



# Lessons from working with Data

I've been working in data for almost 20 years and dogmatically subscribe to the following absolute laws of data:

**Data insatiability:** If you give anyone any data at all they will ask for more. There is no data point that is considered final and satisfactory. Never!

**Data questionability:** Any suitably intelligent person can discount, inject doubt in, or discredit any data presented to them. There is no absolute data truth.

**Data trustability:** You cannot trust any data you do not fully know: origin, collection, storage, transformation. There is no trust in data.

**Data storytelling:** The most under appreciated skill is the ability to tell a narrative story from data. Catch-22 here, as most data narratives are cherry picked, misleading, flawed, and shouldn't be taken at face value.

**Data misuse:** Most people use data to persuade you to adopt their own predetermined opinion. Be careful. Survivorship bias in results is real: they will only show you things they want you to see! Not to say they're bad, we all just do this naturally!

**Data motivation:** You must never pull a data point for anyone anytime without questioning the motivation. "Why?" is your first and most important question and can save you days of misery.

**Data strategy:** Nobody is "data driven". Data cannot create a strategy, only inform one. "Following the data" is another way of saying "following your interpretation of a limited set of data".

**Data limitations:** Sadly for us data nerds, a very large % of the time you are better off spending time fixing known issues with your product vs. building more dashboarding or analysis to "understand something deeper".

**Data unactionability:** Most data analysis results are unactionable. "What will we do differently if we know the result" is your most important beginning question.

**Data joy:** This all said, there's no high like producing a beautiful data visualization that shows all of your hopes and dreams. It's the best!

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