

Does analytics have a role to play in Aluminium?

By **Julie Johnson***

The prevalence of big data and analytics is growing across a seemingly limitless range of industries in the modern world. A post on big data at ReadWrite listed some of the main industries in which we see this occurring – touching on healthcare, retail, telecommunication, manufacturing, fitness, finance, and more. In all of these spaces we see a sensational range of effects that big data and analytics can bring about. But to sum those effects up, we can simply say the following: Data analytics enables businesses and organisations in these spaces to gather information, form insights, and turn those insights into actions with extreme efficiency.

That fundamental function, however complex and variable it may be, speaks to why the analytical process is so broadly useful. Virtually any business or industry can find a way to make use of data and insights at this level. And perhaps unsurprisingly, this includes the aluminium industry.

Big, beautiful data...

First and foremost, modern data analytics can help relevant entities within the aluminum industry to visualise troves of data that as of now can be somewhat dense.

That data can relate to anything from mining conditions and logistical concerns, to product manufacturing and inventory needs, and any number of things in between. With modern analytics though, all of this can be gathered and – more importantly – made sense of. As is pointed out in a piece about “big, beautiful data” on Verizon Connect, one of the true assets of data analytics as we’re coming to know it is that it can turn our information into attention-grabbing, digestible formats. In other words, endless lists of numbers and terms can be automatically converted into clear graphs, charts, and other visualisations. In an industry as sprawling as aluminium, this is invaluable, and can ensure that information that would once



have been overlooked, missed, or simply ignored is now recognised and taken seriously.

That’s the big picture. But it’s also worth considering some of the specific insights data analytics can provide in aluminium that people in the industry might not have been able to take advantage of in years past. We can point to an example, in fact, in a recent blog post citing a YouGov poll about UK consumers’ feelings toward aluminum water cans.

Such cans more or less represent brand new product potential in the aluminium industry, and thanks to survey numbers we now know that some 55% of UK consumers would embrace (and purchase) water in these cans. This is an example of a survey rather than “big data” but it still represents an important idea. The gathering of insights relating to something like consumer preference can produce enough information to actually drive the creation and marketing of new aluminium products.

Finally, data analytics also stands to benefit the aluminium industry by way of

helping with said industry’s digitalisation. This can mean several things, but it’s important to note how important the core concept has become for modern business. In Digitalist’s article on industrial manufacturing, it is noted that 88% of “innovative manufacturers” have started or completed digital transformation – and are typically seeing greater revenue, growth, and profit margin as a result. We tend to think of these terms – innovation and digitalisation – as having to do with the simple implementation of new technology.

But data plays a role as well. It is digital data that improves business supply chains, enables the performance of smarter equipment, and even bring about machine learning to simplify and expedite various internal processes.

How much these ideas apply, and in what ways, depends on the company or entity at hand. But the potential is clear across the industry. It is evident at this point that data and analytics have significant and varied roles to play in the world of aluminium. ■

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