



It's time to activate your data. Make it Sing

Is your data sitting silent? It's time to make it sing.

Published on September 11, 2021



Dr Fahimeh McGregor (Zaeri)
People + Data + Process = Success IBC | Professional Member

6 articles

+ Follow

Project management data can sit stagnant as idle information. Or it can be enriched to deliver actionable insights.

By collecting the right data and educating your team, you can eliminate waste, boost productivity and even see into the future. Want to learn how?

It's time to activate your data

If you're an organisation that manages large, complex projects, it's likely you don't have a data strategy in place. Ideally, you should have a strategy that unifies your information streams, keeps projects on track and allows you to resolve risks – before they even arise.

If your data is sitting in silos, it may be collected, but is it informing your project operations? Have you implemented data-informed processes to reduce inefficiencies? Are daily tasks aligned to keep your project on track – and within budget?

Even if we collate the right information and run regular reports, too often there's a missing link between raw data and actionable insights.

It's time to activate your data. But don't just make it speak. Make it sing.

See into the future with predictive analysis

When risks surface as a project progresses, teams scramble to implement mitigation strategies – mid-project – that are too narrow in scope and wildly inefficient.

The results are unfortunate, but not surprising: blown out costs, non-compliance and client dissatisfaction.

It's sad to witness because these outcomes are entirely avoidable... *If you utilise predictive analysis.*

With the right insights you can:

- Build in leeway to better account for disruptions
- Plan for poor weather days that might interrupt a construction site
- Calculate the likelihood of feature creep and prepare a comprehensive project scope

The key is to examine the project from every angle to reduce uncertainty – before it has a chance to disrupt our plans.

How? A simple three-step process:

1. Collect the right data to run accurate visualisations
2. Establish processes for people on the ground to collect regular reports as a project progresses – and make it easy for them to do so
3. Feed that data into visual dashboards or simulation programmes to update expected outcomes

By comparing current performance against predicted performance, we can identify and resolve gaps before they worsen. So you can steer the project back on track in real-time.

Eliminate data frustration to boost productivity

Over the past two decades, I've embedded myself in dozens of organisations and talked to thousands of employees. Want to know the biggest factor on productivity?

It isn't just automating a process here or there. It isn't just the tools and technology you use.

For the most part, it's employee frustration.

When there's a lack of data education or too much friction involved, simple things like monthly reporting can become irritating.

When employees start loathing tasks, consider the negative energy they'll bring. To their personal work ethic while also dragging down the collective enthusiasm of the team.

If that's the case, it's time to reassess how you're *educating employees on the value of data.*

I call this 'creating a data comfort zone'.

When a business starts to get data savvy to increase productivity or reduce waste, employees can feel threatened. Like they're being monitored or penalised.

That's why it's crucial to establish data safety. To support teams to freely discuss their challenges – and opportunities – when working with data.

When we use data to remove friction and make people's work easier, they'll become more satisfied. And they'll be *much* more productive too.

Putting it all together: An example

Consider this: You're overseeing a major road works project. You've produced a schedule of delivery, but how will you ensure construction proceeds on time?

Resolving this question is crucial because you won't be on-site every day to see developments for yourself.

The planned schedule needs to be translated into meaningful data points. Consider what information needs to be collected. *Wind speed? The number of workers currently on leave?*

Then we need to educate people to collect the data we seek – and the methods we will use. This might involve running a training session, or building a form or template that staff complete each morning or everyday.

It's crucial we include people on the data journey too.

They're not simply entering numbers at the start of each shift for some office worker. They're helping to *reduce uncertainty and disruptions* on site.

So help them see the big picture behind the data you're asking them to collect. Explain how the data will make their lives easier. Perhaps they'll waste less days in poor weather. Or the project will be better staffed to assist on labour-intensive days.

When we capture and utilise valuable information – in the thick of a project, not simply in theory – we build a robust story of all the variables impacting its delivery.

Elevate your data to new heights

The value of data in keeping projects on track is clear. Want to get started?

Engage a data expert to embed themselves in your organisation and develop a data strategy. While collating and analysing the right data is key, *the strategy needs to be implemented – across your people, your platforms and your processes.*

Because there can be some resistance to change, an external strategist is ideal to work with teams and get them on board to align their mindset.

Once the processes and education have been established, it's time to utilise data products.

To present data in an accessible way – to be understood, actioned and implemented. Because when we do, we can say goodbye to waste, remove stress and keep our projects on schedule.

Remember, your data has insights to share. And it's time to make it sing.