



# Influencers in the Field

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## **From Insights to Action:** Building a Data-Driven Culture in Membership Organizations

Is your membership organization making the most of its data? In our digital-first society, many groups have the baseline ability to gather and analyze data thanks to the widespread availability of built-in analytical tools and dashboards. While this can yield benefits, crafting an authentic, data-driven culture offers far greater insights and advantages. By shifting your organization's cultural mindset from merely gathering data to making it a core part of the decision-making process, you can make informed strategic decisions, promote innovation and improve outcomes aligned with your goals.

Many member organizations experience the same set of operational concerns, such as improving retention, enhancing member satisfaction and encouraging greater engagement. A data-driven culture is central to achieving these goals, allowing you to transform raw data into actionable insights.

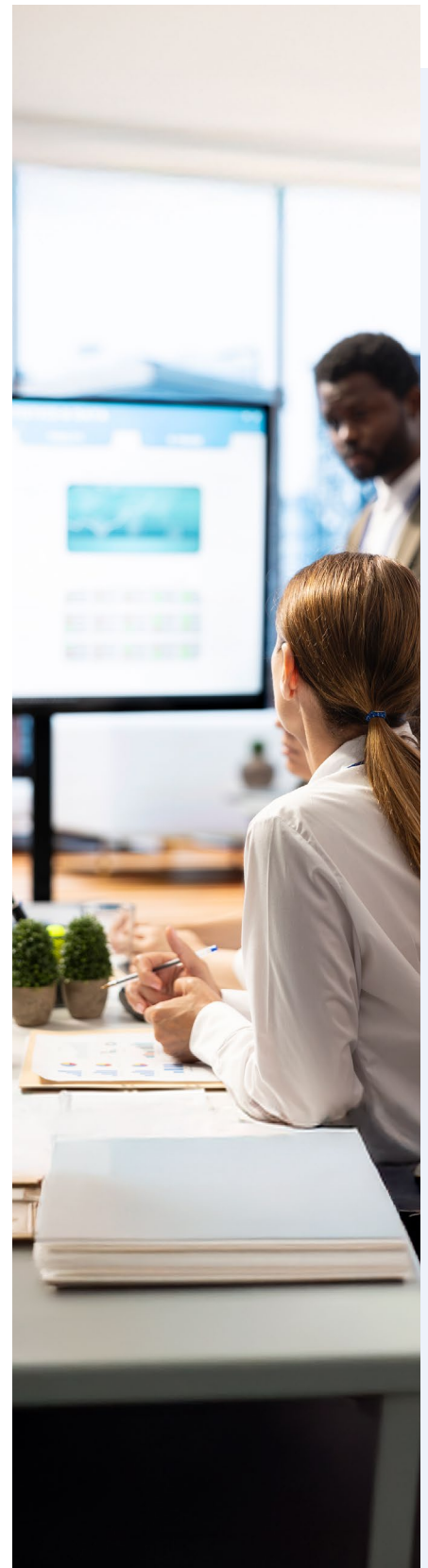
Taking proactive steps to improve your member organization's data prioritization isn't just good business sense; it's the way of the future. According to the [Data Literacy Project](#), data literacy — the ability to read, analyze, work and communicate with data — is set to become the most in-demand skill by 2030; additionally, it claims 85% of executives believe this ability will be as vital as computer literacy today.

## Strategies for Prioritizing Data

Any cultural shift within an organization requires the adoption of deliberate strategies to ensure these efforts are taken seriously at all levels. Failure to step up to the challenge means your data will remain mere numbers on a page, devoid of all meaning.

To develop a sustainable data-driven culture, consider implementing some of the following strategies:

- **Start with the executive suite** – You need high-profile data champions to model the behavior you want to see throughout the organization. Encourage your group's leaders to illustrate the required actions by asking questions about data, actively using it in their decision-making, celebrating analytics-based wins and encouraging data transparency. When senior leadership prioritizes data, it sends a signal throughout the organization; doing so can help ensure better resource allocation and combat resistance to change.
- **Clearly define your vision and goals** – How will a data-driven culture help your member organization succeed? Often, the first step toward establishing new goals is asking yourself what you want to learn about your members and their habits. Once your question is clearly articulated, you can more easily identify relevant data points. For a deeper dive into important data categories for your organization, refer to the section below titled *Key Data Points for Your Organization*.
- **Invest in data literacy programs** – Resistance to change often stems from uncertainty. Give staff members confidence in their data-handling abilities by developing an organization-wide data literacy program. You won't be the only ones; according to DataCamp's 2025 [State of Data & AI Literacy Report](#), 46% of surveyed leaders report such an effort, up from 35% in 2024 — a staggering 33% jump in priority within just one year. This initiative should help ensure understanding of essential program aspects, such as key performance indicators (KPIs), data interpretation and the use of analytical tools.
- **Leverage technology tools** – Your organization doesn't have to take this data journey alone. Utilizing trusted third-party resources, such as the Amazon Web Services (AWS) [suite of analytical tools](#), can help turn a big lift into a series of easy-to-manage tasks. If you don't have the capacity to take on that work in-house, partnering with a trusted organization like Gallagher Affinity can help. We pride ourselves on being an extension of your team, analyzing data and crafting evidence-based suggestions to help you and your members succeed.
- **Promote success stories** – Bring your data-driven initiative full circle by taking time to celebrate its achievements, both big and small. Whether in the form of a formal case study or simply telling the story of a positive result following data-driven changes, these demonstrate the tangible outcomes of your program. Doing so in a way that rewards innovative ideas also encourages employees to become curious about data and experiment with their own concepts.



## Key Data Points for Your Organization

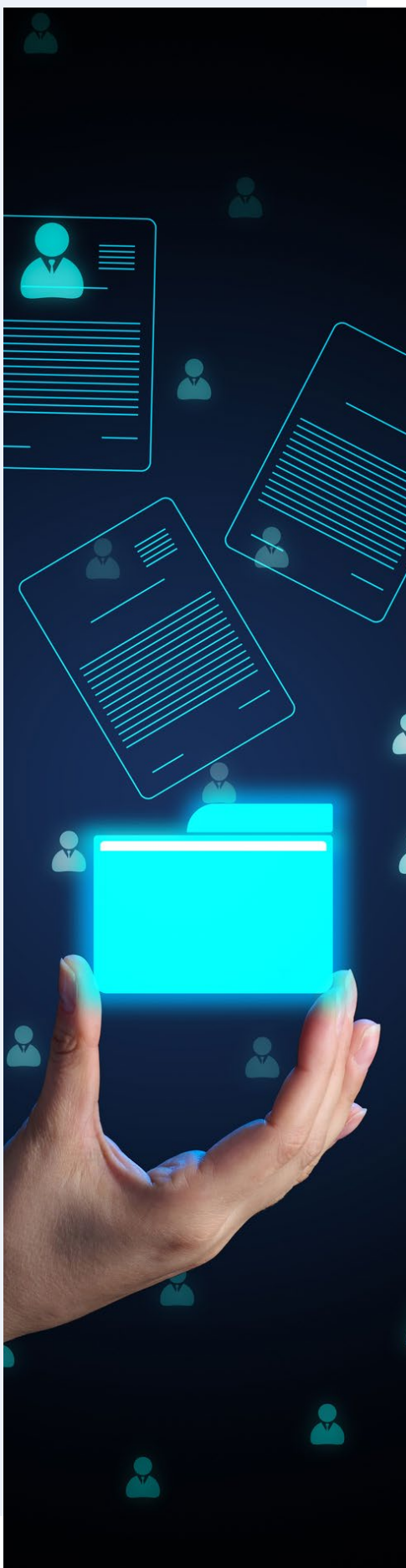
With the right data and analytical lens, it's possible to look at the past and better understand the underlying trends that impacted your member organization to date; it also arms you to turn your vision to the future with insight into what could happen regarding your ongoing goals, enabling you to make informed and strategic decisions.

These data points can vary based on what you're examining, but here is an overview of five important categories and the relevant metrics for each:

- **Member demographics** – This essential baseline data provides valuable insights into who your members are; it can help you determine the best way to conduct outreach and identify which services or opportunities might interest them. Track your members':
  - **Ages**
  - **Occupations**
  - **Education levels**
  - **Income levels**
  - **Family data, such as marital statuses and children**
- **Engagement metrics** – These datasets measure how often a member interacts with a product, service or specific content. Having a robust collection of engagement data can provide valuable insights into a number of situations, such as increasing member retention, optimizing current campaigns and illuminating when an offering is falling short. These metrics can include:
  - **Email and e-newsletter analytics** – Tracking the percentage of individuals who read your emails (open rate), those who click the links included in your newsletters or emails (click-through rate) and those who complete your desired action (conversion rate) can help reveal how impactful your communications are. Breaking these down into subject-based categories — such as event registrations, advocacy events, educational opportunities and volunteerism days — can help reveal what matters most to your members. This information also allows you to test variables to see whether they increase future engagement, such as a straightforward vs. funny subject line or an embedded text link vs. a button. Once you begin tracking this data, you can not only compare it to your historical numbers but also benchmark it against industry averages to ensure your messaging is best-in-class.
  - **Web analytics** – Your website is the digital base of operations for your member organization, as it's where most of your members will seek information. Keeping an eye on page view, bounce rate and time on page, especially if you've created single-purpose webpages in support of a singular offer, can help determine how much progress you've made toward your goals.
  - **Social media analytics** – Social media is the lifeblood of many organizations, fostering awareness and a sense of community for your membership. While your social media channels can change based on your members' demographics and offerings, tracking impressions, reactions, shares and comments is valuable data when examining engagement.







- **Event attendance** – Annual events, such as group-wide workshops and industry conferences, are often the cornerstone of a member organization’s annual activities. These events, when handled effectively, can become a major driver for membership growth, engagement and satisfaction. Pairing the attendance rate — the percent of those registered who actually show up — with demographic data and engagement rates for session attendance and booth visits can help reveal which aspects resonated with which segments of your members and which didn’t.
- **Resource downloads** – Member organizations regularly develop insightful content relevant to their members’ interests or industries, such as whitepapers, articles, FAQs, how-to guides and more. Capturing data on member engagement — such as page views, downloads and demographics — can help you determine which subjects perform best, which your members have no interest in and which gaps you can fill.
- **Feedback** – Continually improving and enhancing the member experience is vital to ensuring long-term retention and satisfaction. To that end, eliciting feedback can be a powerful vehicle in assessing areas for improvement. Using surveys, such as the Net Promoter Score (NPS), which rates respondents’ likelihood of recommending a company, product or service to a friend or colleague, can help you predict overall company growth, member lifetime value and areas for improvement.

## Taking Action on Data

Fostering a data-driven culture requires deliberate action at every level. Without action, the insights you’ll uncover will be useless.

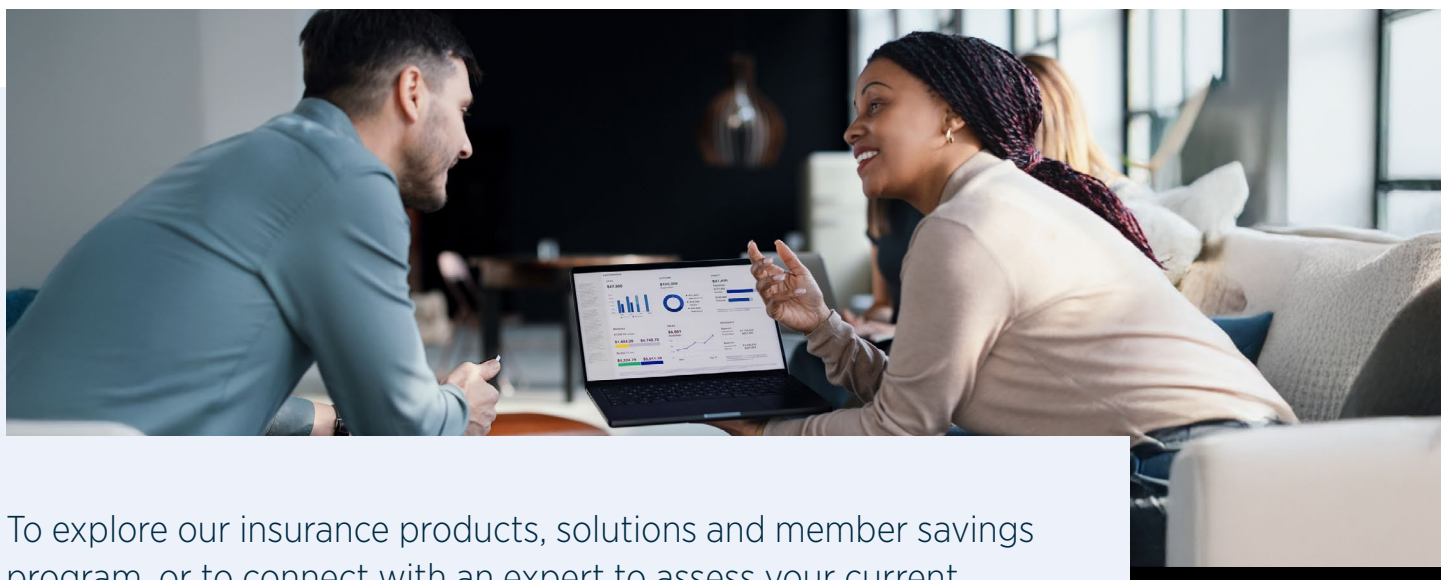
Let’s examine a situation involving a hypothetical professional member organization: Organizational leadership is happy with its older members’ engagement, but struggles to connect with newer, younger members. Demographic data shows these are young professionals aged 24 to 32, the majority of whom enrolled within the last year. Engagement data indicates this group regularly visits the website and social channels while taking advantage of their member benefits, but they are significantly underrepresented at online events, webinars and networking opportunities. It’s obvious they value their membership, but you want to ensure they’re involved at all levels to support long-term retention.

To this end, you decide to more closely examine the aspects of the organization in which they are involved, and an interesting pattern emerges: The majority of them have participated in advocacy events and downloaded a whitepaper detailing how proposed legislative changes and new requirements will impact the profession. Putting the pieces together, you develop the hypothesis that this is an active, politically minded group concerned about the future of their careers.

From there, you develop your data-driven strategy: Each month, you'll publish new content across all channels about the proposed legislation, its current status and steps members can take to make their voices heard. You're planning a webinar with the author of a popular whitepaper, and you're refreshing some old evergreen articles on topics targeted toward new professionals.

Before you embark on this new campaign, establish your key performance indicators (KPIs). KPIs are metrics that help you understand how your campaign is performing and, if it's not, adjust it for greater success. In this scenario, a valuable KPI could be "increasing young demographic participation in online webinars by 20% before the end of the year." KPIs allow you to track your performance over time and spot trends; they aren't set in stone, and it's natural for them to change or evolve based on outcome, much like any other campaign.

Building a data-driven culture in your member organization won't happen overnight. It requires sustained commitment and effort at all levels to succeed. Once you start making data a central part of your decision-making process, you'll have a powerful tool that enables you to build on past successes and correct plans before they go awry — the benefits will far outweigh your hard work.



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