

# DATA LEADERS WHO'S WHO

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DRIVING INNOVATION WITH DATA

## Featured in this week's interview

Silvio Giorgio from Australia Post on Making  
Magic with Data

TECHNOLOGY

# Editors note

*"We are excited to bring you the Data Leaders Who's Who, 2021. This publication is a collection of stories from the frontline - thought leadership from data chiefs who are driving change and making an impact with data. We extend our sincere thanks to the leaders featured for contributing to this initiative and sharing their insights with our audiences in support of lifting the data capability of the community."*

James Lecoutre, Partner, Talent Insights | Felipe Flores, Founder, Data Futurology



# MAKING MAGIC WITH DATA



## SILVIO GIORGIO

GM Data Science

Australia Post

Australia Post's developments in data and AI have received much acclaim of late. Most recently "Happy Post" was awarded the winner for customer excellence in the 2021 World Post & Parcel Awards. Meeting with Silvio, it quickly becomes clear his ability to share his vision for making magic with data at Australia Post is key to affecting change.

**Silvio, you are passionate about lifting the data capability of the organisation as a whole, whilst keeping your data science team small and nimble so they are always on the edge of data projects.**

**Can you explain how you have organised your analytics function at Australia Post and the rationale for setting it up that way?**

Hi there, it's a pleasure to engage with you and your readers. I get asked this question a lot, so much so I wonder if people don't believe how successful our approach actually was – and still is.

Data Science was founded by merging two analytics teams at Australia Post. At that time, we operated a fragmented 'decentralised' model – where analytics teams operated within their own businesses, using their own assets without much collaboration and – I was to learn later – without much sophistication.

One thing was clear to me as the founder of this capability, I didn't want to compete with other analytics teams. Establishing a central Data Science team created an opportunity to simultaneously stimulate collaboration and lift the capability of all teams whilst delivering for Australia Post.

We opted for a federated model – where we were to operate as a central team with a different remit to those of other teams. We defined our role as solely operating in very advanced analytics and only with converged datasets. If an initiative only required data from one business and we had the capability in that federated team, we would defer to them.

"We don't do mediocrity".

Data Science would only operate on the edges of analytics and intelligence. The expectation we set with the team was that we would be the best intelligence capability at Australia Post AND we had to share with other teams – both data and knowledge.

But the expectation of being the best never went away.

What this meant was that once we shared our data or knowledge with another team, we could move on to something closer to the edge.

We lifted. Everyone lifted. Australia Post benefited.

**How have you made this work so successfully?**

Success is measured in different ways and should be considered within context.

Our success has been measured not only by the value we create but also – as we were probably a little late to the party – by the speed of our progression. Here are some of the ways we made it work at Australia Post.

**WE FIRST STOP, THEN WE START:**

We stopped all work without clear benefits and that wasn't going to blow our socks off. We stopped all reporting. No more dashboards. Dashboards don't deliver outcomes. We were going to specialise in advanced data intelligence – do magic with data – on converged datasets.

**WE GET OUT THERE:**

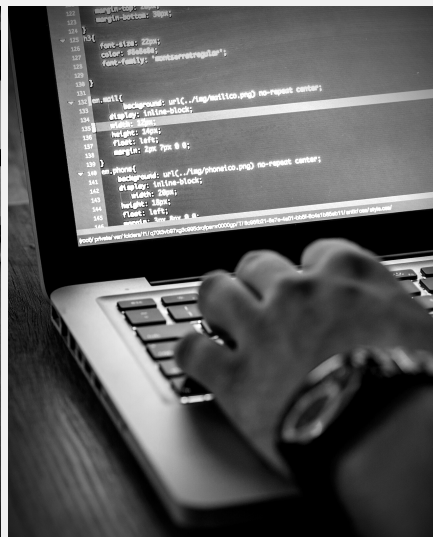
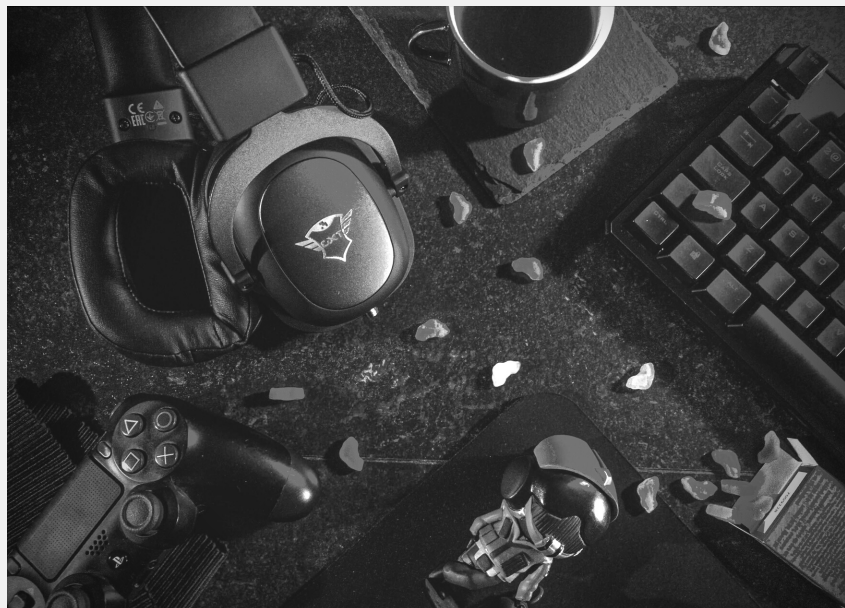
It's very difficult to learn about a business from head office, let alone make credible recommendations. We get out into the field often, mix it with our amazing people who deliver for millions of Australians. We're not the best at it, but we're learning a lot and seeing more of the business in the data.

**WE ARE CLEAR ABOUT OUR PURPOSE:**

We exist to generate value in business outcomes by improving safety for our people, service and experience for our customers, and commercial outcomes for our government and ultimately Australian Citizen shareholders.

**WE SET A VISION, A STRATEGY AND A BAR:**

Our data to insight to intervention strategy set a clear destination towards AI enabled intervention, and a path to get there from data. Our bar is high. Our goal is to be the best data intelligence team in the country. No small feat. But a high bar is not enough. We need to help others lift. We help other analytical teams lift their data capability and share all our knowledge so we can move onto what's next. We all grow using this approach.



***“OUR DATA TO INSIGHT TO INTERVENTION STRATEGY SET A CLEAR DESTINATION TOWARDS AI ENABLED INTERVENTION, AND A PATH TO GET THERE FROM DATA.”***

**WE DESIGN OUR BRAND:**

Most businesses are deliberate about the brand they want to have in the market. We took a similar approach. Every year we set the three words we want to be known for at Australia Post, and we live by them. We want people we engage with to use those words to describe us, based on their experience with us.

**WE HAVE FUN:**

Our job is to inspire the art of the possible through data intelligence. Enjoy exploration, use our creativity, bring our consumer technology and gaming experiences to the business world, and above all make people smile. One way we do this is through the naming of our assets. No acronyms. They're not fun.



**What are the biggest challenges when educating business users on data science?**

As consumers we tend to be open to advanced technologies, many of them disruptive enough to create a change in our behaviour if the benefit is there. In my experience, this doesn't translate to us as employees, so we tend to stick to what works and avoid change. We may not search for new technologies for our business in the same way we do as consumers. Plus, with so many advances in technologies, it's very difficult for people not in the data intelligence field to know what advances are relevant to their business.

People who know me well know I dislike the word 'insight'. I like action. I like outcome. I like experiences. We often get asked for insight – and at the beginning of our journey – for data. People don't ask us for data anymore.

We have built a reputation for coming with better solutions that get the outcome or deliver a better experience. We do this by asking the business a simple question... "what will you do with the data/ insight when you get it?" That is the beginning of a conversation. It leads us to the action. We design solutions that deliver that action using data intelligence. Not just the insight.

**Your work on The Eye – Australia Post's Digital Twin has attracted much media attention. In your opinion why has this project been so pivotal to the delivery experience?**

At Australia Post we feel a strongly about making the eCommerce experience enjoyable and reliable for both consumers and retailers.

We have experienced unprecedented volumes moving through our network and have worked hard to ensure that people have a good experience in their deliveries – no small feat when you're delivering hundreds of millions of parcels a year across the country. However, the concept of the digital twin of the parcel deliveries network was developed in response to a challenge we set ourselves to help us improve the delivery experience for every parcel.

Our business is a physical one, and it's our people that facilitate the delivery experience. Our people are important to us. They are at the heart of how parcels get to you. So, we decided to use ethical artificial intelligence powered by a digital twin to augment our existing infrastructure and help them give their best for our customers every day.

We can utilise artificial intelligence to help us keep things moving seamlessly and intervene when necessary to improve reliability and confidence in our service. For example, we can tell our customers when to expect their parcel with greater precision, or identify bottlenecks in real-time and get parcels back on track if there has been a delay and give you the confidence that we have identified a problem and are on it.

The digital twin will act as the truth; its perspective will see what we cannot see and can help us empower more of our people and communicate to more customers across Australia faster than we can.



**“WE DECIDED TO USE ETHICAL ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE POWERED BY A DIGITAL TWIN TO AUGMENT OUR EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE AND HELP THEM GIVE THEIR BEST FOR OUR CUSTOMERS EVERY DAY.”**



**What work at Australia Post do you most proud of?**

We started our data intelligence journey at Australia Post with a simple question... "Why do people want to become magicians?" It was clear to me, if we wanted to inspire the art of the possible with data intelligence, we needed to do magic with data.

Being named 1st on the 2020 Institute of Analytics Professionals of Australia (IAPA) Top 25 Analytics Leaders in the country is an honour. But more importantly, it's a milestone to a story about how a group of talented data scientists have inspired an organisation with what data can do.

Watching them inspire everyone is some of the best magic I've ever seen. They inspire me to be my best every day.

I am proud of them. I'm proud of their work.

Our data assets are used by hundreds of people in our business, our analytical capability is leading in Australia, and we are pursuing great AI enabled interventions that are improving customer experience and are being recognised in the market. Our Happy Parcel, data intelligent enabled solution was recently awarded the 2021 World Post and Parcel Awards winner for Customer Excellence.

What I'm most proud of are the things we are working on that our customers are yet to see.

Australia Post provides a great service to our customers, but there is more to do.

With the help of data intelligence, we can delight more Australians who are shopping online more often.

**"IT WAS CLEAR TO ME, IF WE WANTED TO INSPIRE THE ART OF THE POSSIBLE WITH DATA INTELLIGENCE, WE NEEDED TO DO MAGIC WITH DATA."**

