Box 26: Key Steps to Creating a Data-Enabled Organization

To build a data-enabled organization, a new approach is needed in order to make it easier for people to find, consume and collaborate with data to work towards data intelligence. True data intelligence means any data citizen can uncover and extract the value in data:

1 What does a data-enabled organization look like?

Data-enabled organizations are populated by data citizens – employees who engage with data in any form. Those data citizens should be:

- Collaborating with other groups in the organization around data intelligence
- Participating in internal data intelligence communities
- Embracing key roles such as "data owner" and "data consumer"
- Working comfortably within the data intelligence platform every day
- Adapting to new functionality and tools within the software with some training
- Contributing to the ongoing development of data intelligence within the organization

2 Get a new perspective

To collaborate more effectively across the wider organization, take the time to understand:

- Business objectives your organization [has], how data supports these and which to prioritize
- The history of previous data efforts may have been… across the business
- How your place on the organizational chart impacts your priorities and assumptions
- How these first two factors may shape the way in which your data team may be viewed across the organization
- How those views – both good and bad – may impact your ability to get projects completed
- What you might consider doing to build on +ve factors and help repair –ve ones before beginning engagement

3 Build diversity into your data team

The need for diversity on a data team may not at first seem obvious – surely it would be best to populate the team with data experts, who have come up through technology, right? But...

Often mono-culture data teams struggle to successfully engage with other parts of the business. Look to build a team that is composed of data-oriented people from across the organization. They will bring with them insights into the data issues that both creators and users have within their part of the business. These insights can help the data team meet the needs of the organization more effectively and eliminate issues that arise early on. They will also bring special skill sets – for example, a person from marketing may be able to bring communication skills and resource contacts. In short, diversity will increase the likelihood of success of becoming a data-enabled organization while simultaneously covering risks related to ethics and privacy. This can be particularly true if the team is drawn entirely from IT.

4 Focus on [creating a mixed] Data Council

Diversity is particularly important for the Data Council because it is such an important body within the whole framework. The Data Council provides oversight of the data governance program, including its policies, procedures, and various projects. Make sure that a wide range of key data citizens are a part of this body from the start. It's also a good idea to select individuals who are aligned with the organization's overall business goals. The input and feedback these data citizens can provide will be important information for the data team.

It is also important to invite critical voices to the table. Getting issues and concerns out on the table makes it easier to address and resolve them, helping the team to more successfully deliver data enablement.

Lastly, the Data Council can help transform the all-important "tone from the top" into the right "music in the middle." Having a variety of stakeholders can help ensure that the right data culture is transmitted across the organization.

5 Be flexible

As the data intelligence program evolves and grows within the organization, the change will become necessary. It's important to realize that if you are not open to change, then you have the potential to become the biggest blocker to success.

Certainly, change can be frightening – but the ability to change and adapt is a sign of strength, not weakness. Many seasoned data teams say that in hindsight, their ability to develop was very important to their success. If the business is struggling with a process, a definition doesn't make sense, or another issue arises, engage and be willing to evolve. Being flexible means:

- Modifying policies or processes, when appropriate, to drive business enablement
- Thinking about how to be both considered and nimble when it comes to small changes
- Experimenting with software and setting up a development environment
- Letting key business stakeholders know you have listened and made changes
- Communicating effectively with leadership about the changes being made

6 Evangelize strategically and constructively

To create a data-enabled organization, effective communication is required. The communication will both create the data culture and provide data citizens with important information they will need to do their jobs effectively. Key actions include:

- Building a strong communications strategy
  It's important to put thought into how the data team communicates with the business. Consider creating clear talking points to use. These should both support the type of data culture that you want to create and align with the organization's goals.

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- Having a clear vision or mission
  Having the right statement can help the organization better understand what it is you are here to do. Keep it simple. Use it whenever you engage with data citizens.

- Speaking at every appropriate opportunity
  Keep abreast of internal events and find out if it would be right for the data team to have a speaking slot to introduce the audience to data intelligence.

- Providing lots of training opportunities
  Individuals learn differently. Provide different kinds of training if possible, including classroom/tutorials, online training, videos, and printed materials.

Getting the approach to communications right is important, so take time to design a plan that is right for your organization, and sustainable for your team.

7 Meet the business in the middle
Communicating with the business is enhanced when business approaches are used. They can include:

Doing demos across the business – Demos can be very effective at eliciting engagement, by showing how the software can help individuals in their jobs day-to-day.

Developing "plain English" materials – Use technical writers to develop user guides, functionality guides, change notifications, and capability launches that are easy to understand for the non-IT people among your data citizens.

Focusing on enabling the business to do things for themselves – Show the business how individuals can be empowered by data intelligence. Emphasize the self-service aspects of data intelligence and the opportunities those create for the business.

Creating metrics – Before projects begin, measure key metrics for the business. Then re-measure those metrics at regular points in the project to demonstrate value through improvement.

Having individuals with communications experience – marketing, training, public speaking, etc. – on the data team can be a real asset.

8 Determine how you can help
The road to data intelligence and the development of a truly data-enabled organization requires communication to flow well in both directions. Be proactive in finding out how the journey is going and how it can be improved.

Best practices include:

Asking to be a part of new, offensive business projects – Find out which projects are most critical to the business and ask to attend project meetings as an observer. It may soon become clear that data intelligence can add considerable value, helping to build recognition of data intelligence's contribution to reaching offensive business goals.

Embracing all use cases – While compliance may not be the sexiest term, enabling teams to comply effectively with new data privacy laws, for example, adds real value to the organization.

Holding office hours – Some data teams have members who hold publicized office hours when people from the business can drop by for a chat about issues they are experiencing.

Obtaining feedback from the business – Find out how processes could be improved, training could be more effective, or reports might be more informative, for example. Use surveys, have informal meetings in small groups, or 1-2-1s with data citizens, including business leaders.

By being proactive about asking for feedback, solving data citizen issues, and getting involved in projects that will add value to the business, teams can help ensure they are supporting their organization's data intelligence journey effectively. This approach also removes potential roadblocks to data-enablement, supports positive initiatives, and allows for the spread of best practices.