DATA BUSTING ANALYTICS

TURNING COMPLEXITY INTO CLARITY

Data and AI Literacy: The Investment Your Strategy Can't Afford to Ignore

Build, fund and measure data, analytics and AI literacy - and turn data and technology investment into business value.

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A POINT OF VIEW ON WORKFORCE CAPABILITY & BUSINESS VALUE

Many data and AI business cases assume people will work differently. Far fewer make an equivalent commitment to helping them do it.

Organizations invest in platforms, AI, data management and governance. In my experience, the commitment to helping people ask better questions, interpret evidence and apply those capabilities often falls short.

Data, analytics and AI literacy is a business capability. Treating it as optional learning weakens the strategy it is supposed to enable.

> **You cannot credibly call data a strategic asset while treating the ability to use it as a discretionary expense.**

INVEST IN CAPABILITY AND INFORMED JUDGMENT

01 Literacy Belongs in the Business Case

Platforms create possibilities. People turn them into better decisions. A business case that assumes adoption and changed behavior without funding them has left a critical dependency unaddressed.

Excellent engineers, analysts, product owners and governance specialists do not automatically create a data-literate organization. Business teams still need to understand the evidence, ask useful questions and act on it. Fund enablement alongside delivery, with ownership and success measures for both.

If workforce enablement is missing from the business case, the business case is incomplete.

02 Access Is Not Empowerment

A license gives access. Literacy builds the understanding and judgment to use it. Not everyone needs to become a data scientist; everyone needs the skills their decisions require.

DATA LITERACY

Understand definitions, sources, quality and context.

ANALYTICS LITERACY

Frame questions, interpret comparisons and uncertainty, connect findings to decisions.

AI LITERACY

Choose appropriate uses, provide context, evaluate outputs and know when to verify.

Confidence matters when understanding grows with it. A manager who sees sales rising should also ask whether price, volume or mix changed - and whether profit improved.

GENAI INCREASES THE NEED FOR LITERACY

03 Easier Answers Require Better Judgment

GenAI makes analytical exploration more accessible. It also makes incomplete or misleading answers easier to produce. The ability to question an answer becomes more valuable as more people can generate one.

Teach more than prompting: evidence, verification, privacy, uncertainty and responsibility. If AI says a promotion increased sales, ask: compared with what baseline, could seasonality explain it, and did profit improve?

04 Recognition Is Ahead of Investment Priorities

88%

Rated basic data literacy important or very important. [1]

<50%

Said their organizations provided basic data or AI literacy training. [1]

DataCamp / YouGov's 2026 survey of 517 US and UK business leaders highlights the disconnect: basic data literacy is widely valued, yet fewer than half reported foundational data or AI literacy training. [1] Recognizing the need is not the same as enabling the workforce.

Data leadership research reinforces the concern. Informatica surveyed 600 CDOs, CDAOs and chief analytics officers: 75% saw data literacy upskilling needs and 74% saw AI literacy needs. While 86% planned increased data management investment, 39% of that group named literacy / AI fluency a top driver. [3]

Gartner C-level Communities' March 2026 survey ranked data-driven culture second among CDAO priorities. Yet its five leading investment categories centered on AI, governance, analytics platforms, metadata management and cloud infrastructure. [4]

These surveys indicate a potential alignment gap, not the amount spent on literacy. Informatica's 39% applies to organizations increasing investment; it does not mean others invest nothing. Literacy may also be funded within other categories.

UNDERINVESTMENT IS A LEADERSHIP COMMITMENT GAP

05 The Return You Expect Requires a Commitment You Have to Make

Organizations do not need to cut learning to underinvest in it. They can leave budgets flat, make development optional, or offer courses without time to apply them.

A technology investment gets a business case, an executive sponsor and a delivery roadmap. Too often, literacy gets a content library and an invitation. Expectations rise while the commitment to helping people deliver remains insufficient.

The gap appears in superficial tool use, recurring questions, avoidable rework and AI outputs accepted without challenge. These are places to investigate unrealized value.

> **If the business case depends on people working differently, the investment must fund their ability to do so.**

FROM MY EXPERIENCE / TURNING INTEREST INTO APPLICATION

In one organization, I saw strong interest in data, but basic questions remained unanswered: What is available? Where is it? How do I get access? We established a data catalog to improve transparency and discovery.

We grew self-service analytics to more than 60,000 users, supported by community workshops showcasing what was possible and what peers were doing. Seeing another team's work prompted a powerful question: "If they can do that, why aren't we?"

We then introduced in-depth data challenges combining tool training, understanding the data and business-specific learning. Coaches and connections to leaders helped participants develop use-case proposals addressing sustainability, new customer opportunities and supply chain improvements. Learning became a way to explore business opportunities, supported by discovery, community and hands-on practice.

BUILD A CONTINUOUS LEARNING CULTURE

06 Build a Capability, Not a Course Catalog

Build a continuous learning culture. Make learning part of everyday work, with ownership, executive sponsorship and protected practice time. Leaders should model curiosity, welcome questions and encourage sharing lessons from successes and mistakes. Sustain this through coaching, office hours and communities of practice.

Personalize learning; avoid a one-size-fits-all approach. Start with each person's role, current skills, confidence and decisions. Tailor learning paths, examples, pace and support: managers, analysts and executives need different depth and practice. Refresh these paths as skills, tools and business priorities evolve.

Data challenges and hackathons apply learning to business priorities. Provide approved data and tools; have business owners judge evidence and proposed actions. Welcome nontechnical participants and mixed teams.

A CONTINUOUS DEVELOPMENT CYCLE



Gamification and incentives build momentum through recognition, pilot time or modest rewards for useful ideas. Reward sound evidence, collaboration, reuse and learning, beyond speed or badges.

Disproving a costly assumption can create value too. Give promising ideas owners and a path to testing and adoption. Make events part of ongoing learning.

Make learning continuous, personal and useful to the business.

MEASURE PROGRESS THROUGH APPLICATION AND VALUE

07 Stop Counting Participation Points. Measure Value.

Attendance and completions show reach. Success means stronger judgment, skills applied to work and better business results. Start with a priority decision or process, then track a small scorecard.

FIVE KPIs / FROM CAPABILITY TO BUSINESS VALUE

KPI	WHAT TO TRACK	WHAT GOOD COULD LOOK LIKE
Demonstrated capability	% of the target group meeting a role-specific practical assessment standard.	80% meet the standard within 90 days; improve from baseline.
Application at work	% of the target group with verified use of a new skill on a real decision or task.	60% show application within 90 days, supported by work samples.
Business performance	Median cycle time for a priority decision or process, alongside error and rework rates.	20% faster within six months, with no increase in errors or rework.
Ideas into action	% of validated, sponsor-approved ideas that reach a pilot; track adoption afterward.	30% reach a pilot within six months, with an owner and outcome measure.
Realized value	Business-owner-confirmed benefits against the agreed target and full program costs.	Meet the outcome target and show positive net value over the agreed horizon.

Illustrative targets, not industry benchmarks. Set targets by role, baseline and business priority; assess comparable groups and tasks over time.

Use surveys, tickets and question intake to diagnose confidence, barriers and gaps; interpret quality and resolution alongside volume. Agree KPI baselines and owners. Review quarterly, separate estimated from realized value, include participant time in costs and account for other changes.

A DATA CHALLENGE THAT CREATES A PATH TO VALUE

08 Turn a Data Challenge Into an Innovation Pipeline

Give a data challenge a path beyond the event: a business priority, an accountable sponsor and a decision to test.

ILLUSTRATIVE CHALLENGE / REDUCE AVOIDABLE INVENTORY WASTE

LEARN AND INVESTIGATE

Teams use approved inventory data, test drivers of waste and challenge AI-generated explanations.

PROPOSE AND VALIDATE

Submit a decision proposal with evidence, assumptions, estimated benefit and a business owner.

PILOT AND MEASURE

Test the strongest proposal. Track adoption, waste and service levels against a baseline, with a comparison group where feasible. Review results after 90 days.

Judge evidence and feasibility, then track proposals through validation, pilots and adoption. Separate estimated opportunity from realized benefits. Include participant time in costs, account for other changes and avoid double-counting.

The value is in what people learn, what gets tested and what improves afterward.

FROM STATED COMMITMENT TO WORKFORCE CAPABILITY

09 Fund the Organization You Want to Become

A commitment to data, analytics and AI should show up in more than architecture diagrams, specialist hiring and software contracts. It should show up in the ability of people across the organization to ask, interpret, challenge and act.

The World Economic Forum's 2025 employer survey found that 63% considered skills gaps a major barrier to transformation. It projected that 59 in every 100 workers would need training by 2030. [2] These are broad workforce findings, but they reinforce the importance of capability alongside technology.

A LEADERSHIP ACTION: TEST THE COMMITMENT

At your next leadership review, compare the data and AI roadmap with your commitment to learning. Ask: who owns capability, do people have time to develop it, and what evidence shows better decisions? Where answers are unclear, name an accountable leader to bring back a commitment that matches the strategy.

The ambition to compete on analytics needs to be matched by the ambition to develop the people who will use it.

If your data and AI ambitions are advancing faster than your organization's ability to use them, that gap deserves a leadership conversation. Helping leaders identify and close it is where Data Busting Analytics fits.

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[1] DataCamp / YouGov, 2026 State of Data & AI Literacy; 517 US/UK leaders, fieldwork Dec. 2025-Feb. 2026.

[2] World Economic Forum, Future of Jobs Report 2025, Jan. 7, 2025; over 1,000 employers.

[3] Informatica / Wakefield Research, CDO Insights 2026; 600 CDOs, CDAOs and CAOs at companies with $500M+ revenue; fieldwork Sept. 12-25, 2025.

[4] Gartner C-level Communities, CDAO Priorities & Investment Trends 2026; 350 CDAO responses, March 2026.