**Measured Opinions #4: What makes a good Analytics Consultant?**

[00:00:17] **Dan:** Hello, and thanks for joining us in The Measure Pod, a podcast for analytics enthusiasts where we dig into different topics each week and try and have a little fun along the way. I am not Dara, as you probably can tell. This time it's me in the driving seat Dan, I'm a lead analytics consultant at Measurelab. And I am joined this week by Measurelab's MD, Dara. What have you been up to?

[00:00:36] **Dara:** Hey Dan, feels strange sitting in the guest seat. Well apart from getting to sit back and let you do all the hard work hosting this week, something else I've been looking at is something called Officevibe. Officevibe sends out a survey to everyone in the company each week and ask some questions around different things from company vision through to relationship with peers and it also has a feedback tool. So I've been spending quite a bit of time speaking to people anonymously through the tool and also looking at the stats and looking at the areas that are doing well and the areas that maybe have some room for improvement.

[00:01:07] **Dan:** Great. I'm glad I made sure that all my feedback is marked anonymous then.

[00:01:11] **Dara:** Oh, I know who you are Dan.

[00:01:13] **Dan:** You can probably tell from all the grammar mistakes and the spelling issues.

[00:01:17] **Dara:** So what about you, Dan? What have you been up to.

[00:01:19] **Dan:** Well, the thing of note really was a webinar I joined last week from Peter O'Neil of ZHS Orchards. And it was really interesting. It was an amazing webinar and a really good way of thinking about analytics tools. The topic was on the quadfurcation of digital analytics tools. I'm told that that is a real word and not a made up word. When they go through loads of different examples, including Universal Analytics and GA4 and how they can be split into these four layers and how at each layer there's a different application and a different use case. It's really fascinating. I'll link off to the recording on their blog. It was really fun and there's the next one in a couple of weeks and I'll be going to that one as well.

[00:01:56] **Dara:** Appreciate the heads up on this, I'll join it myself. If it's Peter O'Neil then you can guarantee it's going to be really top-notch quality. So this week we're going to talk about what makes a good analytics consultant.

[00:02:08] **Dan:** Great, so let's start right at the beginning and maybe touch on what is an analytics consultant?

[00:02:13] **Dara:** Yeah, good question Dan. For different companies is probably gonna be a slightly different answer. So I'll answer from our perspective. So we are an analytics consultancy at Measurelab. For me an analytics consultant is somebody who is working closely with a client proposing analytics solutions and working with specialists to see those analytics solutions implemented. It's taking their business requirements and translating them into analytics solutions.

[00:02:39] **Dan:** That sounds good, at least I'm in the right job, then. So why are we in a position to be able to answer this?

[00:02:43] **Dara:** Well first and foremost, because it's what we do, and it's all we do. So we're not offering analytics consultancy as part of a bigger range of services. We've been doing it for a long time. So at Measurelab for coming up on eight years now. But even prior to that, it's what I was doing in my previous role as well. I've been an analytics consultant. So I feel like that qualifies me. And I'm not big on myself up by saying that because I've learned from my own mistakes along the way as well. I feel like I've got a good sense of what makes a good analytics consultant from, as I say, having been one and also from having worked with lots of people over the years who make good analytics consults.

[00:03:23] **Dan:** So I know that we're always looking for the right people. When you're running an interview for an analytics consultant, where do you start? What kind of questions do you ask to see if they would make a good analytics consultant or analytics nerd just like us?

[00:03:36] **Dara:** Yeah, you're right we are actively recruiting. And even when we're not, we tend to be keeping our ear to the ground. As you know Dan, the industry changes over time. So probably rather than getting into too many of the specifics around whatever the technology or the tool of choice is at the time. It's probably more useful to zoom out a level, and the angle I'm usually taking in an interview is to try and understand how they approach problems, what kind of communicator they are. Because I think to be a good analytics consultant, obviously you need to have product knowledge, but the products change over time and that can be learned on the job. So if you, for example, have worked with Adobe Analytics and the role involves you're working with Google Analytics, that's transferable knowledge, you can pick that up. I tend to be looking more for things like problem solving abilities, communication style, the ability to think as side of the box, or let me put that another way. So as you know, working in analytics, it's never easy. So you're often having to come up with work arounds. You're often having to deal with data issues, requirements might change, the website or the app you're tracking might change, code releases might break the tracking, you might have gaps in the data. So you're always having to work around problems. So I think you need to have some tenacity and you need to be willing to deal with deal with challenges as they arise and be able to adapt and respond to those challenges and not lose your cool or lose your motivation.

[00:05:03] **Dan:** That's really interesting. Something that I've always thought about as being an important trait from my side, it is really just about problem solving. If you're interested in solving problems, you'll figure it out. And it's really more around figuring out solutions rather than knowing the solution already. And ultimately just have that hunger, right? That desire to solve problems. Maybe I'm speaking more of myself than anyone else. I don't know if that rings true for you.

[00:05:25] **Dara:** No, I think you're absolutely right, I think it's curiosity. And we at Measurelab we've got four core company values and curiosity is one of those. It's a willingness and a desire to think about problems to look for solutions. And it's that willingness to solve problems that haven't been solved before or solve them in novel ways or different ways. And you know, no two problems are the same. And even if we see the same issues with analytics implementations, or we see the same difficulties with trying to work with multiple data sources, It never tends to be exactly the same. So you've got to be able to, as I said earlier, deal with the problems as they arise and you've got to be able to adapt and persevere.

[00:06:07] **Dan:** So let's change gears slightly. And something that I thought would be really fun to ask is, what are those things people that might be looking for an analytics job might think is really important, but actually isn't so much?

[00:06:19] **Dara:** Well, we kind of touched on this already in that the specific product knowledge is probably less important than people might think. Doesn't mean it's not important, obviously it is hugely important. But as I said earlier, they're the skills that can get picked up by the right people. So it's actually less about knowledge of using a specific tool and more about knowing how to work with data, how to interpret it, how to separate the signal from the noise and be able to communicate that back effectively and either provide a solution or provide an answer or a recommendation. Because that's what it boils down to as an analytics consultant is you're helping to inform the clients that you're working with. You're helping them to make the right decisions based on the data that's available and based on your experience and your knowledge. So, communication is another key skill, and it's communicating in potentially multiple languages. And what I mean by that is technical language and business language. It's that ability to join the dots between a business problem and an analytical solution.

[00:07:22] **Dan:** So is that data literacy more than anything around working with data and being comfortable in the unknown, which we'll probably identify with. All right, so one more question, what is a red flag? When you were speaking with someone and you're trying to suss out if they're can make a good fit, what are the red flags that might identify that maybe they don't, or maybe they're not going to be such a great fit for us or in general as an analytics consultant?

[00:07:46] **Dara:** I think one of the first things that comes to mind for me is is seeing how a person responds when they are asked a question that they don't immediately know the answer to. So if somebody just shuts down and doesn't try and think about the question or try and propose an answer or try and think it through on the spot, that might indicate that they don't have that tenacity. Or if somebody isn't maybe ask you a question back to further clarify, then that might suggest that they don't have that curiosity. If you're interviewing somebody, you're speaking to them for the first time, you're trying to get a sense of how they think you're trying to get a sense of how they respond when maybe they're under a little bit of pressure. Because when you're in a client facing role and you're in a consultant role, you have to be able to respond under pressure. It absolutely doesn't mean you need to know the right answer because often we don't, and it's that ability to feel a little comfortable in the unknown and be able to confidently say, I don't know the answer but I can think it through. Or I have the resources at my disposal to look it up or to ask somebody or to spend some time on it and try and crack it myself and try and figure it out. So in terms of a red flag, I think that would be the number one. If somebody was unable to demonstrate that they have a willingness and an ability to think about a problem, and if they don't know the answer that they would have the means to go and figure it out.

[00:09:07] **Dan:** I know that in my career, very least, learning to say I don't know was something I learned the hard way. And it's almost very freeing when you're able to say to someone, I don't know, I'm sorry, but we'll find out. And it's such a lovely feeling to be able to do that rather than putting yourself in an awkward position to try and rack your brains, to come up with a solution or an answer there and then. And it's also one of those things that no one can ever argue with right? If you don't know, you don't know. But you have methods, means or you can go away and think about a solution and get an answer for them. I think that's one of the most important lessons I've ever learned in this industry. So Dara we've already mentioned our company values, and I think you've already touched on two of those. Those are tenacity and curiosity. I think it's probably worth just mentioning the rest of them just to cover all bases and tell people what we hold ourselves to. Not just people we're speaking to for the first time, but all of us as well.

[00:09:58] **Dara:** Yeah, I think the two that we've covered so far curiosity and tenacity, they're probably the two that would be pretty universal. The two others that are especially important to us are integrity and compassion. So with integrity, it's effectively us saying we'll do the best that we can. We're transparent. We're honest. We work hard if we don't know the answer, like you were saying a minute ago, we'll say we don't know, but we have the means to go and find out. And compassion is about treating our colleagues, treating our clients with respect. And it's assuming that everybody is trying their best and that it's okay to make mistakes. Analytics as an industry is changing, the technology is changing. The approaches are changing, so we have to be respectful to each other and we have to try and create a culture where people feel they have the environments where they can feel safe, making mistakes and learning from those mistakes.

[00:10:53] **Dan:** Great, thanks Dara. Well, I suppose it's my job to try and wrap this up in a neat little bow. And I think it all comes down actually to those four company values that we've adopted over the many years. So starting with integrity, it doesn't take much explaining it's just about doing the right thing. Be honest with each other and do what is best for each other and our clients. For tenacity, it's all about solving problems. We all love solving problems, that's why we work in analytics. And by helping each other do that, we'll all be better for it. And then compassion, it's about respecting each other. We always assume everyone is doing their best. You never know what people are battling or fighting behind closed doors. So just be kind. And finally curiosity, we want people who are fascinated by analytics and this world that we're in, and that are hungry to learn more about it. Not just about technology we're using, but how it can be applied in a real life situation. So I think that about covers it, the lessons we've learned through many successes and some mistakes along the way of what makes a good consultant in this analytics space. And we've managed to boil it down to those four values. So Dara, outside of this weird and wonderful world of analytics, what have you been up to, to get away from it all?

[00:12:01] **Dara:** I've been running a lot. So my biggest hobby outside of work is long distance running. I find it a really great way of switching off, especially when you sit at a computer screen all day long. It's nice to get outside and it gives me good thinking time and lets me decompress at the end of a busy day. What about you? What have you been up to?

[00:12:19] **Dan:** Well, I'm actually going to rehash something I said on a previous episode, but slightly different. So the Olympics has just wrapped up and I thought it'd be worth mentioning that there was another skateboarding event that I watched and this time Great Britain came out with a bronze medal, and that was from Sky Brown in the women's park competition. And it was just an amazing watch. I highly recommend anyone that's interested in skateboarding and even not that interested in skateboarding to watch a bunch of people skating in the sun, having a great time. And of course, GB getting third place and coming away with that bronze medal. All right. Well, I think that's quite enough for this week. So if you want to find out more, you can go over to measurelab.co.uk, or you can even email hello@measurelab.co.uk with any questions that you want to ask, or if you want to suggest the next topic to me and Dara. So join us next time for more analytics chit chat. I've been Dan, joined by Dara. So it's by for me.

[00:13:07] **Dara:** And buy from me.

[00:13:08] **Dan:** See you next time.

[00:13:26] **Dara:** Cool, have a nice evening.

[00:13:27] **Dan:** You too mate, bye.

[00:13:28] **Dara:** See ya.

[00:13:28] **Dan:** Bye