

# PEDESTAL PULSE



**PEDESTAL TECHNOLOGY**

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Welcome to Pedestal Pulse! This quick and easy newsletter provides insight on the latest industry trends, tips & information – all focused on helping you make the best decisions for your company.



## Why BI Isn't a Technology Issue

By: Jonathan Fowler, Pedestal's Chief Data & Analytics Officer (Part 1 in a Series)



Companies and organizations in the early stages of business intelligence maturity can fall into the trap of assuming BI and analytics efforts are a matter of technology first.

### What's wrong with this picture?

No one in the room has asked what the analytics efforts are supposed to achieve for the customers, what data will be reported in the visualizations, or whether the data environment at present can support an analytics solution.

Now imagine a third employee in the room raising these issues:

**Employee 3:** "I'm excited to start this project, but shouldn't we step back and make sure we have the right infrastructure first?"

I mean, we have issues month to month with being able to validate numbers. Beyond all that, we don't know how these visualizations are supposed to help customers. We would be presumptuous to just throw dashboards at them."

**Manager:** "We don't have time to do that. Our focus is on billable work, and we should be able to figure out what everyone else wants on our own."

In these instances, discussion of BI goals revolves around the tools necessary to get the job done, and the goals are assumed to be short-term and exclusive to the IT domain.

Imagine this conversation at Acme Widgets Corporation:

**Manager:** "We need to get into advanced analytics for our customers."

**Employee 1:** "We have SQL Server Reporting Services and the analytics available in Excel."

**Manager:** "Sure, but I mean next-generation stuff with dashboards and visualizations."

**Employee 2:** "Oh, like Tableau or Power BI. I think SAS is even more robust."

**Manager:** "Yep, like that. Ask IT what we can get licensed. I'd like to see some dashboards by end of quarter."

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### About Pedestal Technology

Pedestal, a woman/minority-owned business, is a leading information technology service provider. We specialize in infrastructure, security, business intelligence and data analytics. Our experienced technology experts design, deploy and manage IT products and services. Visit us at [pedestaltechnology.com](http://pedestaltechnology.com) or [learn more here](#).

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# Why BI Isn't a Technology Issue

Employee 3 has a broader view of this effort and understands the old GIGO adage of database development: **garbage in, garbage out.**



Acme isn't ready to engage an analytics solution. The others in the room are focused on a specific technology package and somehow assume it will make them much more effective and productive without actually defining what the needs are or making sure the existing environment would support it.

Unfortunately, these conversations happen often, and Employee 3's voice is ignored for the sake of "just getting it done." Conventional wisdom at Acme rewards staying focused on billable work. Anything that involves taking the foot off the gas and evaluating where the work efforts are going (and why they matter) is frowned upon

## What will happen?

In this case, Acme will license a very capable analytics solution. Someone will be tasked with learning it. A few dashboards will be made without any real stakeholder input, and the analytics initiative will be underutilized. Ultimately, Acme will question why such an effort was made to begin with, and "analytics" will carry a negative stigma within the corporation.

This is a symptom of seeing BI as a technology issue rather than a cultural one. This view is tempting, to be sure. There are plenty of capable and sophisticated BI software solutions available, and used properly, they can be critical pieces of an organization's data environment.

However, it takes more than adding a software package to make meaningful sense of an organization's data. In our next installment, we will look at the importance and characteristics of a data-centric culture. The Data Science & Analytics team at Pedestal operates on this philosophy, and developers such as Subha Ganapathi (our featured profile this month) demonstrates that every day.

*Jonathan has 15+ years' experience in the analytics and data science field. He has held long-term positions with companies in Upstate SC and the Charlotte, NC metro region, in capacities ranging from database administrator to senior BI developer and team lead.*

*He also has a wealth of experience teaching data science and analytics in institutions and organizations such as Northeastern University, ITT Technical Institute, and the Charlotte chapter of Girl Develop IT.*

## Meet the Pedestal Team

In our last issue, we introduced you to Nancy Rice, Pedestal's Operations Leader. Today, we'd like you to get to know another one of our powerhouse women – Subha Ganapathi – who is changing the IT industry one data point at a time.

Subha is Pedestal's Business Intelligence Developer, performing ETL development, database management and reporting. As she puts it, "just as a plumber ensures the plumbing pipelines in a house are intact; I ensure that data pipelines are intact." Additionally, she creates reports that help companies track their financials and stay informed.



She has spent over 6 years in the IT industry, performing a variety of roles including Data Science Engineer, Technical Writer, QA tester/certifier and SEO Analyst. Prior to joining Pedestal, she worked as a Specialist with Charter Communications providing customer insights via reporting and analytics. Earlier, she worked as a Senior Data Science Engineer with Robert Bosch Engineering and Business Solutions where she was involved in Data Modeling and Visualization.

Subha holds a bachelor's degree in Instrumentation Engineering and a master's degree in Industrial Engineering. She also has a Post Graduate Certificate in Business Analytics endorsed by IBM.

In her free time, she likes to read quick-help books and works of fiction. She also loves music, yoga, hiking, visiting new places and learning new cultures.

# Scaling Up – Are You a Gazelle?

The latest “must read” pick from our CEO Jay McDougall is “Scaling Up: How a Few Companies Make It...and Why the Rest Don’t (Rockefeller Habits 2.0)” by Verne Harnish. According to Jay, this book is a critical tool for any leader looking to take their business to the next level. Here’s some of the key takeaways:

Only 1% of all American start-up companies ever exceed \$1 million in revenue. Of the 1%, only .3 of this small group reach \$10MM in sales. And, of these lucky few, a very small group turn into “gazelles” – fast-growing companies which account for almost ALL the nation’s job growth and innovation.

Gazelles focus on improving “people, strategy, execution and cash.” For companies just starting out, the most pressing of the four areas is the same – cash. Which means the company leaders need to work across the business to sell and then invest that money in the most important part of any business - the people - who will execute on the tactical aspect of the companies’ strategies.

## For Pedestal this strategy extends into how we work for our customers

1. Develop technology solutions that create positive outcomes for our customers (and their employees).
2. These solutions have a clear business case of any technology purchase made by a customer. Any purchase should:
  - Create savings through operational benefits
  - Generate new business opportunities through the technology enhancements
  - Reduce the risk to the business, which can translate into happier employees and less turnover, securing keys data assets
3. Understand the accountability for the companies’ processes, along with those that share in the responsibility for the success. Most owners think accountability means authority and final decision. This is not the case, accountability is ownership and everyone likes to be an owner. The authority still lies with the senior management team, the ownership lies with the employees. This makes for creating great leaders as you scale the business.

## Leadership Corner

Jay McDougall, Pedestal’s CEO, has another great reading recommendation for you. This time, he has selected a book that he believes can be a huge game changer for any company looking to scale and grow. Be sure to check it out!

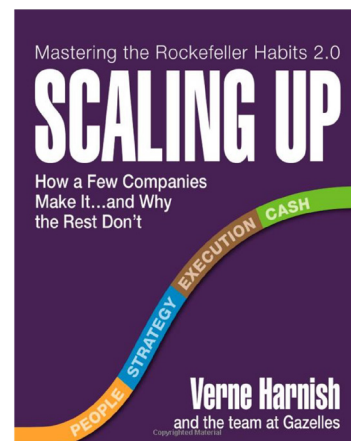


Scaling Up: How a Few Companies Make it... and Why the Rest Don’t (Rockefeller Habits 2.0)”

By Verne Harnish

The biggest learning is that it’s worth the time and energy to hire the people who fit your company culture. It’s critical to believe in the strategy, communicate all the goals and how all the employees’ work effects and creates success.

All of this allows for ownership throughout the organization and employees who feel they are creating the culture and understand their value.



## Here’s a few other gems I garnered from this book:

- Every goal must be attached to a person who is accountable for it.
- Each goal aligns to a value. Every employee must know and live company values. Focus on cash and cash flow – the most critical elements of growth. Gazelle leaders appreciate their teams, delegate broadly and use data to make better predictions and decisions.

## So, the question is – are you a Gazelle? And if not, what should you be doing to become one?

Please feel free to give me a shout to discuss - either at: [jmcdougall@pedestaltechnology.com](mailto:jmcdougall@pedestaltechnology.com) or 203-520-2318.

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