

6 Yellow Flags of Using Too Much Data

Data can be a leader's friend as [it is wise for leaders to leverage data in their decision-making](#). While it is foolish for leaders to ignore data, it is equally unhealthy for leaders to obsess over it. Here are six problems with obsessing over data:

1. You can find your worth in the numbers.

There are some leaders who find their worth in their weekly or daily dashboards. Ministry leaders are not immune to the temptation. In our sinfulness, a desire to reach people can become about the number and what that number says about our effectiveness. Having served in a rapidly growing environment, I learned the sinfulness in my own heart and needed God's grace constantly to rescue me from finding my worth in a spreadsheet.

2. You can allow one metric to drive you.

Leaders who wisely use data look at more than one metric, as it is possible to allow one metric to drive you and lead in ways that are not healthy for the whole. For example, in church ministry, if a leader is consumed only with the weekend attendance metric, investments will be heavily weighted toward the weekend and away from focus on leadership development, discipleship, and sending others.

3. You can miss the bigger picture.

Some leaders analyze and analyze and miss the proverbial forest for the trees of data that consume them. By living in the data, they can fail to deliver overarching direction.

4. You can miss small data.

With all the emphasis on big data (learning through looking at data in multiple ways), Martin Lindstrom released his book *Small Data* to emphasize the importance of observing real people and not simply looking at numbers. If you obsess over data, you can miss the stories of the real people that are more than just data. If you obsess over data, you can lose your heart for the people the data represents.

5. You live reactively instead of proactively.

Those who obsess over data are likely to react continually to it instead of proactively charting a course and letting the data speak into the execution of that course. Those who obsess over data don't lead with conviction but can allow the data to lead them in a myriad of different directions.

6. You can re-create what has already been created.

In software development it has become common to release iterations, gather customer feedback, and adjust to that feedback. Some have pointed out that while the approach is valid, it results in creating what has already been created. If you are going to lead a team that meets a different need, data is important, but you have to look at data in light of your overarching mission.

Look at data. Learn from data. But don't find your worth in it, and don't obsess over it.

> [Read more from Eric.](#)