



The Executive's Guide to

Creating a Data-Driven Culture

By Fred Shilmover

Meet the Authors

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Introduction

As a staffing executive, your firm is likely using data to measure sales rep and recruiter performance. But do they know the best way to hit their number? Do they have the tools to make smart decisions and prioritize their workday? Ultimately, does your team use data to win more business?

Many staffing and recruiting firms use ATS data to track performance and drive growth, but those that leverage their data to invoke a culture of analysis and ownership empower employees to prioritize their efforts, work smarter, and drive more revenue. How do you build a data-driven culture in your firm without exposing critical company data or spending your day sifting through spreadsheets? Focus on these **6 steps staffing firms can take to become more data-driven** and win more business, by the numbers.





6 Steps to Creating a Data-Driven Culture

1 // Define Your Company Culture

Culture manifests itself in many ways: Broadly, culture is composed of the unique values that make up the foundation of your organization. Work ethic, pride, or teamwork could be core tenets of your culture, for example.

Culture also includes the social framework that overlays your team's day-to-day: Do your employees "work hard, play hard"? Collaborate to achieve goals? Take pride in being part of your team?

Most importantly, culture is about the standards you uphold in your organization, and how you measure those standards. How do you hold your team accountable? How do you reward your top performers and coach those who need more support?

Best-in-class staffing firms have data in their cultural DNA. They establish company-wide standards and set repeatable processes in place to hit goals. Does this mean you have to adopt a "spreadsheet culture" or buy a special software to achieve this level of performance? Not at all, in fact, quite the contrary: A performance culture based on data cannot be wedged into an organization, or treated like a stick. Data-driven culture needs to start from the top.

Instant Wins:

- Understand the "core" of your culture – and realign your values if necessary
- Know your business' unique value proposition
- Identify how and where to incorporate a data-driven focus in your firm

2 // Get Transparent

The first thing you need to adopt when building a data-driven firm is data transparency. Senior management and sales leaders need to give the whole team access to performance metrics. Managers need to be able to use data to assess employee performance and set objective benchmarks, and your sales team needs to dig into the metrics to find better ways to work.

Admittedly, this can be scary for firms to start sharing, but in order to create a culture that strives to analyze information and work smarter, employees need to see the whole data landscape: Job orders, sendouts, recruitment activity, top performers, effort spent and revenue.

When you allow everyone on your team the same access to your sales data the conversations will become more objective. On the whole, leaders who use quantitative measurements to drive their conversations gain the respect of their team; employees appreciate the level playing field that metrics provide in their performance reviews.

The good news is, you probably already have elements of transparency around the office – elements like recruiter activity whiteboards or a sales leaderboard are a great place to start. In addition to these “performance-driving metrics” you should start to consider the next step: Building the sales processes that will run your new metrics-focused culture.

Instant Wins:

- Give employees the tools to make smart decisions autonomously
- Empower managers to have objective conversations around performance
- Set benchmarks across the business

3 // Drive Consistency

Everyone wants to go faster, do better, and grow their business, but the last thing you want as a business leader is to break down along the way. Being data driven requires consistency, and consistency demands uniform process. These processes should be based on achieving quantitative performance metrics, and can be easily set by benchmarking based on past performance.

Most importantly, data-driven cultures enforce standardized processes, which is perhaps one of the most challenging aspects of reshaping an existing culture. Executives who believe in the power of being data-driven, however, understand the tremendous benefits they will reap from these processes and find internal champions to lead the charge. In turn, they are able to use the same scale to measure all of their efforts, and create a highly predictable, and scalable process for growth within their organization.

To enforce these processes, executives need to shift their conversations and those of their managers: Managers should coach their teams based on objective goals and employees should be measured on the same performance scale across the board. Once you institute a top-down data-driven culture, managers and teams can have metrics-based conversations to make smart decisions about using resources, coaching, and prioritizing efforts more effectively.

Instant Wins:

- Put processes in place that drive repeatable and scalable business
- Allow managers and employees to easily understand
- Drive predictable revenue

4 // Ask Metrics-Based Questions

Peter Drucker, the father of modern management, put it best when he said, “If you can’t measure it, you can’t manage it.”

By establishing consistent processes and key performance metrics, you enable managers to better coach and manage their teams, and give recruiters and account executives clear goals that they can measure their performance against. Pipeline reviews, forecasting meetings, and weekly 1-on-1’s between managers and sales performers will be more specific and measurable when managers ask data-backed questions of their employees’ performance.

“If you can’t measure it, you can’t manage it.”

Managers will be able to use objective data in their weekly meetings to identify early warning signs of struggling employees, discuss performance compared to goals, and coach objectively based on historic performance data. These clear and quantitative goals allow your team to analyze their performance based on measurable, repeatable numbers, instead of by how they “feel” about a client, a job order, or a candidate.

Instant Wins:

- Standardize weekly 1-on-1’s with employees
- Get reps prepared to answer analytically
- Track performance over time more effectively

5 // Demand Data-Driven Answers

As your organization begins to ask objective questions, you will also need to demand data-driven answers. Recruiters and account executives will quickly begin to look at their actions with this same objective lens; they will be able to use metrics to see where they stand week-to-week, and to take analysis into their own hands.

For example, a conversation should never start with whether an account exec “likes” a job order – this assessment should come after the analysis that the Account Executive has run on this order that shows it tracking well when compared to past job orders. Whether an Account Executive “feels good” about hitting her numbers should come after the analysis that shows that pipeline is enough for her to exceed quota based on historic data. This is not to say that an employee’s subjective opinions about a candidate or open job order should get thrown out entirely, but rather, should be incorporated as a valuable overlay on top of the data about that opportunity.

Not only does shifting from qualitative to quantitative performance assessment give employees the ability to answer questions with business data, but it further drives ATS adoption by enforcing proper data quality.

Instant Wins:

- Give reps the autonomy to make the best decision
- Improve data quality and compliance in your ATS
- Create a team of analytical revenue generators

6 // Don't Wait to Get Started

Often, the first response when deciding to become a more data-driven organization is to assume that you first need to improve your ATS data before you do anything else. Stop there. You will not accomplish anything if you rely on trying to “clean out the cobwebs” before getting started. In order to fully adopt a data-driven culture, you need to build and deploy the appropriate processes and allow those to be the framework for both better data and growth. Regardless of your business trajectory plan, waiting is the biggest momentum killer there is.

Get started.

Learn what works and what doesn't. From there, you can experiment with ways to further improve data-quality and drive adoption, including setting data-quality as a Key Performance Indicator, or compensating your sales team based on their compliance with your processes.

Instant Wins:

- Better visibility into your business
- Faster ROI for implementation
- Laying the tracks for high-speed growth



Conclusion

Final Thoughts

Deciding to build or shift towards a data-driven culture is no easy endeavor, and staffing executives should be aware of both the added benefits as well as the potential hurdles they may need to overcome in the process. But firms that arm their employees, managers, and executives with data allow each member of the team to own their own desk and make analytical choices about how they perform their daily activities.

If you plan to implement a more data-driven culture in your staffing and recruiting firm, start with these basics:

- 1. Define Your Culture**
- 2. Be Transparent with Your Data**
- 3. Drive a Consistent Process**
- 4. Ask Metrics-Based Questions**
- 5. Demand Data-Driven Answers and**
- 6. Get Started Immediately**

And you will begin to see the value in a more consistent, repeatable, and scalable business model that drives analysis, and more importantly, revenue.

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