Category

Data & AI

Executive & Board Data Literacy Playbook (Decision-Maker Essentials)

A focused briefing program that gives executives and board members the specific questions to ask about data, without turning them into analysts.

- Executive
- Beginner
- Template Included

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- 7 minute(s)

Overview

Give executives and board members the exact questions to ask about any number put in front of them, in briefings short enough that senior leaders will actually attend.

Isn't this just basic critical thinking — why does it need a formal program?

Critical thinking about data specifically requires a shared vocabulary (definition, source, confidence, comparison basis) that most executives were never taught, plus social permission to ask "how do we know that" of a peer or a direct report without it reading as an attack. The program creates both the vocabulary and the permission structure.

How do we get board members to actually attend a training session?

Frame it as sharpening oversight and reducing personal liability exposure from approving decisions on unverified numbers, not as remedial education. Keep it to four sessions of 45 minutes each, scheduled well in advance, ideally attached to existing board or leadership offsite time.

What if the executive team resists being told they need "data training"?

Reframe the language entirely — call it a briefing series on board-level data governance, not training. Lead with the Data Appendix requirement as a governance win first; the skill-building sessions follow naturally once the group sees gaps surface in real board materials.

How is this different from the general employee data literacy program?

The general program builds broad workforce capability across many tools and tasks over months. This one is deliberately narrow — four questions, four sessions, applied only to the handful of numbers that reach board-level decisions — because executive time is the scarcest resource in the organization.

How often should the Four Questions reference card be refreshed?

Annually is sufficient for the questions themselves, since they're deliberately generic and durable. Refresh the accompanying real-example case studies every year so the material stays grounded in decisions the group actually remembers making.

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Talk to our data literacy team

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