



# A new approach to data analytics

Search-driven analytics puts the power of AI in the hands of even nontechnical employees



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**BLOOMBERG REPORTED THAT** the federal government spent \$2.6 billion on tools to manage, analyze and visualize data in fiscal 2019. Even with that amount of spending, however, agencies are not able to properly leverage their data for informed decision-making and mission effectiveness.

The current process for creating reports and finding insights in data depends on those with technical skills and is complex, slow and inflexible. Reports are often built on an aggregated view of the data, and dashboards rarely address everybody's needs. So users end up with a static snapshot that leaves the next question unanswered.

## The best of both worlds

A key tool in tackling those challenges is natural language search, which we use with Google, Amazon and a host of other tools in our everyday lives to instantly answer a variety of questions. When applied to enterprise datasets, the familiarity of search helps speed decision-making and bridge the talent gap because it reduces the need for training. This, in turn, empowers agency employees to engage with data in a more agile, productive way.

People aren't equipped to manually sift through massive amounts of data to find patterns. But we thrive when it comes to interpreting those patterns and identifying the best path forward. When you augment human skills with technology, you get the best of both worlds.

With search-driven analytics, logisticians could more rapidly prepare for military deployments or humanitarian relief efforts

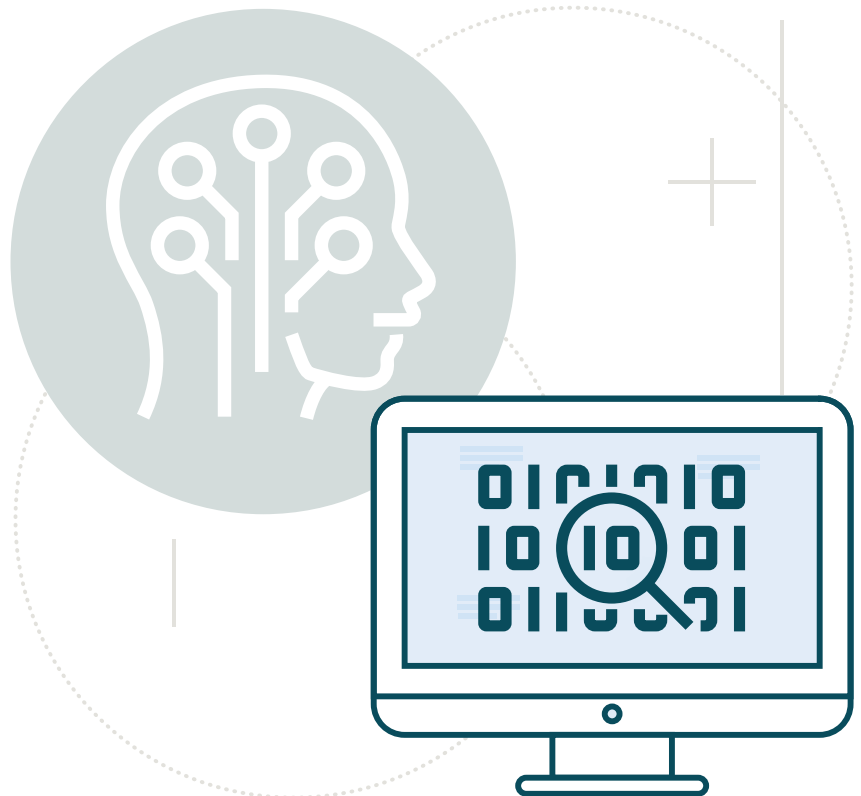
because they can quickly identify where the people with the right skill sets are located and where the equipment is. Combined with their own situational awareness, they can then determine the most efficient way to deploy those resources.

## Using data to solve real-world problems

I'd like to share a story that Jose Arrieta, CIO of the Department of Health and Human Services, often uses to talk about the importance of using data. Imagine a recently divorced mother who lives in rural

upstate New York. When she hurts her back on the job, she's prescribed an opioid. She spirals into opioid addiction, becomes very sick and develops life-threatening sepsis. The small local hospital is unable to treat her so she is airlifted to a larger hospital in a nearby city, and doctors there are forced to put her on an array of harmful drugs to keep her alive while they wait for lab results to confirm the most effective medication.

Now imagine if you incorporate AI into that story. Applying AI to social determinants could have signaled a potential mental health issue, making





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doctors aware that their patient might be at risk of opioid abuse before they prescribed the medicine. AI could also analyze other data so the doctors could quickly identify the best treatment before her health deteriorated.

More broadly, AI applied to data, or augmented analytics, can also identify underlying trends in our current opioid crisis and allow officials to react before

a community finds itself in crisis. Using a publicly available Drug Enforcement Administration dataset, ThoughtSpot’s platform took only seven seconds to analyze 21 billion rows of data and identify 17 outliers, including the providers and distributors that had been overprescribing opioids. Imagine the potential for applying this kind of technology not just to DEA data, but to datasets from any agency –

truly allowing users to find that “needle in a haystack.”

With platforms like ThoughtSpot, even nontechnical users can leverage the power of AI to overcome government’s biggest challenges and, in doing so, create a better America for us all. ■

**Monica McEwen** is vice president of public sector at ThoughtSpot.

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