

How to get C-suite buy-in for your data initiatives

You've already done a lot of the heavy lifting for your business case to improve your organization's data. You've come up with delivery timelines, calculated ROI projections, met with finance and other stakeholders, and now you have a solid written proposal in your hands. Your next step: C-suite approval!

A pitch to your executive team puts a bow on your written proposal. You're now tasked with earning the attention and support of your time-strapped, preoccupied leaders. How can your pitch inspire them to back your data initiatives, whether it's for better data quality, governance, or migration?

The key to success lies in storytelling. Cases that are complex and technical leave executives feeling confused, bored, and disconnected, which risks their buy-in for your project. Stories make your audience think, feel, and remember ideas in ways that numbers and charts on slides can't.

Feeling overwhelmed? We have four tried-and-true steps for telling a compelling story that will get your data and analytics projects greenlit by the C-suite.

1. Begin with your vision.

Start your meeting with a clear objective. This is precious time with senior leaders with various specialties and interests, so it's important to cite from the get-go why they're here, what's in it for them, and what success looks like in this meeting. This ensures your leaders are focused and know exactly what's being asked for them.

Like any Hollywood blockbuster, the most successful pitches are built on a well-crafted narrative that includes a conflict, hero, and supporting cast. To start, frame your pitch with your vision. What would "great" look like for your organization? What's a key strategic initiative—a.k.a your happy ending?



For example, if your business is part of the 53 percent of organizations that are focused on improving customer experience over the next year¹, you can lead with: "Elevating our customer experience is our top business priority. A key dependency to winning over our customers is providing frictionless interactions with our brand at every touchpoint."

Now, what's getting in the way of that happy ending? That's the next part of your pitch.

2. Describe your conflict.

It's time to lay the groundwork for your data initiatives.

Introduce your current blockers. For example, delivering innovative, personalized customer experiences starts with

reliable, accurate, and complete customer data. Do you trust your data? Do you know where it is? When you're able to locate it, do you see duplicate entries, inconsistent formats, or incomplete records? Connecting your argument to specific business problems shows how accurate data is more than a nice-to-have—it's a must-have.

Speaking of data, come prepared to discuss the costs of not having reliable insights. How has flawed data impacted your business? Name the major business performance issues you researched for your written proposal. For example, have you seen any recent upticks in churn rates or negative customer reviews? Can you find any patterns in your employee complaints? How much time have you lost to fixing internal errors? Citing specific data points gives your story credibility. Statistics about effects on the bottom-line capture your C-suite's attention and bring the issues you need to fix into immediate focus.

3. Champion your solution.

Take your leaders on a high-level journey on how to improve your present problem. For trusted customer insights, for example, touch on the core steps like centralizing data across the organization, profiling to uncover errors and anomalies, standardizing inconsistent formats, and using harmonization to match up relational data elements, resulting in a singular view of each customer.

Then, paint a picture of the bottom-line impact your solution can have. For example, a single customer view with data you can trust empowers you to discover a customer's needs and deliver personalized solutions. This builds loyal customers and business profits.

What does that look like? Meet Bruce. Bruce loves to spoil his dog. With a single customer view, including his purchase history, scheduled appointments, etc, you can now send his dog a birthday card, a haircut reminder, or a recommended product. This leads to upsells, reduced churn, and better customer experiences. Weaving examples and anecdotes into your pitch, whether entertaining or serious, shows how you can put your reasoning into practice.



4. Outline your approach.

Finally, recommend the supporting cast, production, and resources you need for your data ambitions.

Choose your costars. Those who speak in both data and business languages to navigate technical and business contexts will be especially helpful. Data analysts, data engineers, and data scientists are examples of people who can bridge the gap between business and IT requirements. Advocate for collaboration among business, IT, and data groups to involve the organization at large in your quest for clean information.

A movie relies on production to bring it to life, and you'll need to create processes that structure your goals for your data and infuse them into daily business activities. For example, you can set up a process for quarterly data audits or weekly checks for duplicates on larger datasets. Simple, consistent processes will turn your ambitions into realities.

Lastly, you need a platform to stand up your program. Evaluate the technical capabilities you need. For example, do you need a tool to consolidate your data? Is cleansing your datasets your top priority or are you more interested in enriching your customer records? An interactive discussion with your leaders can help you reach a consensus about a specific solution.

And that is how you sell a blockbuster pitch for your data initiatives.

Need help building your data management program? Explore our guide to get started.

Learn more

¹"2019 Global data management research benchmark report". Experian, 2019.

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