



GoodData

# Three unique attributes of a successful data culture



The study of corporate and organizational culture dates back to the mid-20th century, with early researchers realizing that a cultural element within factories played a role in how people worked. More than 70 years later, business leaders across the world continue to strive (and sometimes struggle) to understand and shape their corporate cultures to fit their business, goals and strategy. As technology adoption accelerates, particularly in the wake of COVID-19, adapting cultures at the speed of technology is no simple task.

One of the most prominent technology and organizational changes of the past 20 years is the proliferation of data throughout every company. It's almost universally seen as one of the biggest business game changers of this century. But according to the NewVantage Partners' 2021 [Big Data and AI Executive Survey](#), 92% of companies report cultural challenges as being the biggest impediment around data initiatives.

While companies are making massive investments in data infrastructure, many are leaving culture to HR teams. This approach misses the fact that data technology and culture are inextricably linked. A culture requires systems and processes to enable it. What companies with strong sales cultures don't have a powerful, integrated CRM solution? What customer obsessed companies today aren't empowered with a customer service platform?

When it comes to data, the technology-culture link is even stronger. Data cannot be a part of every business decision without technology to make sense of it and deliver it in intuitive ways. But data-driven decision-making at scale is a brand new concept and companies are still learning how to navigate it and ingrain it into culture.

## The three essential elements of a data culture

Every company is different and the path for each to achieve a data culture will differ in many ways. But all must involve three key elements that are essential pieces of any data culture: make data accessible and valuable to everyone, create a shared data language, and build trust in the numbers.

### 1. Data must be pervasive and accessible

A seminal 2018 Harvard Business Review [study about corporate culture](#) defines "pervasive" as a key characteristic of culture: "culture permeates multiple levels and applies very broadly in an organization; sometimes it is even conflated with the organization itself." No matter the type of culture at a company (or the type that leaders want), the one they've got is the one that's pervasive. To make a data culture pervasive, therefore, company leaders need to provide a way for everyone to access insights and gain value from the company's data.

### The challenge:

For data-driven decisions to become pervasive at a company, anyone making a decision — from a marketer tweaking messaging to a CEO building a five-year strategic plan — must not only have access to data, but also be able to analyze it in order to take action. Some companies have tried to solve this problem by building out data science teams to pull and analyze data for others.

### The solution:

To successfully make data-driven decisions a pervasive part of the culture, companies need two things: company-wide access to data, and data presented in a way anyone can read, interpret and analyze to help make business decisions. This goes beyond data visualization tools, which do

not necessarily make it easy for everyone to analyze or interpret data. Companies can make data literacy simple by providing an intuitive way for employees to consume data. In fact, [84% of executives agree that a good consumption layer is necessary to scale analytics at their company.](#)

The problem with this approach is that it's not scalable to an entire organization, and it turns data scientists into order-takers instead of strategic workers. Data scientists are also increasingly hard to recruit and are very expensive.

Other organizations have tried to solve this challenge by giving decision-maker access to data. While this option is accessible, it requires everyone to have extensive data analysis expertise and dissolves any chance of data governance — thereby making it impossible to scale this method of analytics without widespread error.

## 2. The language of data must be shared

The HBR culture study also shows that culture must be shared. When it comes to data, that means everyone at a company should be working from the same data-sets, defined the same way so they can collaborate productively with data at the center of the conversation.

### How to measure data literacy:

Data literacy should be measured as the percentage of people at an organization that are effectively using data to make decisions in their daily workflows.



**Technomic®**  
A Winsight Company

### Technomic provides added value to foodservice customers

As consultants for the food services industry, data is a core business offering for Technomic. In 2009, the company partnered with GoodData to create a custom platform that would deliver custom insights to its diverse set of suppliers and restaurant operators in the food and beverage industry. The result was a data-driven product called Ignite Consumer which provided customers the ability to create custom dashboards, is easy to you and simple enough for the Technomic's product team to adjust and tailor analytics (no technical team required).

### **The challenge:**

Business intelligence has long been one of two things: driven by IT with a rigid approach to data governance, or modern BI where business teams work around IT with their own analytics that do not align or integrate with other departments. The result is fractured, inconsistent data with no governance. How are sales and marketing supposed to collaborate if they have varying definitions of various customer metrics?

### **The solution:**

A true, shared data language is achieved when IT and business teams come together in a collaborative way. IT and data scientists maintain data governance and ensure consistency throughout the company, while end users have the flexibility to tailor the data to their needs. So, even while using data in their own context (i.e. finance vs. HR), separate functions can also use data to collaborate and work productively off of the same information in the same consumption layer to make better decisions.

## **3. The data must be trusted**

For a data culture to be pervasive and shared throughout an organization, trust is essential. This is one of the more implicit aspects of building a data culture, and one that also must be supported by the right data governance, tools and processes.

### **The challenge:**

[According to KPMG](#), 56% of CEOs have concerns regarding the integrity of their data. If there is no trust at the top, a culture that trusts data as a key input for business decisions is unlikely. For example, an employee consistently hearing his managers question data presented in meetings is not going to trust data himself. It's an implicit cultural cue that hurts the overall acceptance of data and the support of a data culture. The key is making data insights trustworthy at the most senior levels and letting that trust trickle down.

### **The solution:**

Successfully making data pervasive with a shared language within an organization will go a long way toward building trust in data insights. But an essential piece of reaching those milestones is enabling and investing in the necessary collaboration between IT and business users.



### **Say Insurance builds a shared view of the customer**

Say Insurance needed a better understanding of who its customers were, what the buyer journey looked like and, ultimately, how to spend its marketing budget. The company was relying on multiple disparate data sources that could not deliver a clear picture to employees who didn't have data science experience or a high level of data literacy. Delivering cohesive, shared insights with GoodData created a platform to help the marketing team make data driven decisions about where to focus their spend, what policies to promote, and which customers were most profitable. As a next step, Say Insurance will expand access to this data with other departments in contextual formats that will help customer service, for example, tailor the sales experience based on a customer's profile.

That's where senior leadership comes in to facilitate the IT-business collaborative foundation needed to build a data culture and ultimately create better data systems and trust in data insights company-wide.

## **A data culture investment now, for big dividends in the future**

Building culture is a long-term and ongoing quest for company leaders. There's a good reason it has been the focus of so much research (and executives' sleepless nights) for decades. It's hard, it is shaped by many factors at once, and as the world changes so does culture. But one undeniable requirement to build a culture is having the resources and processes to support it. Building a culture around data where employees can make data-driven decisions company-wide requires investments in making data insights pervasive, shared, and trusted. There is certainly more work to be done, fostering culture at an organization goes far beyond implementation and adoption of technology, but, together these three building blocks can help set the stage for a company's transformation into a data-driven organization.

**Want to learn more about how GoodData can help you build a strong data culture?**

Schedule a demo

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# About GoodData

## What is it that we do?

At GoodData, we believe that traditional data tools are no longer enough. Our Data as a Service (DaaS) infrastructure is the future of analytics: real-time, open, secure, and scalable. GoodData's leading cloud native analytics platform gives our customers the flexibility to build and scale any of their data use cases; from self-service and embeddable analytics, to machine learning and IoT — while maintaining the performance, cost-efficiency, and easy change management of such a central and integrated solution.

GoodData has teams and data centers in the USA, Europe, and Asia, with customers including leading software companies (SaaS), global financial and payment institutions, and multi-brand e-commerce platforms.

## The GoodData Advantage



### Business

1. One platform for all: internal teams, client companies, external partners
2. Self-service analytics for business users
3. Your own branding
4. Predictable pricing to suit your business, no pay-per-user
5. The highest data privacy and security certifications

### Technical

1. Automated scaling to different departments and companies
2. Embedded dashboards in your application or software product
3. Streamlined multi-tenant change management
4. Abundant data-source options
5. Fully hosted or deployed as a container in your application