

Be Honest: Why Do You Care About Data?

A conversation with data professionals on how to leverage advanced analytics more fully

This past July, at experience: Liaison Boston, Othot Product Manager, Jeff Morgan, and Manager of Data Curation, Alexis Tshudy, shared tips on how to support strategic decision making and enrollment success more effectively by reframing today's reliance on data. Here's what they had to say at their session, **Be Honest: Why Do You Care About Data?**

Make the Data More About You

Jeff and Alexis kicked off the session by challenging the audience to flip the traditional narrative regarding "the promise and future of analytics in higher education," arguing that success with analytics starts with — and relies upon — the humans leveraging it.

The pair posed some big questions, starting with: **"Why do you care about data at your institution?"** Common answers included:

- To advance institutional goals
- To improve quality and efficiency
- To strengthen student outcomes
- To enhance teaching, learning, and advising

Then, Jeff and Alexis provided what they believe to be **the most honest answer**: "...a large portion of consumerism is designed to achieve the same thing... people are seeking to impress each other, or they are seeking to impress themselves." *Sutherland, Rory. Alchemy. London: WH Allen, 2019*

Replacing "consumerism" with "the adoption of advanced analytics" for these purposes, the next logical question was, **"How do you impress people with data?"**

“ We want you to anticipate the answers to the ‘logical’ questions you might be asked about your new ideas, and think about how you can answer those with simple, bite-sized pieces of content.”

– ALEXIS TSHUDY

FEATURING:



JEFF MORGAN
Product Manager



ALEXIS TSHUDY
Manager of Data Curation



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Go for the Good: Logic, Outcomes, and Ideas

So how do you impress people with data? **“Most people actually value LOGIC over OUTCOMES.”**

Four possible combinations of good and bad logic and outcomes, and the different reactions that will result, were presented:

- The good logic/good outcome and bad logic/bad outcome combinations deliver obvious reactions
- With a good outcome based on bad logic, the positive results are not usually sustainable
- With a bad outcome based on good logic, results are often perceived as justifiable, explainable, or a “learning experience”

So, if “good logic” alone is more likely to impress people than a “good outcome” on its own, the next question asked was: **“Where do good ideas come from?”**

Jeff argued that, good ideas do not come from data. “You’re going to have to just try them out,” he advised.

Good Logic Hacks to Fuel Good Outcomes

Jeff and Alexis had substantiated their original premise that it is people – not analytics – who are responsible for producing ideas and making decisions.

What is their takeaway advice?

- ✓ Let the action you want to take – not data – drive your analysis
- ✓ Don’t expect surprises from your advanced analytics models
- ✓ Focus on sharing insights (not data)
- ✓ Use a little magic with machine learning to back up good ideas with good logic

“Analytics on its own won’t impress anybody. What it does is help you support your own ideas and decisions, which in turn improves the perception of your work among the people you need to continuously impress,” Jeff concluded.

A Real-World Case for Higher Ed Logic

A school approached us with a financial aid hypothesis they were nervous to implement: increase enrollment by increasing gift aid to students with higher need while decreasing merit-only scholarships to students without need.

The Othot model said it was possible and the school chose the most aggressive option.

On deposit deadline day, enrollment dramatically increased, but the discount rate was a little higher and the NTR was a little lower than they’d expected.

At first, they were somewhat disappointed but for the next year, **they didn’t change it.**

Why? Because the logic that supported their decision was really strong. Just ask their now-former VP of enrollment who was hired soon after as president of another college.

To learn more about advanced analytics, [click here](#)

View the full presentation from this session [here](#)