of thing. We have pension contributions and savings information, so instead of people having to come to us we go to them and say we think you're entitled to this, please fill this form in. This is leading edge and It's all part of the government's agenda of reducing poverty by trying to make sure people get what they are entitled to using the data and information based decisions rather than waiting for them to come to us.

Can you tell us a little bit about your academic background?

I did a computer science BSc at the University of Greenwich but now I'm more of a business analyst as well as an information systems analyst.

How did you first come to understand the requirement in the DWP for analytics?

I joined as an IT programmer .

Did you have any analytics skills/training before you obtained your current role?

When I joined, DWP had already made a choice that analytics was an important as well as more information based decision making.

The part of the organisation I joined at the time, The Analytical Services Division as it was called in those days, was about 300 people .

Do you think that the type skills you have obtained provided you with any advantages in getting jobs or promotions within the Department?

Definitely. If I hadn't got them I wouldn't be here now, so it was a really good choice. Our directorate is generally driven by people who have done some sort of numerate degree, such as economics or statistics .

Do you feel that the use of analytics is going to become more important in the future world of work?

Oh, definitely. I think that people are realising the value of what they can get out of information. A private company wants to maximise profits, so making efficiencies in their processes and accurately based costing etc.

It's actually the skills from marketing, like the stuff that the Pension Service does, using



our analytics tools and our data that's amazing and it's really helping the public. It's impact on national poverty and pensioner poverty are the biggest things and I think the Pension Service has done a lot to help this using, analytical tools and business intelligence.

The key for them was really the understanding how to use business analysis and data analysis skills and tie them together. In the old days a techie was a techie. Now you need to be multi skilled.

The thing is there's a realisation within government that we need information to make decisions:

We are looking at things like how do chil-

dren get to school, looking at the eco impact of living a long distance from schools and the related traffic situation. We know when people go into hospital and when people leave and come back into the country and we can start tying up data and know where we can correctly award benefit.

It impacts all our lives. If you look at the Pension Service, it's being done by people who understand the business and information decision making. It's understanding business processes and it really doesn't matter what business, whether it's a government department or a private company. Having business aptitude, I think that's the most important thing. ■