THE DATA STRATEGY PERSPECTIVE

Your business doesn't need more data. It needs a data strategy.

Start with what matters to your business. Build the capabilities to enable it. Measure the value that follows.

By **Todd Sobiech**
Founder & Principal Advisor
Data Busting Analytics

6 MIN READ



From scattered data to purposeful decisions.

Three departments. Three reports. Three different revenue numbers.

Everyone brought data to the meeting. Nobody brought an answer everyone trusts.

Sound familiar?

Businesses can be swimming in data while starving for useful information. Reports arrive too late. Systems don't connect. Definitions change between departments. Employees spend more time reconciling numbers than deciding what to do about them.

More data won't automatically fix any of this. Neither will another dashboard.

That's where a data strategy comes in.

> **A data strategy is a plan for using data to create business value.**

It connects business goals to the people, processes, data, and technology needed to achieve them. It explains why the work matters, what outcomes it should deliver, and how the pieces fit together.

It also makes choices: what to prioritize, what to fund, and what can wait.

WHAT A DATA STRATEGY IS

- Business outcomes and priorities
- Capabilities, ownership, and resources
- A roadmap with measurable value

WHAT IT ISN'T

- A technology shopping list
- A cloud migration or dashboard collection
- A declaration of being "data-driven"

Those investments may support a strategy. They don't substitute for one.

Begin with the end in mind.

Before asking, "What data do we have?" ask, **"What business problem are we trying to solve?"**

Are customers leaving? Are operating costs rising? Does leadership struggle to assess risk? Do employees spend days assembling reports that should take minutes?

FOUR QUESTIONS BEFORE THE TOOLS

- What question do we need to answer?
- What decision or action will that answer support?
- Who will act on it?
- What would success look like?

"We need better reporting" is a starting point, not a defined outcome.

"Regional managers need to identify declining margins early enough to adjust pricing or costs" gives you something to design around.

That distinction matters. If you start with tools, you risk building an expensive answer to a question nobody needed to ask.

McKinsey similarly recommends defining data priorities around business use cases and their expected returns. Read: Getting Your Data House in Order ↗

Where good intentions lose their value.

My view: a strategy starts losing its value the moment delivering technology becomes more important than improving the business.

01 / PURPOSE
Technology leads. Business purpose follows.
A platform gets purchased before anyone agrees on the problem.

02 / PRIORITIES
Everything is a priority.
The roadmap becomes a wish list with no meaningful choices.

03 / ACCOUNTABILITY
Ownership is missing.
IT is expected to resolve disagreements about business definitions, quality, and accountability.

04 / PROGRESS
Perfection delays progress.
Teams try to clean every dataset before delivering anything useful.

05 / ADOPTION
Adoption is assumed.
A dashboard launches, but nobody changes how decisions get made.

06 / VALUE
Activity passes for achievement.
Success means reports delivered or records loaded, with little evidence of business improvement.

THE DISTINCTION THAT MATTERS

A program. Not a project.

Projects deliver specific changes. A program sustains ownership, funding, standards, skills, and improvement as business needs evolve.

The strategy document should have versions. The program should have accountability. Neither should disappear after launch.

PRIORITIZE → DELIVER → ADOPT → MEASURE → ADAPT ↻

Five steps from business problem to business value.

THE DATA STRATEGY FRAMEWORK

1 Define outcomes → 2 Assess today → 3 Identify capabilities → 4 Prioritize the roadmap → 5 Operate & measure

↻ Learn, adapt, and revisit as business needs change

01 Define the outcomes.
Use workshops and interviews to uncover business questions, pain points, risks, and opportunities. Align them with organizational goals. Write down what success means before discussing solutions.

02 Assess the current state.
Examine people, processes, data, and technology. Can employees find the information they need? Is it accurate enough, timely enough, and accessible to the right people? Do departments mean the same thing by "customer" or "revenue"? Assess actual capability, including problems people have learned to work around.

03 Identify the capabilities that matter.
Compare business needs with current capabilities. Gaps might include shared definitions, integration, quality controls, reporting, automation, or data literacy. Build reusable data assets where multiple needs overlap. Aim for quality that is fit for purpose: a monthly planning report and a real-time operational alert have different requirements.

04 Build a prioritized roadmap.
Sequence projects and ongoing programs by expected value, urgency, effort, risk, and dependencies. Pair useful early results with the foundations needed to sustain them. Give each initiative an owner, scope, resources, success measures, and approval criteria. State constraints honestly.

05 Establish the operating model—and measure.
Define who owns data, resolves quality issues, approves access, maintains definitions, and sets priorities. Include privacy, security, and appropriate use. Budget for ongoing support and learning. Track business outcomes alongside data health and adoption, then adjust the roadmap as evidence develops.

THE FRAMEWORK IN PRACTICE / ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE

Start with late deliveries. Not a new platform.

Consider a distributor trying to reduce late deliveries. It might begin by connecting order, inventory, and shipping data; agreeing on the definition of "on time"; and giving an operations manager responsibility for acting on exceptions.

BUSINESS PROBLEM	DATA CAPABILITY	VALUE MEASURE
Too many late deliveries	Connected records and a shared definition	Change in on-time delivery rate

Measure the starting point, set a target, and track the result. Expand from there.

It doesn't need a perfect 360-degree view of the entire business before improving one important decision.

The real test is whether anything gets better.

A useful vision might be: "Maximize the value of our data assets by enabling better decisions."

But the strategy must turn that ambition into observable changes: faster reporting, less manual reconciliation, more reliable forecasts, better risk assessment, or improved customer outcomes.

Document the journey. Record decisions, lessons, results, and changing priorities. Measure value against the starting point, including the cost of sustaining it.

At Data Busting Analytics, the question I want businesses to ask is simple:

> **What should your business be able to do better—and what needs to change about your data to make that possible?**

Turn insights into impact.

Build a data strategy around your business priorities and measurable outcomes.

Let's connect ↗

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