7 ways IT can drive a winning data strategy
53 trillion GB of data will be created by 2020.* With this absolutely staggering amount of information at their disposal, businesses are becoming more data-driven than ever.

This data is often operational in nature, telling businesses “what” happened, but not “why.” For that, they need feedback from customers, employees, and prospects—what we call People Powered Data.

This poses a new challenge for IT leaders, requiring them to create different strategies and business processes to handle this wealth of data. Additionally, this trove of information needs to be accessible, scalable, and actionable. This situation puts IT in a strategic position to help the organization meet its business goals by empowering their teams with technology that drives growth and innovation.

Here are 7 ways IT can use People Powered Data to drive an effective data management strategy.

*Source: www.eetimes.com/author.asp?section_id=36&doc_id=1330462
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Most businesses separate business strategy from IT strategy. Business strategy typically focuses on growing the business, while IT strategy concerns itself with providing reliable technology.

However, the two aren’t mutually exclusive. In today’s business landscape, technology is a key driver of growth and innovation—often providing organizations with a competitive edge and a direct impact on their speed to market.

As an IT leader, your mission is to source the right tools, create the correct infrastructure, and build the best processes to help your organization effectively use all of the data it’s collecting. Thus it’s increasingly important to align your technology goals and processes with those of the business.

But how do you do that?

The first step is to work with business stakeholders to understand the bigger business problem. Why does your organization need People Powered Data? What key business challenges is it solving?

Next you have to understand the company’s current technological state. What solutions are they currently using to answer these questions, if any? In most organizations where IT has not aligned with the business’s goals, people end up using disparate, unvetted tools, with no standardized process (this is often referred to as “Shadow IT”). As a result, data becomes siloed and difficult to share across the organization.

IT should endeavor to build a better partnership with business stakeholders and set priorities based on those larger needs.
Once alignment is achieved, the next order of business is to help your teams capture the right feedback—whether it’s HR listening to employees, or the customer success team measuring customer satisfaction.

It’s important to map out all of the touchpoints where feedback needs to be collected.

**Example:** your marketing team wants to gather data across the customer lifecycle, so they can better understand prospects and create more effective marketing campaigns. In that case, they will most likely want to gather data via channels as varied as your website, at events, retail locations, or wherever else your company interacts with customers.

Once you’ve identified the different types of data your organization needs, and all the channels through which they’ll need to capture it, you can select the right tools and create the necessary processes for them to gather information in a scalable and repeatable fashion.

In most cases, this includes sensitive data about customers and employees—which means security and compliance are critical. For example, if you’re a healthcare organization collecting PHI (Protected Health Information) data, you need tools that have HIPAA compliance features.

Most importantly, it’s not about the amount of data you capture: it’s about the quality of your data. If your data pool can cross departments and teams, and still have meaning and value at the individual level, that’s what will determine the success of your overall data strategy.
You’ve given your team the right tools to capture People Powered Data at every customer touchpoint and employee milestone. Now what?

Data is only useful if it’s actionable—and in most cases you need a few different data points to make a key business decision.

This is why it’s important to ensure that your survey data can be easily connected to existing business data. One way to do that is with integrations and APIs, so you can flow feedback into your CRM, marketing automation tools, and other business-critical applications. This empowers your teams to act quickly, giving them the data they need where they’re already working.

When done right, integrations provide deeper cohort analyses and insights. You’ll also save time by automating or simplifying processes for your employees and customers, and allow your business to focus on prospects that are more likely to convert. Use trend-level data and analysis of higher level demographic data to run more relevant marketing campaigns.
Govern your data to ensure integrity and security

Balance your data governance with the flexibility and agility requirements of the business by empowering your users in a self-service environment. This is one of the most important and rewarding practices, but the least pursued, and the hardest to accomplish.

Data governance ensures that you have more visibility and control over the data being gathered across the organization—helping to share insights and eliminate data silos.

Proper governance enables collaboration across departments, fostering broader insights, fueling better business decisions, and on the whole promoting a more data-centric culture.

It also enforces accountability. Since data is tracked, monitored, and recorded (in your CRM, for example), users gathering data will be more likely—and able—to follow best practices and policies that you help determine.

Finally, good data governance ensures compliance and security. Having a security plan, and choosing data storage and solutions that prevent data loss, is paramount. Plan well for security measures in the event the devices you use to collect and/or store data fall into the wrong hands, and extend these measures to analog tools and methods used to initially capture data. Maintain the confidence of your internal and external customers by reviewing and ensuring that you’re honoring your privacy and data usage policies, and being HIPAA and GDPR compliant if required.
To get the most value from your data, it needs to be shared across your organization. Make People Powered Data available to everyone who needs it and encourage collaboration.

This typically requires a secure central hub or dashboard so that teams can easily share insights. Ideally, this hub or dashboard is user-friendly enough that the learning curve isn’t too steep. Remember: while nearly every organization has access to big data, not every organization has an army of data scientists. Having an easy-to-use platform helps more of your people get more from your survey and existing data, so they can contribute greater value to the business.

Attaining much of that value depends on data collaboration. Part of data collaboration is about accessibility, as discussed above. Your hub or dashboard—a single, consistent environment—should also be able to:

- Let multiple stakeholders collaborate securely
- Add value to existing systems and infrastructure
- Have intuitive analysis tools
- Automatically generate and share reports

Organizationally, building scalable multidisciplinary teams (straddling worlds such as business, data science, IT, and others where necessary) will help grow the practice across the business.
Implement

Enable users to uncover actionable insights

Once you can easily share survey data across your organization, it’s important that users are able to dig into it to get the insights they need, so they can take actions that achieve your goals. This is more easily accomplished with a platform that is not only more accessible, but has the ability to output data in a digestible way.

A survey platform that has intuitive analysis tools (as mentioned in the previous section) does a lot to empower your people. When only data scientists can use your organization’s software, only data scientists will dig into your data. Invest in tools that welcome your non-specialist user to start searching for insights. Where possible, leverage artificial intelligence to help your people find what they need, fast.

Using solutions that can quickly generate reports and data visualizations helps convey the takeaways from data-driven insights to executives and management. This is key: as data increases in ubiquity, and data literacy can vary widely between functions, succinct communication becomes ever more critical.

When you make your data easier to analyze, insights surface more readily. When you communicate those insights effectively, necessary action can be taken more swiftly.
Your data strategy should be viewed as a continuous learning experience. Measure the impact and success of People Powered Data and analytics use cases so you can constantly re-evaluate and refine your processes.

One tactic for IT is to use NPS as a measurement tool for the effectiveness of your organization’s strategies and chosen solutions. Implemented as a business metric, it can track their contribution to the overall growth of the company—strengthening alignment within the organization as IT helps achieve broader business goals.

Gaining leverage with vendors is another use case for NPS in this capacity. With objective feedback about the performance of different solutions within your organization, you have another tool in your kit for negotiating with vendors. This, in turn, helps you hone in on new, potentially more appropriate solutions, and furthers the improvement of your data strategy and internal processes.
Conclusion

As organizations demand more access to data, and more powerful but approachable tools to explore and use it, the onus rests with IT to turn data strategy into reality.

This requires choosing solutions that not only meet the above requirements of empowering users, but also guarantees strict control over your company’s data.

SurveyMonkey’s Enterprise platform addresses all of these needs and more.

Reach out to our sales team to schedule a demo today.