

In Plain Sight: Why Analytics Efforts Fail

Why User Adoption is the Leading Indicator



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Introduction

Many organizations pour time and resources into deploying advanced analytics platforms, confident that data-driven transformation will naturally follow. But experience shows that technology alone rarely delivers the expected results. Underneath the surface, there is a key, often-overlooked factor separating analytics success stories from costly disappointments: adoption.

Most analytics projects falter not due to tool selection or technical glitches, but because users simply don’t use what’s been built. Granting access is not the same as achieving true adoption. When dashboards don’t fit into daily workflows, lack role-based relevance, or users aren’t empowered through training and feedback, analytics investments turn into “shelfware”: expensive tools with little impact.

What’s the real reason so many analytics efforts fail? It’s not the data, the platform, or the visualizations, it’s the absence of a deliberate adoption strategy grounded in understanding, enablement, and engagement. When adoption is prioritized as a strategic pillar from day one, analytics become woven into the culture of decision-making, driving the outcomes organizations envision.

The Myth of “If You Build It, They Will Come”

Across industries and government sectors, organizations repeatedly invest in new analytics platforms, convinced that the latest technology is all they need. But reality paints a different picture, a landscape dotted with powerful dashboards that nobody uses. The “Field of Dreams” fallacy: building something and expecting users to naturally gravitate to it, remains a primary reason analytics initiatives underwhelm.

Gartner estimates that up to 87% of data science projects never reach production. Even more concerning: an average of 60 to 80% of analytics investments become “shelfware,” or underused platforms languishing in the digital shadows.

Legacy thinking assumes technology alone will drive transformation, but it is people, empowered, informed, and confident, who actually deliver value.

Why Adoption Must Be a Strategic Pillar

The best designed dashboard that nobody cares is useless. Organizations treat change management and end-user adoption as “add-ons” rather than pillars of transformation. Adoption is not an afterthought. It should be the north star of every analytics initiative. You should start your planning with adoption in mind. **Adoption is the greatest measure of success in anything.** It must be an integral to planning, design, delivery, education, and evolution (PDDEE). Without strategic focus on who will use the data, how they’ll use it, and why it matters, even the most sophisticated dashboards become digital wallpaper, offering decoration rather than insight.

What Most Organizations Get Wrong

Mistaking Access for Adoption

Provisioning licenses does not equal producing insights. Login counts can masquerade as success while dashboards sit untouched. Adoption requires measurable engagement: frequency of use, depth of interaction, and demonstrable influence on decisions.

Building Dashboards Without Understanding User Needs

Relevance is king. When KPIs are not tied to daily workflows, users drown in metrics they neither trust nor need. Effective design starts with ethnographic research: ride-alongs, interviews, and workflow mapping, so that every visual answers an actual business question. Analytics need to help people perform their daily tasks not drag them down by adding more to their already busy work.

Over-Governance has the potential to kill curiosity. Rigid approval queues and blanket restrictions push users back to spreadsheets. Governance should enable exploration while protecting data. Lightweight guardrails, role-based row-level security, governed data catalogs, and audit trails, build confidence without blocking innovation.

Considering Users Inapt: Too often organizations assume their people “won’t get it” and design with the lowest common denominator in mind. By dumbing down applications or resisting improvements, they underestimate their users’ ability to learn and adapt. This mindset limits adoption and stifles the user experience, when in reality thoughtful design and guided enablement can elevate everyone’s capability.

Underinvesting in Training, Enablement & Feedback

Do not treat training as a one-off event. Webinars at go-live don't move the needle. Adult learning theory tells us that spaced repetition, hands-on challenges, and peer coaching drive retention. Without a structured path: awareness → guided practice → mastery, the analytics muscle atrophies.

Change scares people. If organizations fail to proactively train and enable users, not just on “what buttons to push,” but on “why this matters”, adoption stalls. Missing regular feedback loops also guarantees dashboards drift from what users actually need. If people do not understand the value of change, they will not change.

Analytics products must evolve with the business. Yet many teams ship dashboards and vanish. Continuous instrumentation (usage telemetry), in-app surveys, and 30-day enhancement sprints keep solutions relevant and users invested.

The Real Costs of Poor Adoption

Organizational busyness is no substitute for effectiveness, and poor adoption quietly sabotages transformation efforts from within.

Cost	Symptom	Impact
Shelfware	Licenses go unused	Wasted spend & CFO scrutiny
Shadow IT	Users revert to rogue spreadsheets	Data silos & governance risk
Decision Fatigue	Too many irrelevant dashboards	Slower, less confident decisions
Change Fatigue	Re-launches without results	Erodes trust in future initiatives
Technical Debt	Short-term fixes pile up over time	Increased maintenance, reduced agility

The IPC Global Approach: Adoption-First Analytics

Adoption-first isn't about dashboards, it's about outcomes. Every insight, every data point, every chart must be tied directly to a decision or action. Users become champions for data not because they're told to, but because it makes their jobs easier, faster, and smarter. Having partnered with government agencies, hospitals, manufacturers, nonprofits, and several enterprises, IPC Global has witnessed the pitfalls and triumphs of analytics transformation up close. The verdict: Projects succeed when adoption is the first metric of success, not the last.

What works:

- Co-designing analytics with business users
- Embedding iterative feedback throughout the project lifecycle
- Investing early in organizational enablement and executive sponsorship
- Align dashboards to business priorities
- List actions users should take based on insights they got from dashboards
- Every single metric in a dashboard must be aligned with an actionable insight
- Identify the **Stop Doing** list

What fails:

- Assuming access equals adoption
- Rigid dashboards with no user input
- No real business impact
- Data just add more work to people, no ambient analytics
- No formal feedback or iteration
- No ability for self-service to drive users' needs
- I.T. dependency leads to backlog and users create “alternative” routes.

Stop Doing: Clearing the Path for True Adoption

Successful adoption isn't only about building new capabilities, it's also about letting go of outdated, inefficient habits that block momentum and erode trust in analytics. Too often, organizations cling to manual processes or poor practices that prevent analytics from living up to their promise. To fully embrace adoption-first analytics, leaders must recognize and eliminate these “Stop Doing” items. The “Stop Doing” list must be assigned as tasks in a company-wide To-Do list, measured and reported. Everyone must clear their “Stop Doing” list.

Some examples:

- **Stop exporting to Excel:** static spreadsheets weaken trust and drain time instead of enabling live, dynamic insights. Additionally, it is a threat to data privacy and data governance.
- **Stop emailing reports to stakeholders:** emailed reports create version control issues and disconnect teams from real-time performance.
- **Stop manually updating the CRM:** manual inputs create errors, bottlenecks, and inconsistent data quality.
- **Stop forecasting results manually:** spreadsheet-driven forecasts are fragile and often inaccurate; analytics offers accuracy and agility.
- **Stop manually reconciling multiple reports:** reconciliation should be automated; duplication signals poor data integration.
- **Stop “list matching” by hand:** prevent wasted hours and mistakes with analytics-driven automation.
- **Stop wondering whether tasks are complete (e.g., T&Es submitted):** dashboards should provide automated status tracking, erasing uncertainty.
- **Stop managing without performance facts:** decisions must be grounded in trusted analytics, not hunches or stale reports.
- **Stop assuming technology equals adoption:** having powerful platforms (like Snowflake, Qlik, or others) doesn't guarantee usage; success comes from people enabled to apply them.

Qlik as an Enabler, Not the Solution

Qlik delivers industry-leading technology, but it is only as valuable as the people and processes driving its use. Qlik is the only true end-to-end data platform. It is the best choice for analytics for any company, public or private

sector. However, IPC Global positions Qlik as an enabler, the real solution is a workforce empowered to answer questions, challenge assumptions, and make confident decisions. The key is our people, not the technology.

The Blueprint: 6 Elements of a Successful Adoption Strategy

Before organizations can achieve real results from their analytics investments, they must move beyond simply delivering dashboards and reports to foster deep, lasting user engagement. True transformation happens when analytics become essential tools in daily decision-making, embedded to the work, driven by intuitive design, meaningful onboarding, trusted governance, ongoing iteration, and metrics that reflect genuine value. The following blueprint distills IPC Global's proven approach into five core elements, each critical to building a culture where data is not just accessible but truly adopted. By focusing on role-based design, user enablement, frictionless governance, continuous feedback, and impact-driven metrics, organizations can bridge the gap between analytics potential and real-world impact: turning underused platforms into indispensable instruments for growth.

1: Role-Based Application Design

Identify Key Personas: Understand the needs, goals, and pain points of executives, analysts, operational staff, and front-line team members.

Customize KPIs & Views: Personalize analytics, so each user interacts with what matters to them.

Support Everyday Decisions: Each dashboard should be mapped to specific business questions or decisions, moving from generic reporting to actionable insight.

2: User Enablement Paths

Structured Onboarding: Don't just hand over a login, walk users through their specific flows. This must be an ongoing process as new users are always coming and users might also change roles and responsibilities.

Peer Champions: Identify and empower internal advocates who drive adoption through influence and demonstration.

Tiered Training: Start with foundational learning, then progress users from awareness, through practical usage, toward mastery with advanced features.

3: Governance without Friction

Build Trust with Light Touch: Govern data access, not to restrict, but to empower and build trust.

Access Control as Adoption Enabler: Align permissions to user roles, ensuring access is intuitive and frictionless.

"Trust, Don't Police" Model: Promote self-service analytics within a secure and reliable framework.

4: Continuous Feedback & Iteration

Usage Analytics: Track engagement patterns: what's working, what's not?

In-App Feedback Channels: Make feedback easy and immediate.

Agile Iteration: Update dashboards regularly based on data and direct feedback and the company strategy, keeping them relevant and user-friendly. Dashboards should tie to the business priorities.

Top Users: An application steering committee is composed of the top users who prioritize the next application features.

5: Adoption Metrics That Matter

Beyond Logins: Track true engagement: session depth, duration, data re-use, and collaboration.

Decision Influence: Quantify how analytics shape business outcomes: where did a dashboard tip the scale?

Reusability Measurement: Evaluate if components and data sets are leveraged across projects or stuck in silos.

Your Path Forward: How IPC Global Can Help

Successfully embedding analytics into the fabric of your organization requires more than technology, it demands a purposeful, structured approach to driving adoption at every level. IPC Global offers a suite of specialized services designed to unlock sustained value, accelerate cultural change, and ensure analytics becomes a catalyst, not a cost. Here's how our approach propels your journey:

Adoption Readiness Assessment (ARA)

IPC Global's ARA is a deep-dive diagnostic that examines every facet impacting analytics adoption: technology infrastructure, user skills, cultural readiness, executive engagement, and existing workflows. We conduct focused interviews, review platform usage data, and benchmark your environment against industry best practices.

As part of the Adoption Readiness Assessment (ARA), IPC Global provides organizations with a practical tool for self-evaluation: the Adoption Checklist. This checklist helps teams identify strengths and gaps across the key pillars of successful analytics implementation. Rooted in the 7D Framework of evaluation, the checklist covers critical dimensions, including strategy, design, training, governance, feedback, measurement, and culture, to ensure a comprehensive and actionable review. While the 7D Framework underpins the assessment process, the checklist itself keeps things straightforward for business leaders, offering a hands-on starting point to guide improvement without overwhelming detail.

Enablement Blueprint

Our Enablement Blueprint takes the guesswork out of driving lasting engagement. Building on insights from the ARA, we design a concrete, step-by-step rollout plan. This blueprint maps out how each user persona: executives, analysts, operational leaders, or front-line staff, will be onboarded, trained, and supported. It aligns content, channels, and cadence to maximize learning retention and enthusiasm, incorporating embedded support resources and timely interventions. The blueprint also leverages change champions and peer networks to foster a culture where analytics can thrive organically, ensuring your rollout goes beyond launch day and delivers ongoing value.

Persona Mapping Workshop

Analytics initiatives often falter when solutions don't reflect the real-world roles and workflows of end users. Our Persona Mapping Workshop is a collaborative, interactive session that brings together business users, technical teams, and leadership. We map the day-to-day realities: what decisions must be made, what pain points hinder

progress, which KPIs matter most, and how information flows. The outcome is a set of rich, actionable personas that serve as blueprints for future dashboard design and enablement programs, ensuring every analytics deliverable is relevant, meaningful, and actionable for its intended audience.

Adoption KPIs & Executive Reporting

Adoption must be measured to be managed. IPC Global builds live, executive-ready dashboards that track not just logins, but the metrics that truly matter: depth and frequency of user engagement, impact on key decisions, collaboration rates, and correlation with critical business outcomes (like error reduction or process acceleration). We arm leaders with transparency and insights, enabling data-driven investment choices and fast course corrections. Our reporting shifts focus from vanity metrics to tangible results, making analytics adoption a core part of how you measure overall organizational performance.

Value for You

Clear Strategy for Adoption: Our methodology equips you with a structured, actionable plan focused on driving user engagement and business outcomes, not just platform deployment.

Fast Path from Investment to Value: Accelerate time-to-impact by ensuring every stage, from assessment to rollout to measurement, is aligned to deliver results and ROI quickly.

Sustainable Usage Growth and Culture Change: With a system of ongoing enablement and adoption metrics, your organization builds not just dashboards, but a culture where data-driven thinking is embedded in everyday action.

With IPC Global, your analytics journey transforms from a hopeful investment into a strategic advantage, where adoption is engineered, measured, and, above all, achieved.

Key Takeaways

Taking the next step toward effective analytics adoption means translating insights from this white paper into concrete actions within your organization. By focusing on readiness, engagement, and measurable outcomes, you can ensure that your analytics investments lead to sustained business impact. Here's how to begin moving from intention to implementation:

Adoption is the True Success Factor: The most powerful analytics platforms fail without active, enthusiastic users. Real transformation depends not on technology alone, but on embedding analytics into daily decision-making at every level.

Access ≠ Adoption: Merely providing tools or dashboards is not enough. Lasting impact requires role-based design, targeted enablement, and ongoing user engagement.

Build for Decisions, Not Decoration: Dashboards should empower users to make faster, more confident decisions. When insights remain unused, analytics investments become costly shelfware.

Continuous Feedback Fuels Improvement: Listening to users, tracking meaningful metrics, and iterating on your approach keeps analytics fresh, relevant, and widely adopted.

Measuring What Matters Drives Value: Meaningful adoption metrics, like engagement depth, decision influence, and outcome improvement, show the true business impact of analytics.

A Structured Strategy Delivers Results: Purposeful frameworks, like the one outlined by IPC Global, bridge the gap between analytics potential and organizational value, building sustainable data-driven cultures.

What's next?

Ready to turn analytics from a technical investment into a strategic driver of your organization's success? Here's how to get started:

1. **Assess Your Adoption Readiness:** Begin with an objective, organization-wide review of your current analytics landscape, user engagement, and culture. IPC Global's Adoption Readiness Assessment (ARA) will help you uncover roadblocks and opportunities.
2. **Engage Your Stakeholders:** Involve business leaders, technical teams, and end users early. Schedule a Persona Mapping Workshop to ensure your solutions address real needs and empower decision-makers.
3. **Build a Clear Roadmap:** Develop an Enablement Blueprint tailored to your organization's culture, workflows, and goals. This ensures a smooth rollout and sustainable engagement.
4. **Measure and Refine:** Establish robust Adoption KPIs and Executive Reporting dashboards. Monitor progress, gather feedback, and continuously iterate to close adoption gaps.
5. **Connect with Success:** Learn from organizations who've transformed analytics adoption into measurable business gains. IPC Global can arrange introductions to real-world clients with firsthand experience.

Take the first step today:

- Download the Adoption Checklist to benchmark your current approach.
- Schedule a free 30-minute Adoption Readiness Assessment with IPC Global's experts.
- Discover how adoption-first analytics can help you unlock the full value of your data.
- Your analytics deserve to drive action, not gather dust. Let's make adoption your competitive edge.

Visit ipc-global.com to get started.

About IPC Global

IPC Global is a diverse, nationwide team of experienced, engaging, and effective data analytics experts. We provide advisory, consulting and managed services to solve your organization's Enterprise Intelligence challenges. For more than 20 years we have been the go-to source for Artificial intelligence, Data Analytics, Data Science & Research, Business intelligence, Cloud Solutions, Data Integration, Education, Advisory services and more.



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