

Business Intelligence, Analytics, Digital Transformation Dominate Discussion at the 2018 Business Strategies Roundtable

MINNEAPOLIS, MINN., UNITED STATES, May 31, 2018 /EINPresswire.com/ -- On May 23, over 120 members of the local Twin Cities business community gathered at the Metropolitan Ballroom in Golden Valley to explore how business intelligence (BI) empowers strategy, as part of the fourth-annual Small Business Strategies Roundtable. [Jason Muhlstein](#), Twin Cities Market Leader for Wipfli LLP (Wipfli), moderated the hour-long panel discussion, and [Patrick Brault](#), CPA, CTFA, principal and regional director for Wipfli Hewins Investment Advisors, LLC (Wipfli Hewins) in the Twin Cities, served as the emcee.

Conversation centered around some of the most talked-about topics in technology today, like artificial intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things (IoT) and the role of big data in business. Much ink has been spilled over the “digital disruption,” and there’s no question that these advances are more than just hype — they have the potential to fundamentally change business, commerce and everyday life as we know it.

But what about the local small business owner, often called the “lifeblood” of our economy? How can this essential community leverage an increasingly data-driven culture to grow, scale and better serve their customers? The panel, which was made up of four, esteemed local business leaders, shared valuable advice for how they leveraged BI, analytics and other tools to drive strategy, measure performance and take their companies to the next level. The group included:

- * Austin Coleman, Data and AI Solutions Sales Lead at Microsoft
- * Bonnie Holub, PhD, Data Analysis and AI Thought Leader, and Advisory Board Member with the University of St. Thomas and University of Minnesota
- * Mike Mathews, senior vice president and chief information officer at Deluxe
- * Mitch Helgersen, senior vice president of Marketing and Ticket Sales for the Minnesota Wild

From navigating a small business team, to leading international company initiatives, to exploring what is on the horizon for BI, the panelists’ diverse experience, industries and areas of focus provided a robust and rounded discussion, which was followed by a Q&A with the engaged audience. Each panelist provided tangible examples of how data about business processes and performance can foster growth, as well as the challenges that can present themselves along the way. “You have to be careful not to find yourselves in a ‘data basement,’” said Mathews. “Without knowing what you are looking for, a company can find itself with a ton of information they don’t know what to do with and it becomes stale.”

Helgersen furthered this thinking through his experience with earning increased buy-in from



stakeholders through results. “With the right data and insights, you can measure, demand and determine ‘the why’ behind pursuing a strategy, versus just a gut feeling,” he explained.

The group also addressed the common misconception that competitive BI is only accessible to Fortune 500 companies and large corporations. It’s quite the contrary, said Coleman, who ran a small manufacturing business in the late 1980s, prior to joining Microsoft. “This is the first time in the industrial age that size really doesn’t matter when it comes to your ability to access this type of computing and data,” he said, citing supply chain management as an example in which technologies like AI and IoT can troubleshoot process breakdowns, allowing owners to take back valuable time, money and resources.

Looking beyond the external impact, Holub cited recruiting as another key area in which owners could leverage new technologies to attract the next generation of employees and retain top talent. Her vast industry and academic experience allowed her to provide a unique perspective on the use of these technologies in the field and how they’ll benefit businesses in the future.

A key takeaway from the panel was put forth by Mathews, who encouraged business owners not to discount the impact these technologies can have on their future success and scalability. “Business intelligence is not IT — think of it as the new fuel to propel your growth trajectory and help you do business better. It is a data journey, and you are already on it.”

The 2018 Small Business Strategies Roundtable was co-sponsored by Wipfli, Wipfli Hewins, Messerli & Kramer and the Opus College of Business at the University of St. Thomas. [Twin Cities Business Magazine](#) was the media sponsor.

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