

# Investing in People: Data Literacy and Upskilling

**Group discussion take-aways**  
**Data Leaders Peer Exchange Series**



In the recent Data Leaders Peer Exchange Event attendees in small groups discussed what can be done to ensure data literacy and upskilling gets enough attention as part of the strategy and what is the right way to prioritise the efforts.

Most were keen advocates of data literacy in their organisations, and so the question was how to ensure the right training is provided to the right people at the right time.

There seemed to be a consensus that training programs or courses are the way to go for both data specialists and wider organisation. It's important it's part of organisational structure to allow for personal development time, and respecting that allocation.

A few groups have suggested to start with the leadership. One group said: "Data literacy efforts should be prioritised for the leadership first to allow healthy processes and understanding and usage of data at all levels across the company. If Leadership is onboard to begin with then efforts can be prioritised to allow data literacy to happen at the same time across the company."

Lack of understanding can spark many unintended consequences - people are sceptical about what data can

bring, budget expectations can be misaligned because of lack of understanding of what it takes to achieve business goals with data. On the other hand, it can leave people, who are engaged and excited about data, frustrated, because they assume data projects can deliver instantly.

It was suggested that senior leaders should spend some time working with junior analysts, to see how they execute on the tasks they've been given, and better understand the limitations.

An aspect of unlearning should not be underestimated. People may assume they are doing things correctly, when the reality may be different. It's important to set the appropriate data governance measures in place.

When it comes to hiring, one team suggested hiring people with the right attitude and intrinsic motivation to work with data: 'Train them on the job rather than to look for the unicorn candidates out there'.

Finally, the dangers of over-democratising the data need to be taken into account. Poor data quality, incomplete data sets can lead people down the wrong path, create mistrust that will be hard to fix. Maintaining a central centre of excellence around data quality and data ethics is key.