

# Data-Driven Decision-Making for Business Professionals

with Jamie Champagne

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## Data-Driven Decision-Making Checklist

### Step 1. Identify the goal.

**Action:** Identify the intended outcome. What should be achieved with this decision?

**Ask:**

- What do we hope to accomplish based on this decision?
- Do we even know what decisions need to be made?
- Do we know why the decisions need to be made? Or why now?
- What recommendations are to be presented?
- What is our competition doing?
- What is our industry currently doing?
- What is technology doing
- What trends are we seeing?
- What is your own organization looking at doing? Is anything planned?

### Step 2. Break things down.

**Action:** Break up large challenges or questions into smaller pieces.

**Ask:** For each data point, you might think of asking:

- What?
- Which?
- How?
- Where?
- When?
- Who?
- How much?

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## Step 3. Shift your questions to prescriptive.

**Action:** Take your questions and shift them to prescriptive questions.

**Ask:** What would help the business tomorrow (not today)?

- Based on the data we have, what do we expect to happen?
- What do we anticipate to happen, based on the data?
- What could we assume would happen given the data insights?
- What could we push to drive to based on trends and prior data?

## Step 4. Identify what data you already have access to.

**Action:** Identify what data sources you already have access to and use regularly.

**Ask:** Questions about your own daily activities:

- What's my job? What data do I use to complete it?
- What applications do I use? And for what purpose?
- Who do I interact with? And what do we talk about?
- Do I use outside resources? Technology?
- What questions am I getting asked already?
- What reports, status, or follow-up information do I provide regularly?
- What departments and who do I rely on to get information to complete my work?
- Who are my customers (inside and outside the organization)?

## Step 5. Identify what data you need access to.

**Action:** We know our data points, we know what questions we want to answer, we know what we have access to—now identify the gaps.

**Ask:** Questions about your decisions:

- What data do you need to feel confident in your decision?
- What data validates your decision?
- What makes your decision appropriate?
- What makes your decision better than other decisions?

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- Why is it better? Why is it accurate? Why is it right?
- What questions are others going to ask you about your decision?

## Step 6. Identify alternative and substitute data sources.

**Action:** Now that we know what we need; if we can't get it, determine options.

**Ask:** Other ways to look at the data points you need:

- What do we hope to accomplish based on this decision?
- Do we even know what decisions need to be made?
- Do we know why the decisions need to be made? Or why now?
- What recommendations are to be presented?
- What is our competition doing?

## Step 7. Ask others to help provide data.

**Action:** Get decision-supporting data from sources who use the data.

**Ask:** Clearly state what data you need and why you need it.

- Be clear on specific data to limit amount.
- Explain what you hope to use the data for.
- Explain what decisions you are trying to make with the data.
- Explain the goal of using the data.
- Ask the data source to walk you through the data.
- Ask if there's any other types of data they think may help you with your decision-making.
- Ask the other person if they have any other ideas on what you should use.
- Use the structure: I want [what]\_\_\_\_\_because [why]\_\_\_\_\_so I need [data need]\_\_\_\_\_.

## Step 8. Start analyzing the data.

**Action:** Identify causation and correlation in your data.

**Ask:** Consider if the data is actually a causation relationship or just correlates by considering:

- What are the patterns in the data?

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- What are the similarities?
- What trends do I see?
- If I take one element can I say with 100% certainty it caused the other element?
- What if I flip the data relationship around: If A causes B, do I feel B causes A?
- If something happens, do I know what is going to probably then happen, based on my data?

## Step 9. Moving from data to actions.

**Action:** Identify the value of the data for your decision-making.

**Ask:**

- Why are the data patterns and relationships important?
- Why do I need to know there is a causation between data elements?
- What is important about the data relationships I've found?
- What is the organization going to do with this data insight?
- What actions can be taken based on the data relationships I've found?

## Step 10. Make your action statement.

**Action:** Create an action statement in this format:

As our goal is to \_\_\_\_\_, we should\_\_\_\_\_.

**Ask:**

- Did I state my goal upfront?
- Is my goal the thing I started with?
- Is my goal stated clear and simple?
- What is the action I'm recommending?
- Can I make the action (or the goal) even more specific?
- Is the action something I'm confident about?
- If I'm not confident about the action, what am I confident about?
- Am I confident with my recommendation?
- Do you feel you can stand behind your recommendation?

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## Step 11. Visually present your conclusions.

**Action:** Identify visuals that drive action.

**Ask:**

- What images convey the action I want taken?
- What might my audience connect to?
- What is one key item I want to present?
- Is my visual trying to present more than one thing at a time?
- Am I using my action statement?
- Am I focused on the goal? And driving the action?
- Does my visual figure out the data for my audience?
- Does my visual focus on outcomes?

## Step 12. Share your story,

**Action:** Deliver the story of your action.

**Ask:**

- Do I have too much data and facts presented?
- Am I boring my audience with too much unnecessary information?
- Do I have too much detail that isn't relevant?
- Am I providing an emotional connection to my data?
- Have I presented something that the audience will remember?
- Have I set up a story that my audience can define the ending?
- Is my story able to be shared within three minutes?
- Have I given enough background so the audience has some context?
- Does my audience know who the villain is?
- Does my audience know who the hero is?
- Have I presented the need, the goal in the crux of the story?
- Does my story emphasize the decision that needs to be made or could be made by highlighting the desired outcome?

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- Have I delivered a dream destination to my audience?
- Can my audience picture themselves in that final outcome?

## Step 13. Data conclusions in the business context

**Action:** Present data conclusions in the context of business operations.

**Ask:** Are my data conclusions buried in the data or shown in the words and images of the business?

- What about my data affects the business?
- What things is the business doing that affects our decisions?
- What things is the business not doing that affects our decisions?
- What's going on in the business right now?
- What happened last time this topic came up?
- What were people in the organization worried when discussing this topic prior?
- What considerations do I need to think about resources—people, budget, and time—with the ask?
- What competing factors might affect my recommendations?
- What external pressures does our organization have? How do they affect my recommendation?  
My data?
- Are there changes that are coming that could affect my data? My recommendations?
- What assumptions can I spell out clearly?
- What questions or concerns might the business have as I present my data?

## Step 14. Identify any data gaps.

**Action:** Consider how any gaps in your data might affect or shape your recommendation.

**Ask:**

- What would you do with your data if you had more time?
- How would your data change with more data analysis?
- Would more data change your recommendation?
- Would you want to share conclusions with others before presenting? If so, what would they say that would affect your recommendation?
- What impacts of missing data would have on your recommendations?

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- What risks are there with the data you have?
- Did you consider gaps from:
- Where you gathered the data?
- What kind of data you gathered?
- The age of your data?
- The frequency of your data?
- The completeness of your data?
- Is there more data you didn't get access to?
- Is there data that isn't available at this time?

## Step 15. Consider your organization.

**Action:** Identify organizational capabilities and gaps.

**Ask:**

- Do I have a solution or a recommendation?
- If it's a solution, does the organization have the capabilities to deliver?
- Skill sets? Infrastructure? Technology? Budget? Resources? Industry position? Risk tolerance?
- What is needed so the organization can actually deliver on the decision?
- Have I given a direction that is clear enough to start key decisions?
- Is there more research or data needed to be clear on a decision that supports the entire organization?
- What might be some possible options or pathways to achieve our goals?
- What does the organization already do well?
- What do we have?
- What would we need?
- What do other organizations do?
- What are the trends in the industry?
- What solutions provided increased revenue or decreased production costs for others?