

# ANALYTICAL MIND MAP: THE COLLABORATIVE-INDEPENDENT SPECTRUM

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## Report Highlights

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**Where do analytical minds fall on the spectrum?**

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**What personalities go with what roles?**

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**Pros and cons of collaboration and independence.**

**p7**

**Where to find collaborators and lone wolves.**

This report examines individuals who identified themselves as collaborative or independent in Aberdeen Group's second annual Mind Map survey.

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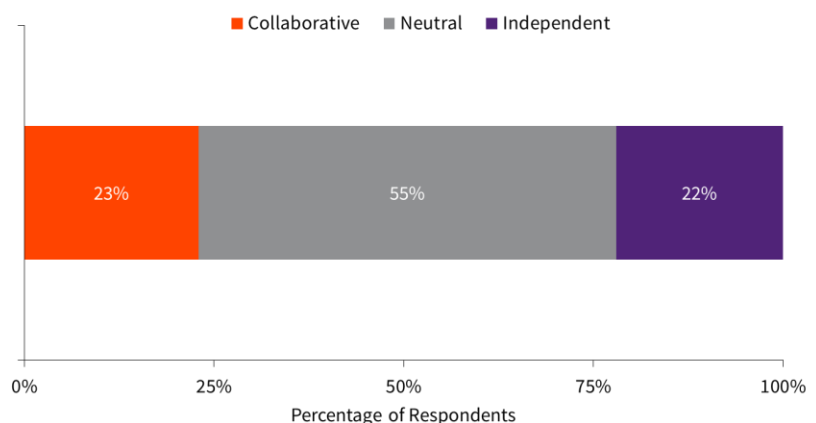
**Some like to share their analytical insights with anyone who will listen. Others do not feel any compulsion to shout their findings from the rooftops.**

Business Intelligence (BI) has a social side. Some like to share their analytical insights with anyone who will listen and, in turn, acquire fresh perspectives on data from a multitude of colleagues. Others prefer to work out the solutions to analytical questions alone, and do not feel any compulsion to shout their findings from the rooftops. Aberdeen Group's 2015 business analytics survey included the second annual Mind Map study, a type of BI personality test. Survey takers self-identified as either collaborative or independent BI users before answering questions about their respective organizations' analytical capabilities and performance. This report will examine the collaborative-independent spectrum, and discuss the affinities and advantages of the two analytical personas.

### Self-Identification

Aberdeen asked survey respondents to place themselves on a spectrum where one end was highly collaborative and the opposite end was purely independent (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: The Collaborative-Independent Spectrum**



n=465

Source: Aberdeen Group, June 2015

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Survey respondents were evenly split between the two extremes of the spectrum, with over half of respondents not strongly identifying as either highly collaborative or independent. Collaborators seek to leverage the analytical work of others as much as possible. They revel in the social capabilities of BI tools and constantly engage their colleagues to hone their understanding of data. They are also eager to share their own findings with anyone they think might benefit. Highly independent individuals are not statistical shut-ins by any means, but they prefer to work alone when engaging data. They may respect the analysis and opinions of others but, ultimately, do not like to muddle their analytical process with outside influence. They also do not insert themselves or their findings into anybody else's work. Their data fuels their analysis to help them perform their jobs. To be clear, Aberdeen views all analytical personalities as equally valid for achieving the goal of generating insights. The 55% of respondents, who identified as neutral, show that many BI users are not collaborative or independent all the time. Many neutral respondents may want to be more collaborative, but lack the supporting technology. Or perhaps they are independent by nature but the demands of their job role forces them to be collaborative.

#### Collaboration and Independence at All Levels

Collaborative and independent thinkers can be found at all levels of the organization (Figure 2). A greater percentage of line-of-business users that answered the survey were highly collaborative. Colleagues in the line-of-business share valuable data sources that they've tapped into. A powerful visualization created by a single user can spread like wildfire and provide value to an entire department. Savvy line-of-business users also recognize how they can benefit from the analytical work of other departments.

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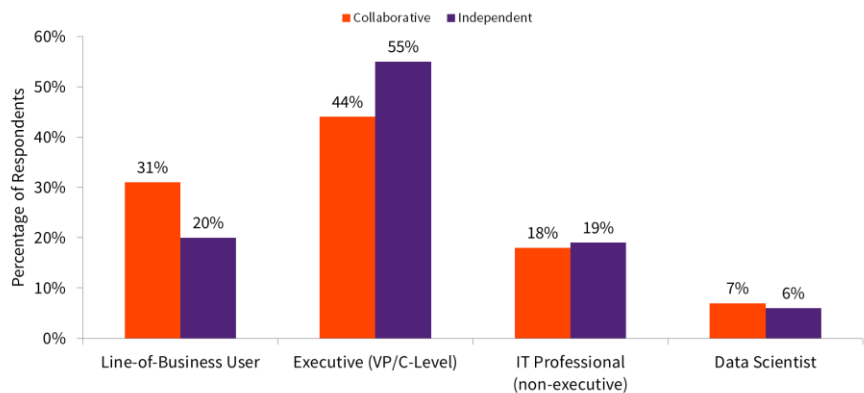


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**A greater percentage of line-of-business users that answered the survey were highly collaborative.**

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**Figure 2: The Distribution of Analytical Minds**

n=194

Source: Aberdeen Group, June 2015

**Apparently it can get lonely at the top, as executives across all departments were more likely to be independent than collaborative.**

Apparently it can get lonely at the top, as executives across all departments were more likely to be independent than collaborative. Many executives like to simply engage dashboards or reports that cover the metrics they are responsible for. They get the information they need, perform any necessary analysis, and make decisions, all with minimal collaboration. Executives may also be working with proprietary information that cannot be shared. Their elevated position forces them to carefully consider the sensitivity of their information and makes them more hesitant to collaborate. Still, a great deal of executives are highly collaborative and benefit from the perspectives of their peers and those they manage.

IT staffs are made up of equal parts in regards to collaborators and lone wolves. Many IT personnel are most comfortable focusing on their purview and quietly handling the analytical demands of their respective job roles. Others want to be constantly plugged in to the struggles and triumphs of the user base, and work with all manner of users to offer suggestions and

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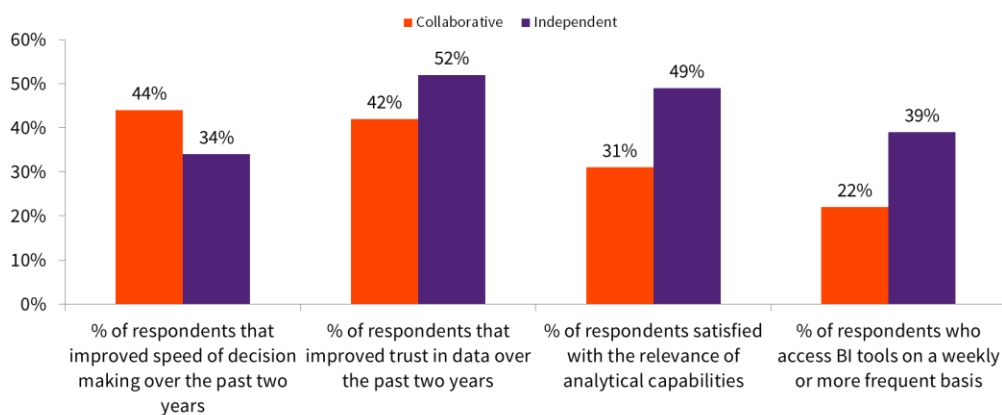
kickstart new analytical initiatives. The data scientists who answered the survey fell on both ends of the spectrum. Some like to constantly bounce their ideas off of others; they keep their ear to the ground to understand the needs of the organization and work closely with other analytical minds. Other data scientists prefer the ivory tower; their approach is to avoid the clutter of thinking of others.

### Better to be Collaborative or Independent?

Both the collaborative and the independent are equally well-suited to the challenge of converting data into insights. However, there are some areas where one end of the spectrum holds an advantage over the other (Figure 3). Collaborators are 29% more likely than highly independent individuals to report an improvement in the speed of decision making over the past two years. Collaborators can save time by drawing heavily from the analytical work of others. Independent analysts feel the need to work problems out for themselves before acting.

**Collaborators can save time by drawing heavily from the analytical work of others.**

**Figure 3: Advantages and Disadvantages**



n=194

Source: Aberdeen Group, June 2015

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**An unfortunate byproduct of high levels of collaboration can be statistical noise.**

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Precisely because independent users spend more time performing their own analysis, they are more likely to have improved trust in data over the past two years. Independent users will recognize data quality problems and address them before they skew final analysis. Collaborators have to take on faith that the data and analysis of others truly reflects reality.

Independent users are more likely to be satisfied with the relevance of their analytical capabilities. An unfortunate byproduct of high levels of collaboration can be statistical noise. Collaborative users end up with too much information and lose track of the insights that really matter. Independent users go out and get the exact information they need to do their jobs. They also ignore capabilities in their analytical sandbox that they don't need. Because independent users do everything themselves, they also engage BI tools more often. Collaborative individuals may have insights dropped on their doorstep, while the highly independent have to engage tools to create every scrap of valuable analysis they use.

#### Which Job Role is Most Collaborative?

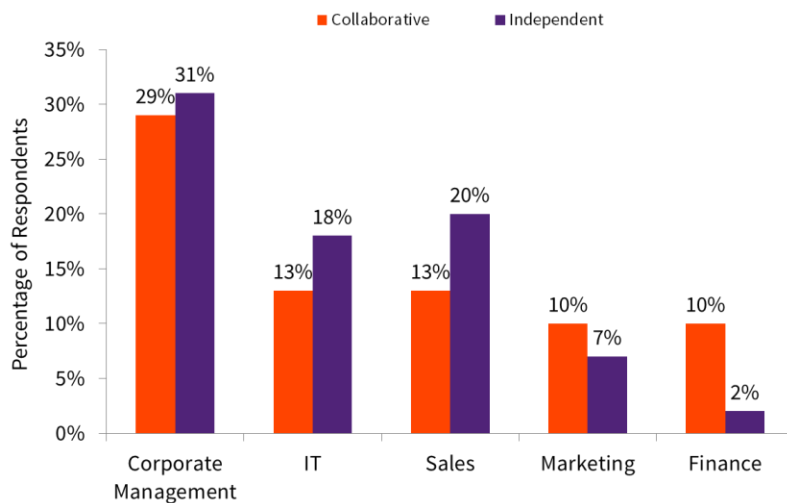
Both the highly collaborative and the highly independent can be found in a variety of job roles, though it seems some functions are better fits for one end of the spectrum or the other (Figure 4). While departmental leaders tend to be more independent, executives in corporate management show that both personas are a valid approach to the analytical demands of a leadership position. However, even leaders who prefer the company of their own thoughts should make some effort to share appropriate insights and enlist outside perspectives. Salespeople as a group are more independent than collaborative. Many view themselves as purely individual contributors. They crunch the numbers on their own that will help them hit their number. [Recent Aberdeen](#)

→ [Related Research:](#)  
“Analytical Mind Map: The Consumer-Creator Spectrum”

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[research](#) found that salespeople are also more likely to be consumers of information, rather than creators of insight.

**Figure 4: Where to Find Collaborative and Independent Thinkers**



n=194

Source: Aberdeen Group, June 2015

When IT leaders are included with general personnel, it appears that IT departments as a whole are comprised of more independent minds than highly collaborative individuals. Marketers are slightly more likely to be collaborative, and Aberdeen found almost no highly independent individuals in finance. Highly collaborative financial analysts will gather all the data and input they need to be sure that the final numbers are comprehensive and correct.

### Key Takeaways

Both the collaborative and the independent can provide enormous value to the analytical efforts of their organizations. It is true that analytical decision making can be hindered by having too many cooks in the kitchen. However, those who work alone miss out on opportunities to reap the benefits of outside

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perspectives and expertise. Self-awareness will help all BI users get the most out of their data and tools:

- **Be who you are.** Aberdeen identified equal parts in regards to collaborative and independent minds in its community. Over half of all respondents did not identify strongly with either end of the spectrum. People should embrace their analytical personality and let it inform how they engage data and what tools and technologies they leverage.
- **Both ends of the spectrums have advantages and disadvantages.** Collaborators are more likely to have improved their speed of decision making. However, independent users are more likely to have improved trust in data. More solitary thinkers are also more satisfied with the relevance of their analytical capabilities and engage BI tools more often.
- **Different roles lean towards either end of the spectrum.** As a whole, line-of-business users are more collaborative than executives. Data scientists are evenly distributed across the spectrum. IT personnel and salespeople tend to be more independent, while marketers and finance professionals are more collaborative.



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For more information on this or other research topics, please visit [www.aberdeen.com](http://www.aberdeen.com).

### Related Research

[\*Analytical Mind Map: The Consumer-Creator Spectrum\*](#); August 2015

[\*Introducing the Analytical Mind Map: The BI Personality Test\*](#); June 2014

[\*Analytical Detectives: Solving Data Mysteries\*](#); June 2014

[\*Analytical Gunslingers: The Quick and the Dead\*](#); June 2015

[\*Analytical Evangelists: Preaching the Gospel of Data-Driven Insight\*](#); February 2015

[\*Analytical Professors: Leverage of the Nerds\*](#); June 2014

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