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A CIO's Big Data Wish List for the Festive Season

Robert Plant, Associate Professor, School of Business Administration, University of Miami
12/19/2012

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It's the time of year when we all take stock of what we have achieved during the past 365 days, and think ahead to our goals and aspirations for the next year. CIOs are no different, and as such, many will be preparing their wish lists for the festive season, as well as for 2013. They may just look something like this...

One Hadoop software library: For many, 2013 is the time to get on the big data wave, and the natural place to start is to obtain the software that is going to continue to drive the analytics space for a long time.

Two high performance servers: You will need one to act as a development platform, and one to act as a production server. Start the big data push as an experiment, then scale, rather than go for broke on day one.

Three visionary senior executives: Big data is not an individual activity, it's a team activity that needs support and involvement from the senior management leadership, CEO, CFO, and COO, among others. It's time for the CIO to move into educator mode and get them on board.

Four credit hours of specialized training: Perhaps at an extension school class like that offered by Harvard in Big Data Analytics. The best way to get up to speed with big data is hands-on exposure, and the fastest way to do that is to go back to school. It will be fun, enjoy the freedom and the environment.

Five Days at hack/reduce: A great way to put all that theory and training to practice, and live up to the "Code Big or Go Home" ideal, while proving to the Gen Y coders at the office that the guy in charge still has it.

Six days of big data conferences: In 2013, the "must attend" conferences will be those around big data. Time to block out three of them on the calendar, assemble a team, and book the flights.

Seven Terabytes of data storage: Not sure how big your big data is going to get? It might be worthwhile to look at all your corporate data -- past, present, and future -- benchmarking other firms of a similar type, and probing exhibitors for insights on competitors at the conferences. For example, Twitter processes an estimated 7 terabytes of data a day, in 140 character blocks, while UPS database supports 1.1 Billion SQL queries an hour.

Eight Apache Hadoop related projects: Hadoop is just the beginning of the journey. 2013 is also the time to get familiar with the other technologies in the distributed programming environment: Avro, Cassandra, Chukwa, Hive, Mahout, Pig, and Zookeeper.

Nine social media feeds: 2013 will be the year firms start to understand how to leverage social media for competitive advantage through big data. Therefore, it's time to understand the dynamics of Linkedin, YouTube, Facebook, Google+, Flicker, Stumbleupon, Blogspot, FeedBurner, and LiveJournal (among others). Not exactly sure of what they offer? In that case, it's definitely time to re-orientate the team.

Ten technologies to track: CIOs will need to track the deployment of the new technologies in the big data sector in 2013, and tools such as Gartner's Hype Cycle will be useful in keeping an inventory of what to follow. Technologies projected to plateau in the two to five year range include: intelligent electronic devices, text analytics, in memory analytics, Map/Reduce, Telematics, Open Government Data, social analytics, advanced fraud, predictive modeling solutions, and dynamic data masking. Knowing what will affect your firm, and when, is a key to winning any technology race.

Eleven non-financial metrics, in addition to a financial KPI: Development of a balanced scorecard to evaluate the big data solution is a useful way to evaluate the system beyond traditional, hard ROI metrics. The BSC approach can be flexible and amended as the system is deployed and evolves. Starting this process early in the development is a useful way to benchmark the system, and gain a holistic understanding of its impact.

Twelve intern credit hours: Universities and colleges are just waking up to the demand for big data and analytics. Spring 2013 would be a perfect time to offer four students the chance to work as a team at

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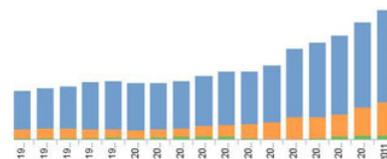
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your firm on a big data project. You may even want to pay for their three-credit internship, as it's a great win-win for both the firm and the students.

Perhaps the CEO will be generous this year and grant all these wishes, but just like Santa, he may not know what you need if you don't tell him, so perhaps it's time to share your wish list. Who knows, you may be pleasantly surprised.

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— Robert Plant, *Associate Professor, School of Business Administration, University of Miami*

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Susan Fourtané , User Rank: Blogger
12/28/2012 | 6:32:53 AM

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Re: Six days of big data conferences
SharCo,

Indeed, education is power, as well as knowledge. The CIOs with the more education in the latest of big data, and the knowledge and wisdom to implement that education in the best possible and efficient way in the organization are the ones who will take their company to the next level. And, as we know, that's the way to success, right?

-Susan

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SharCo, User Rank: Petabyte Pathfinder
12/28/2012 | 1:49:47 AM

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Re: Number Three is Number One.
CIO = Chief Information Officer = ongoing education and training expected. At least, that's what I think.

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SharCo, User Rank: Petabyte Pathfinder
12/28/2012 | 1:49:24 AM

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Re: Six days of big data conferences
Agreed, the conferences will be one of the big stars of 2013! And hopefully, in the years to come. Education is power!

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mharden, User Rank: Exabyte Executive
12/27/2012 | 2:23:28 PM

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Re: Number Three is Number One.
@Saul - *"Can the educational content lead to a solid number 3?"* I think that Four and Five will make great candidates for the top 3 spots. You can never have enough education when it comes to the rapidly changing big data space.

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Susan Fourtané , User Rank: Blogger
12/25/2012 | 2:18:57 PM

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Six days of big data conferences
Robert,

Yay! The conferences on big data are going to be the star of 2013. Look: The big data tour.

-Susan

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Saul Sherry, User Rank: Blogger
12/24/2012 | 10:31:48 AM

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Re: Number Three is Number One.
A visit from the innovation business ghosts of past present and future wouldn't go astray.

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MDMConsult, User Rank: Exabyte Executive
12/20/2012 | 8:25:03 PM

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Re: Number Three is Number One.
Yes. The way business is today and the pace businesses accelerate will further that type of ongoing evolution.

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Saul Sherry, User Rank: Blogger
12/19/2012 | 5:00:18 PM

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Re: Number Three is Number One.
Would it be worth pursuing the pauper for a day programmes? If your C-level have to be on the

floor, in IT or in data, they might have a new found appreciation for what their teams do, and what their insight there can bring.

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Robert Plant, User Rank: Blogger
12/19/2012 | 3:53:56 PM

Re: Number Three is Number One.
We find that CIOs and tech leaders are more about the leadership than the tech as their careers go forward and hence a hands on tech reemersion would be a good thing, new insights and new thoughts come from actual experince with the technology. As we found as a child watching someone ride a bike is different from doing it yourself.

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Robert Plant, User Rank: Blogger
12/19/2012 | 3:50:54 PM

Re: Number Three is Number One.
Yes, I concur, hopefully we can extend the Christmas analogy by hoping the CFO is on board and not scruge like.

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