Data

By [Mark Abbott](#)

Introduction

How an organization thinks about, selects, monitors, and leverages its data to accomplish its goals is key to accurately gauging how it's doing, from the whole organization to each team and Seat. That's why Data is one of the 9 Core Competencies of a great organization.

Data gives insight into the performance of:

- Organization
- Senior Leadership Team
- Departments
- Teams
- Individuals

Using data to analyze past decisions, inform current priorities, and more confidently predict future performance is critical for sustained long-term success. When organizations and their teams create **agreements-based** metrics and **set up data Scorecards** that predict trends and spot issues, data becomes a superpower.

Context

We believe mastery of the 9 Core Competencies is essential to building a great organization. **Data Competency** is our ability to define, align to, and track metrics that give us an actionable pulse on the organization.

Organizations can get more out of their data by using:

1. A top-down approach starts with building your Senior Leadership Team's **Scorecard**
2. A bottom-up approach begins with setting team member key performance indicators (KPIs)

At Ninety, we do both. We create Scorecards that can be easily monitored and leveraged by each team. A Scorecard is a set of **KPIs**, or quantifiable metrics, used to ensure we're all on the same page in terms of when there's an issue with one of our routine processes or

expected outcomes. Scorecards are owned by teams; KPIs are owned by the people in a Seat.

A Scorecard shows a carefully selected set of KPIs over a specified period of time. Teams and their leaders choose the data in each Scorecard to be the most useful, meaningful metrics for a person, team, or organization to monitor. KPIs make it possible for us to easily see what's working and not working and track (and even predict) important trends.

Leaders often ask, **"How do I know if we're tracking the right data?"** The reality is that choosing the right data requires time and experimentation. As always, use your **vision** as your compass. Specifically, your organization's Compelling Value Proposition (CVP) offers quantifiable touchpoints from your vision. For example, if your CVP is to offer outstanding customer service, the most informative data to track might be how many customer requests are received, how many are satisfactorily resolved, and how long it took to solve them.

At Ninety, every team and every person has a Scorecard displaying a set of KPIs for which they are responsible. Within each KPI is a **target**, which is an agreed-upon threshold. We're intentional about using issue-centric rather than goal-centric targets: outcomes that fall above or below its target are considered an **issue** and often warrant discussion to find a solution, especially if there's an obvious and negative trend.

For example, a sales team may have a Scorecard KPI for new client acquisitions. If their target for client acquisitions is 60 per month and they fall below that number, the team knows to look for a solution. The issue could come from the sales team's performance, the sales **process**, a change in the market, or the target itself.

Core Disciplines of Data

1. Every Seat owns three to five KPIs. Having just one or two gives too much weight to a single aspect of the Seat. Having more than five often becomes counter-productive and overwhelming.

2. KPIs aren't about micromanagement. They're a way of **agreeing on** what it looks like when things are going well and when there's an issue.

3. Team members own their targets. Everyone in the organization is responsible for their individual and team contributions to the overall vision.

4. Review Scorecards every week. One of our most important practices at Ninety is to review and discuss our data Scorecards every week during **Weekly Team Meetings** (WTMs) so leaders and their teams can make timely adjustments.

Hopefully Helpful Hints

Track the most important data rather than all data.

Measuring the right activities — especially those that help us identify issues — is essential. Leading indicators tend to be more useful than lagging indicators. For example, a hotel might closely monitor its weekly revenue and occupancy rates while keeping track of the dollar value of reservations made for the next 30 days. If reservations (leading indicator) drop significantly, the staff knows they can expect a drop in weekly revenue (lagging indicator) unless they take action to boost occupancy.

Understand what the data means and how to use it.

Organizations that monitor and leverage data to make decisions must ensure leaders have enough context to understand it. Properly informed leaders and their teams understand the difference between normal fluctuations and urgent issues and will have an easier time making good decisions.

Share data sooner rather than later.

Using data to identify or even prevent issues is different from sharing data to report on performance each quarter or year. In the hotel example, leaders won't be able to improve the low reservation rate for the next 30 days if they don't receive the data until day 31. Reporting Scorecard data during Weekly Team Meetings can help spot issues earlier and solve them promptly.

Takeaway

Mastering the Data Competency helps leaders make better-informed decisions and ensures everyone is on the same page in terms of what's decent performance and when there's an issue. However, organizations must be thoughtful about which data to track. The right data to track varies from one organization to the next and requires the collaboration of leaders at every level in the organization to determine. Finally, we recommend reviewing Scorecard data during all Weekly Team Meetings so teams can decide what actions to take to meet their performance agreements.

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