

# Empowering your organization to embrace a data culture with Power BI

The amount of data that companies generate is exploding. Microsoft Power BI gives you powerful tools to access, manipulate, learn from, and act on that data. Here at Microsoft, we're no different. Every day, our employees use Power BI to explore, gain crucial insights, and make decisions using our data.

Just giving your people access to Power BI is not enough—at Microsoft, we have spent time and effort winning our employees over to the power of data. If you want to do the same for your employees, show them all the amazing things that BI can do with their data. Then, teach them to get the most out of BI by giving them great learning opportunities. Once they learn how to use BI, help them reach the point where looking to data for breakthrough insights is a natural, everyday part of their work.



*Figure 1. Successfully rolling out Microsoft Power BI to your employees requires a sustained effort. First you need to let them know what Power BI is and what they can do with it. Then, train them to get the most out of their data and help them start using and gaining insights from it.*

## Embracing a data culture

Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella consistently calls on Microsoft employees to use data to guide everything they do. He calls it living in a data culture. "Power BI is a tool that's absolutely changed not only the way I view our business success and metrics, but it's changing conversations inside of Microsoft," Nadella said at Envision 2016.

At Microsoft, we're working hard to make data visualization, BI, and statistical analysis part of our normal, everyday work. Drawing insights from data and making decisions based on these insights is a key part of our culture. Truly embracing a data culture means handing the keys to our data to our employees.

Historically, Core Services Engineering (CSE, formerly Microsoft IT) owned the company's data—we collected it, ran reports, and decided what to send to each business group. These reports were not interactive and visual, and tended to be more operational than explorative. To truly embrace a data culture, we needed to flip the script—we needed to

provide tools like Power BI, and we needed to let business groups decide what data to use. The more you empower your employees, the deeper the insights they will uncover, and the faster they can use those insights to create value.

## Driving adoption

Giving employees Power BI and urging them to use it is just a first step. Our goal is to move each employee on a journey:

- Awareness—they become aware of the product and its features.
- Understanding—they understand why it's valuable to them.
- Enablement—they learn how to use it.
- Adoption—they use it regularly and effectively.

We did this at Microsoft by actively encouraging employees to use data every day, especially leaders. We cultivated a culture where using data to make decisions is expected. We rewarded those who used data well and publicly nudged those who didn't.

We drove Power BI usage by acting like a startup. We used creative techniques that fast-growing companies use to drive adoption rapidly and at scale; we ran our service as a business. We experimented, learned, and adjusted in an agile manner, refining and improving our approach along the way. We used Yammer conversations, surveys, and other listening tools to gauge employee sentiment. We asked our employees for ideas on how to improve Power BI and used a third-party tool, UserVoice, for employees to invite their peers to vote the best ideas to the top. We fed all this feedback to the product group for real-time innovation. And we're still working at it—the product keeps getting better every month.

Other ways we rolled Power BI out to our employees at Microsoft four years ago, and how we are sustaining it today, include:

**Early adopters.** We helped quick adopters build Power BI solutions, and those teams became Power BI champions. They shared what they learned with their peers, and asked others to share their experiences on social forums and in training. And then we used their stories to get others to follow. These early adopters were the kindling that ignited a data culture at Microsoft.

**Communications.** Our communications strategy is broad (121,000 employees) and focused. We use the Microsoft SharePoint intranet to scale our communications through a self-service web site. We have also consolidated our BI Yammer groups into a one-stop shop for Power BI conversations.

**Training.** We held more than 60 online and live training sessions to launch Power BI, and we continue to hold more as we move along our deployment journey. In these sessions, we showed employees how to use Power BI and the value they can get from it. We used real-world examples and showed visible support for adoption. We continue to build out and promote online, virtual, and live training.

**Internal enablement website.** Early on, we set up an internal enablement website to drive adoption. The site includes information and training to help employees get started with Power BI. It includes information on products, arranged by role (business user, business analyst, developer, BI professional); learning tools such as training webinars (grouped by role); use case examples and success stories; and support to help people get started or get help with the tools. The site integrates Yammer group discussions and relevant blog posts.

**Leadership support.** Leaders across Microsoft encourage employees to embrace Power BI in their daily work, and to base their decisions on insights they get from data.

## Achieving success

Today, our employees are using Power BI broadly and pervasively. Monthly, weekly, and daily use have all increased exponentially, which means our people are beginning to truly live a data culture. People are running reports and

doing analysis that they once would have left to analysts. People who never considered using data before are using it because it's easy and it's being promoted throughout the company.

Most importantly, our employees are using Power BI to do some of the most impactful work at Microsoft today. Compelling examples of how some Microsoft teams are using Power BI to transform our business are published on our IT Showcase website. Here are a few examples, or view a [comprehensive list of Power BI stories](#).

### **Propelling digital transformation in manufacturing with Power BI**

If manufacturers like Microsoft Surface, HoloLens, and Xbox don't ship on time because of supply chain or production line problems, customers and sales are affected. To stay competitive, prevent costly delays, and avoid errors, it's critical to understand and respond quickly to factory, supply chain, and production line issues.

To avoid such challenges, manufacturers must monitor and optimize their operations, taking critical time away from proactive decision-making. CSE and the Microsoft supply chain team used Power BI and data analytics to transform factory operations, which led to higher productivity and faster anomaly detection.

### **Microsoft Store uses Power BI real-time insights to drive results**

Retail is a multibillion-dollar business for Microsoft, and no time is more important to the company's retail business than the four days between Black Friday and Cyber Monday. In 2014, ambitious sales targets for the company's flagship Xbox meant Microsoft couldn't afford a misstep in promoting and selling Xbox in its retail stores and online.

Thanks to real-time data insights from Power BI, the retail stores team could see that they did not have enough inventory to support a key promotional offer. The team used that information to flag suppliers and other channel partners, allowing them to add inventory just in time.

Power BI allowed the team to sell more units than they would have otherwise by a significant margin. Rather than rely on intuition, the merchandising team had real, actionable data to base their decisions on.

### **Solving digital marketing challenges with Power BI**

The Microsoft.com team collects more than 10 terabytes of data every month about how users traverse Microsoft websites and how they behave in relation to specific services and products. The team wanted to see what it could glean from data produced by a six-week promotional event called the Surface Back to School campaign. The event served hundreds of millions of web impressions to college students, their parents, and people who were shopping for tablets and laptops at the end of the summer. The team wanted to know what an individual customer journey looked like and how exposing customers to ads affected that journey.

Power BI illuminated important discoveries that could otherwise be lost in translation by calculating and demonstrating click-through percentages, impression efficiency, and the unique steps customers took as they were exposed to ads, engaged with content, or perused the online store. And, because it takes little in the form of specialized engineering, Power BI effectively commoditized the data analysis.

By applying Power BI to the data, the team turned analysis into scalable and actionable reports. The Microsoft.com team was then able to look at summary reports, ask the data a range of questions, and understand how visitors interacted with the Surface Back to School campaign. In Power BI, a customer journey becomes a flow chart showing the sequence of a visitor's decisions in response to ads.

### **Power BI mobile apps—enabling data analytics on the go**

To keep up with the modern pace of business and a workforce that is always on the go, Power BI is designed from the ground up for the mobile age and has industry-leading experiences on iOS, Windows, and Android devices. People can access the same Power BI reports and dashboards they know and love on their mobile devices. With Power BI, mobile apps, reports, and dashboards are optimized for smaller screens. This extends the visualization capabilities of Power BI to the devices our employees use when they are on the move. It includes an optimized dashboard and reports for mobile devices where no added effort is required.

## Conclusion

For Microsoft, successfully driving Power BI adoption started with leaders sponsoring a companywide move to a data culture and finished with employees being willing to learn how to use and embrace it. It is through this cross-company effort that we are now thriving in the world of BI, making well-informed business decisions and reaping the benefits of our new our data culture.

## For more information

### Microsoft IT Showcase

[microsoft.com/ITShowcase](https://microsoft.com/ITShowcase)

[Learn more about how Microsoft IT is using data analytics.](#)

[See examples of Microsoft teams using Power BI.](#)

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