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Seven Principles to Create a Data-Led Sports Organization



Luke Casey-Leigh
Strategy and M&A | New York

luke.casey@sportsologygroup.com

Introduction

In today's fast-paced sports industry, time is of the essence, and the ability to make informed decisions quickly can be the difference between success and failure. Historically, sports teams have relied on instinct, experience and knowledge to evaluate performance and make strategic decisions. While this approach to decision-making cannot be discounted, these methods can be time-consuming and have the potential to lack focus. By embracing a data-driven approach, sports organizations can increase the speed of their decision-making processes, ensuring they remain focused on what truly matters.

The seven principles below should be seen as opportunities to enhance a teams progresstowards being a data-led organization.

1. Not all data is important
2. Clean data is better than more data
3. Collecting now for later
4. Promote Data Literacy
5. Review Data First
6. Single Source of Truth
7. People Are Still Number One

Seven Principles to Create a Data-Led Sports Organization

1. Not all data is important

To create a data-driven sports organization, it's crucial to prioritize the right data. Not all data is essential, and having too much data can be overwhelming. Being data-led is about using data effectively, not necessarily having the most data. Therefore, focus on data sets that are aligned with organizational priorities and are intentional and focused.

2. Clean data is better than more data

While we all strive for more and more data, what is more important is that the data we are collecting is clean. The quality of insights and output is only as good as the input of data – that starts at the ground level. Consider implementing guardrails that can be put in place to preserve the integrity of the data from the collection point. It will not only serve in reaching higher quality outputs, but reduce the time and effort of fixing errors later.

3. Collecting now for later

Being thoughtful about what data you need, is not just about what you need now, but what you might need or find useful later. One example might be identifying additional interests from fans or tracking purchase behavior in stadiums to drive additional sponsorship deals in the Gambling industry, Fast Food, and even Health Care

4. Promote Data Literacy

Data is a language that is not well taught in organizations but essential for teams to learn in the coming years. Understanding the very basics can shift mindsets from being a blocker of information, to becoming more solution-oriented. At a minimum, for every metric used in the organization it's important to know three basic principles; 1) what that data means, 2) how it's used, and 3) where it comes from.

5. Review Data First

In meetings, data should be reviewed first before addressing issues. This sets the tone that data is a priority in the organization. Leaving data and dashboards towards the end of the meeting sends the message that the data is not a priority. Setting the tone for data prioritization is crucial to being a data-driven sports organization.

6. Single Source of Truth

It's important to align on the data used in your organization, but it's equally important to align on the data source. Too many organizations and teams have the habit of using different systems to access the "same data", which can lead to discrepancies. Leaving data sources open to interpretation makes it easier to manipulate data. A single source of truth also promotes the role of automation (i.e. dashboards), the ability to retain data integrity, and helps the business eliminate unnecessary repetitive tasks.

7. People Are Still Number One

Data is essential, but organizations need to recognize that people are still the core of the organization. Without them, the organization fails. You can have all the data in the world, but it's the people that create the value. Take care of your people.

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New York

110 East 25th Street
New York
NY 10010

Los Angeles

304 S Broadway
Los Angeles
CA 90013

London

37-41 Mortimer Street
London
W1T 3JH