



COVID-19 INSIGHT

NAVIGATING A NEW WORLD



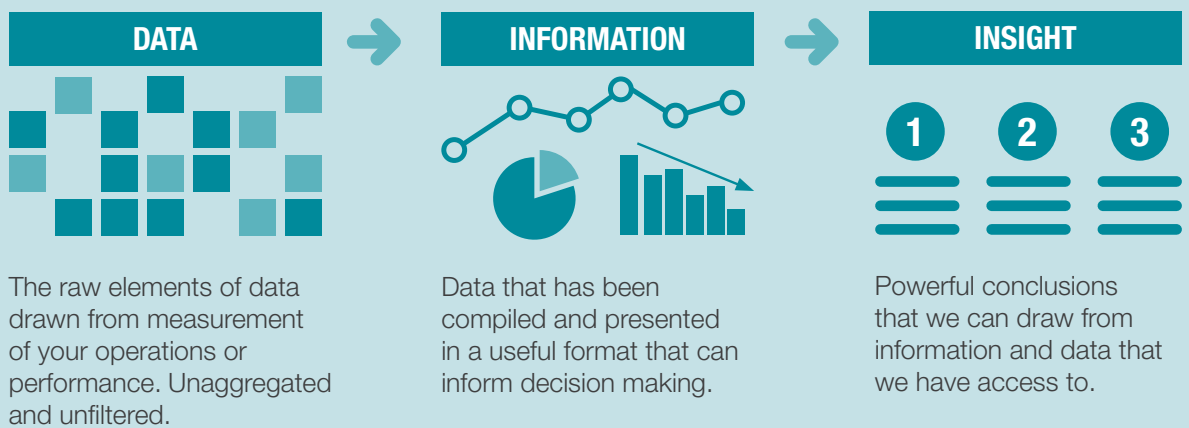
Leveraging data
to improve delivery

The rise of the coronavirus pandemic has ensured that we are never far away from a demonstration of the importance of good data. From infection rates to economic productivity, the unprecedented impact of the virus has meant it is more important than ever for us all to be able to understand the data we have and use it to make critical decisions.

For corporates, investors, consultants and contractors, the importance of data has meant a total transformation of how they use their own data. As we begin to work our way back to the ‘new normal’, it is critical that we continue to focus on data-driven decision making.

For the built environment sector – where progress on the use of data has been slow compared to other industries – COVID-19 provides us with an opportunity to truly transform how we work using the power of data and technology. Why can’t a client track real-time delivery of assets on a site? Why can’t the consultants provide a live data studio that tracks productivity? Why can’t a global team collaborate effortlessly to deliver a project in London?

Moving from data to insight



1

The scale of the challenge

In previous reports in this series we have highlighted the ‘productivity gap’ that we must cross in order to return to a sustainable level of productivity across the sector. The restrictions on construction delivery – social distancing and its impact on access to site, ways of working and welfare capacity – mean that we face a long-term 20% reduction in output.

To fix that gap, we need to find smarter solutions to boost productivity with a smaller workforce – and we won’t know that’s working unless we can aggregate data on performance and productivity across entire programmes or sectors.

2

Data blindness and the opportunity of the pandemic

The construction industry has often been criticised for its slow progress on digitisation and the use of data. Companies often considered themselves ‘data blind’ and solving that problem was expensive and a slow process.

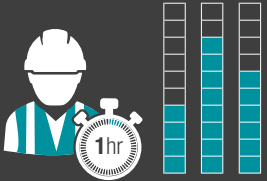



In reality, companies in the sector already had access to great data; particularly on project delivery; but that data was not seen as a resource and leveraged effectively. Overlooked, it sat in manually compiled spreadsheets that were hard to use and impossible to aggregate to create meaningful insight.

For many firms the pandemic has required a total transformation of the use of internal corporate data. On everything from financial resilience to workforce data, the lockdown and relaxing of restrictions has forced companies to quickly adapt and adopt to data-driven decision making. Executives need live data to make decisions in a crisis situation – and in turn that has driven behaviour change across organisations.

3

Tracking your performance

Mace has established four key areas of measurement and data which every business in the construction and infrastructure sector – from clients to contractors and suppliers – must consider when making decisions:

PRODUCTIVITY AND OUTPUT 	PEOPLE 	FINANCIAL RESILIENCE 	MATERIALS AND SUPPLY CHAINS 
CURRENT CHALLENGE			
What output are your projects and programmes achieving?	Have you got the right resource level in place to manage the return to work?	Can your finances remain resilient if we face a second wave of the pandemic?	Are your strategic supply chain engaged and aware of the issues?
FUTURE CHALLENGE			
Where are risks emerging or contractual liabilities mounting?	How will your requirements change in the future?	Will contractual risk overwhelm your reserves?	Can your projects and programmes continue to deliver if supply chains are impacted?
DATA REQUIRED			
Output and productivity per worker hour	Utilisation rates, workforce engagement	Revenue, cashflow, liabilities, assets	Lead times, supplier performance, supplier finances

4

Transforming our delivery using data-driven insights

That new approach – quick behaviour change and iterative use of data – now needs to move beyond the board room and into operational project delivery. Uncertainty is a huge risk to delivering projects and programmes, and the more we can use and integrate data sources that already exist the more we can ensure our delivery is resilient to the challenges we face.

There are five steps that we believe are critical for embedding these behaviours across your organisation and ensuring you’re using data-driven insights to deliver better outcomes:

1. Set the critical corporate KPI’s

Different challenges require different data. In the resilience phase, businesses needed to understand their exact position quickly – whether that’s their cash balances or the number of workers on site each day. On the return to work, it is the output and productivity KPIs that will be key – the business will need to be constantly checking to make sure that it is genuinely returning to an effective level of production.

These then need to be run as often as possible – you can’t fly blind at such a critical juncture. Best guesses and month-old data won’t do; it needs to be accurate and it needs to be regular. Investing time and energy into getting this right will pay dividends later.

2. Identify key data sets for programme delivery

The impact of coronavirus made it clear very quickly that companies needed access to live, up-to-the-second data on their people, their finances and their performance – but at a project and programme level it is not always clear what data is accessible and what will make a difference to performance.

Productivity data is critical during this period, as is data on the supply chain and it’s performance. The important thing is being able to integrate this data at a macro level to provide visibility to the leadership of emerging risks and opportunities.

3. Set clear bench marks – establish what good looks like

Once you've established the KPIs and data sets, you need to track them against a clear transparent set of benchmarks. No goalpost moving here – you need to define early on what good looks like, and don't prevaricate if those targets aren't being hit.

Data gives you clearer insight into what's happening in your business, but it won't make a difference if you ignore what it is telling you; or you assume the data is the problem rather than the solution.

4. Challenge your teams to think differently and keep sharing

Teams across the business have a tendency to only share the data they find useful, if they share any at all. Fully data-driven businesses deliver value by combining data sets from across the business to uncover fresh insight – something which is impossible to do if people aren't sharing everything.

The coronavirus pandemic has given a clear imperative for transparent data sharing between teams – and it's important that drive isn't lost as we return to work. What data can each team or business division share about the recovery? How can those insights be shared and embedded across the organisation?

5. Leverage your existing data and tools

Often businesses are seriously under-utilising their existing suite of digital tools, missing out on key insight. If you've invested in digital tools that have helped deliver more productive working before the pandemic, now is the time to sweat those assets. What data can they generate? Does it match or contradict data being reported through other channels?

For example, if you've got clever BIM tools in place on projects or programmes advanced, can those outputs be matched to more analogue measures of production, such as people attending site each day? If so, that data can be used to validate assumptions about work being delivered; in turn giving you more certainty you're hitting your plan.