Four questions to ask before getting started on a building analytics project

We've all heard that we should be "doing analytics" to take advantage of the true power of big data. But figuring out where to start with turning zeroes and ones into actionable intelligence can be daunting. And, if you're not careful once you do embark on an analytics project, the size and scope can quickly get out of hand.

Here's the truth – you shouldn't be afraid to start small. Don't try to boil the ocean on your first venture out to sea. Here are a few things to consider before, and while, getting started on a building analytics project.

1.) What is my goal? What problems do I want to solve with my new analytics system?

Before you do anything around analytics, engage in conversations about your top business priorities.

Some goals building analytics can achieve:

- Improve comfort
- Improve maintenance and lower costs
- Energy savings
- Utility cost savings
- Improve uptime on equipment
- Predictability of operational costs
- Easier access to data

Narrowing down what you want your system to accomplish first will also set up a clear roadmap for success, with a limited scope and very specific action items for both internal and external teams.

2.) How am I going to take the findings from my data and produce actionable results? Do I have a system in place to act on a recommendation?

Whether you are looking to save energy or just improve your workflow, your new analytics system should result in a host of new ideas for projects. Take the time to consider what processes are in place to take those ideas and make them a reality. You'll need to have an idea of whose approvals are required and what information they need to make their decision, who will manage new projects and who will complete the repairs or installation. An understanding of your company's budget cycle and limitations is key to sizing your analytics system to provide you with the right types of recommendations.

The last thing you want is a system that produces valuable recommendations that sit on a shelf. Be sure you're ready to turn those new ideas into results.

PRO TIP

Don't overlook the small stuff. Projects that address business questions as simple as "Is this piece of equipment running when it should not be?" can produce solid results quickly.

PRO TIP

Don't get over-excited about alarms. Too many alarms can create a boy-crying-wolf scenario that bogs down workflow and undermines the system.

3.) Who is the intended audience for my new analytics tool?

Each audience within your business has a different need, a different skill set and a differing ability when it comes to advanced digital technologies.

Some potential audiences are:

- Energy managers
- Facility managers
- Control technicians
- Maintenance
- Chief financial officer

Understanding the intended users is a crucial step and allows you to answer the last and most important question.

4.) How does my audience need to receive the information in order to use the analytics system to achieve our goals?

There are many options for displaying and delivering analytic information. In most cases, this depends on the type of information you want, how often you want it, and how many people need to receive it.

Some options for data delivery are:

- Alarms and notifications delivered to field technicians
- Reports emailed on a set schedule
- Advanced data analysis tools
- Interactive dashboards to monitor critical equipment and highlight areas of concern

There is so much data available in any system, it is crucial to determine what you are looking for, who is looking for it, and how they are going use that information in their daily business operations to achieve your agreed-upon goals.

The analytics experts and data engineers at Kodaro have experience with analytics projects big and small. We'd be happy to talk about what you need analytics to do for you, and what we might be able to build together.