



Stephanie Robinson

Qlik Manager IT BI Team at JBS USA



LINK

Finding the Recipe for a Data-Driven Company QLIK

MARCH 19, 2020

These days, it seems like every company wants to be data-driven. Or, at least, they say they do. The reality is that many organizations are either reluctant to fully embrace a data-driven culture, or simply unsure how to get started.

One of the first hurdles blocking progress toward full information integration is the belief that data integrity requires extremely limited access. In the past, this might have been true. The more hands accessing a data file, the less you could depend on the accuracy of the information.

Even where there was accuracy, the data was often so inconsistent that it was nearly meaningless. Every person accessing the information might have their own individual definitions for each data point. Well-meaning staff may also attempt database corrections that only make things worse.

The legacy of this previously messy process is the reluctance of modern organizations to release access to data to the entire organization. Even where staff may want personal involvement, that ongoing fear of losing control is unrelenting. Leaders may believe the perfect solution is to designate a small group of database administrators and allow staff the opportunity to request extractions or fact-finding projects. This solution almost always results in bottlenecks and a distancing from the concept of including data in decisions.

Like many other fears, the fear of losing control of the database is the dragon guarding the treasure of a data-driven company. Getting beyond this fear and giving everyone access to the information equally is the only way to truly build an intelligent organization.

Opening up access is the only path to building a data-driven company.

[SHARE IT](#) [TWEET IT](#)

In the past, I've worked with organizations that were afraid to face this dragon. Fortunately, at JBS USA the culture is defined by the easy access to data and the powerful innovations that creates. It is a most refreshing change. It's also a change that I'm confident you can find in your organization.

Duplicating the JBS USA Model for Data-Driven Success

From the surface, JBS USA is about food. The company processes, distributes, and retails a variety of beef, pork, lamb, poultry, and plant-based protein products. JBS is a global leader in protein operations. With facilities throughout the world, including Canada, the United States, Australia, Mexico, New Zealand, Europe, and the UK, and more than 100,000 employees. JBS is driven to provide the best possible protein products to people around the world.

Perhaps motivated by the inherent flexibility of recipes in the kitchen, it is an organization driven by innovation. JBS USA takes seriously the contributions of every single member of the employee family. Part of this culture of innovation is easy access to data tools throughout the company. The company wants every single corner of the organization able to explore the potential benefits of making smarter decisions that are data driven. There is no question that this policy results in dividends. The astounding growth over the decades is proof.

What is important to understand is that this model is possible to copy. Any organization can be more data-driven. All that is needed the right tools, and a commitment to training, support, and change management. I believe given this strategy, any organization can apply what we have learned and realize similar benefits.

Component 1: Training Staff to Understand and Use Data

If you're thinking about moving to a data-driven model, there's a reality you must face. There is no such thing as one truth in data. I believe many organizations fear open access to data because of the potential for a confusing number of truths to emerge.

If only one team has access to the data, then they will use one analysis formula and deliver one number to the organization. If multiple groups have access to the data, there is a potential for various numbers based on different formulas. The fear of these differing numbers scares many businesses away from a truly open environment. However, this fear is simply another dragon to slay.

There is a reason every research paper begins with a breakdown of the analysis methods. Dealing with different truths is simply a matter of understanding how data analysis works. It may be possible that we can even learn distinctive properties by examining the same data in different ways. That is why the first component of shifting to a data-centered culture begins with training for everyone interested in using data. At JBS USA, we are proud to offer a three-day training course to any employee who believes they may be able to use data within their job.

During the three days of training, we teach the basics. They learn how to load the data and relevant applications. We demonstrate functions like pivoting, scripting, and designing a data model. By the time they leave, they have at least experimented with creating tables, graphs, and other basic analysis tools. The point is to make sure everyone is exposed to the fundamental elements.

Now, experienced data analysts are no doubt chuckling at the very thought that three days can create a data scientist. But, that was not the intention. We are not bringing our employees to data science, we are bringing data science to our employees. Our point is to give them a formal introduction to that brave new world.

Initial training in BI won't make your employees data scientists. But it should get them excited about data.

[SHARE IT](#) [TWEET IT](#)

That is why [Qlik](#) is so powerful as a tool for teaching elementary business intelligence. Qlik can begin directly from a spreadsheet, so beginner users have a format they recognize. It is very easy to upload the data and create visual representations like tables and graphs. That ability to start simple allows new users to experience the analysis process almost immediately. Of course, the more expertise they gain, the more complicated the analysis they can use. Qlik is perfectly scalable to the user's expertise.

Component 2: Continued Support

After our employees learn the basics, the continued support component is really the most important element of inspiring learning. Most people don't learn by analyzing widgets and abstract concepts. But if you give people the tools and support to solve things that matter to their job, they simply love the opportunity.

The real learning happens when the employees go back to the job and attempt to apply what they learned to their own data. Our responsibility becomes providing them with the assistance they need to go from a screen full of numbers to realistic, useful insights.

This transition between classroom information and practical applications is accomplished through a number of methods. I regularly meet with many of our employees to walk them through the process of creating usable intelligence reports from internal data. The company also runs what we call "collaboration hours" once a week. During this time, one of our Qlik experts is available to meet with anyone who needs help developing a dashboard or a specific research project. We let people find their own interests, and then promise to provide them with the support they need to develop expertise.

Finally, we recently just purchased a large number of licenses with Qlik Sense so that we can use [Qlik Continuous Classroom](#). That purchase reinforces our belief that becoming data-driven is not about teaching employees a single skill. It is about demonstrating a commitment to lifetime learning.

Component 3: Change Management

The third component of building a BI-focused organization is largely psychological. Leadership has to understand that you can't make your organization smarter, and then stifle the resulting suggestions. If you want your staff to watch for opportunities for improvement, you might have to take the occasional leap of faith when the staff proposes ideas for change. That includes encouraging innovation and creating mechanisms for communicating new concepts to leadership.

Sending an email isn't change management. Your approach needs to be all-encompassing.

[SHARE IT](#) [TWEET IT](#)

Part of this new approach is a holistic strategy to change management. It is not enough to send an email informing the staff of the coming changes. When JBS USA changed from QlikView to Qlik Sense, we understood that some people get nervous about change. That is why we took an inclusive approach.

We created an ongoing campaign of information regarding the benefits of the switch to Qlik Sense, including many in-person demonstrations. We also allowed people to keep the QlikView tools they already created and permitted them to make the transition at their own schedule. Before long, the internal buzz we created pushed the change on our behalf. The early adopters became our informal Qlik Sense champions, and we were fully prepared to provide extra assistance to those struggling with the new application.

This more inclusive approach to innovation and change management is a necessary component of a business intelligence environment.

Why Qlik Is the Perfect Tool for the Data-Driven Transformation

An important underlying theme in this transformation journey is about finding the right tools. That's not enough, but it's an important foundation. What is really powerful is the fact that Qlik seems as dedicated to continued learning as JBS USA. The staff at Qlik are always willing to help with any problems. The best part is, they don't just want to answer my question. They want to understand *why* the question exists. Every interaction with Qlik feels like an opportunity to improve their products and related services. Perhaps that is why Qlik products are incredibly user-friendly and flexible.

They also offer powerful training tools like Qlik Masters Summit and the QlikWorld conferences. Also, as a Qlik Luminary, I have the opportunity to interact with other professionals who are equally passionate about business intelligence and Qlik products.

Those partnerships are immeasurably valuable in terms of finding solutions to whatever barriers exist to my success. Making intelligent, data-based decisions has never been more accessible than it is with Qlik.

The Real Power of Information Intelligence

Let's face facts. No company wants to transition to becoming data-driven simply for the fun of it. Enterprise leaders want results.

Navigating by business intelligence means having a much better picture of the interior environment of the company. With people in every corner of the organization regularly performing robust reports, we were able to experience truly enviable expansion over the last ten years. We are rarely surprised by internal trends that have gone unnoticed for years.

While other organizations beg employees to think outside the box when facing critical problems, our staff see opportunities for innovation as a perk of the job. That difference means we are nimble enough to quickly adapt to market changes and take advantage of the possibilities.

All it takes to truly embrace your new BI-focused reality is allowing your organization to prove its greatness. The dragon is waiting, but so is your treasure.