

USE YOUR DATA AND **BOOST YOUR BUSINESS!**

Making Better Decisions With The Info You Already Have **By Brandon Willey**

As a bowling center or FEC operator, you are sitting on something incredibly valuable — your data. From foot traffic patterns and guest demographics to sales numbers and behavior trends, you have a goldmine at your fingertips. The real magic? Figuring out how to use it to fine-tune operations, boost revenue, and give guests experiences they cannot wait to come back for.

WHY DATA-DRIVEN DECISIONS MATTER

Sure, data-driven management is not new. But today's tools are more powerful and easier to use than ever before. POS and scoring systems, cashless cards, marketing platforms, Bluetooth tracking, Wi-Fi tracking, and digital booking platforms all give you insights you *can actually act on*.

Imagine quickly answering questions like:

1. Which parts of your center bring in the most guests, and when?
2. What food and drinks are hot sellers at various times of the day?

3. How do different age groups spend their money across your attractions?
4. Which promotions or ads are making you money?

With answers to questions like these, you can make smarter staffing, marketing, and menu planning decisions. You name it!

MAKE YOUR CENTER FLOW (AND YOUR STAFF) WORK SMARTER

Understanding how guests move through your center is essential for operational efficiency and guest experience design. Have you ever noticed how guests naturally bunch up around certain spots, like rental counters or food stands? Bluetooth-enabled technologies and Wi-Fi tracking allow you to visualize and map foot traffic patterns in real-time or over a period of time so you can adjust.

Say your game floor gets packed between 2 p.m. and 6 p.m. on weekends. Now you know when to put extra staff on duty. Or, if you spot bottlenecks by concessions, you can tweak your setup or add better signage to improve guest flow.

Competitive Strategies

Insights into dwell time can also influence decisions around seating, lighting, attraction mix, promotional displays, etc. Foot traffic data becomes a blueprint for optimizing layout, staffing, and capital investment priorities.

MAXIMIZING REVENUE PER GUEST

POS and cashless card system data offer treasure troves of information about what guests buy and when. This analysis uncovers revenue gaps, high-margin opportunities, and underperforming elements within the venue.

Here are a few ways to put this data into action:

1. **Refine menu offerings:** Identify top sellers and streamline menus to focus on high-performing, high-margin items.
2. **Test dynamic pricing:** Analyze demand curves and experiment with price adjustments during peak versus off-peak days and hours.
3. **Create upsell strategies:** Track bundling behaviors and offer targeted upsells at the right moment, such as bundling certain attractions or upgrading a party package.

When you roll out a new game or a limited-time deal, you will be able to track exactly how it's performing compared to before—no guessing needed.

PERSONALIZING THE GUEST EXPERIENCE

One of the most powerful applications of data analytics lies in personalization. Guests frequently expect experiences tailored to their preferences, and the data collected through rewards platforms, online bookings, surveys, and digital interactions can make this a reality.

Imagine a family that frequently visits your center on Saturday afternoons and receives an email promotion for a discounted pizza and bowling combo that is valid that same day. Or a parent who just booked a birthday party for their child gets a follow-up email with a curated list of add-on experiences based on past arcade spend.

Personalization can extend to:

1. **Marketing communications:** Segment your email list based on behavior, age group, spending history, or favorite attractions.
2. **Frequency rewards:** To encourage return visits, offer customized rewards based on the frequency of visits or total spending.
3. **Surprise and delight experiences:** Equip staff with tools to recognize repeat customers or high-value guests and deliver a personalized welcome or enhanced experience.

Quick stat: According to McKinsey, companies that personalize customer experiences can increase their revenue by 5%–15% and improve marketing efficiency by 10%–30%. This could mean increased party bookings, repeat visits, and viral word-of-mouth referrals.

PLANNING WITH CONFIDENCE

Want to stay ahead of the game? *Enter predictive analytics.* By looking at your past data, you can start forecasting future trends, like:

1. **Forecasting sales:** Predict foot traffic for holiday weekends, seasonal slumps, or school breaks to ensure appropriate staffing and inventory levels.
2. **Predicting peak group event seasons:** Deploy early-bird promotions to fill the calendar.
3. **Identifying at-risk customers:** If visit frequency drops, re-engage with personalized promotions.

With predictive analytics, planning becomes proactive rather than reactive, enabling smoother operations and more strategic growth initiatives. Instead of reacting to slow days or missed opportunities, you will plan confidently.

START SMALL, THINK BIG

If this sounds overwhelming, do not stress. You do not have to become a data wizard overnight.

Here are a few tips to get started:

1. **Centralize your data:** Ensure all your systems (e.g., POS, booking platform, if different, and cashless card system) are integrated into one central dashboard or reporting platform.
2. **Pick a few key metrics:** Focus on easy-to-track numbers like revenue per guest, arcade spend per capita, or attraction usage.
3. **Train your team:** Equip managers with tools and training to interpret data and make informed decisions.
4. **Act on insights:** Based on your data, prioritize a few high-impact, low-effort changes and measure the results before scaling into higher-effort opportunities.

Over time, you can use more powerful tools like guest flow mapping or predictive modeling. Before you know it, you will use data to make smarter decisions faster and see the impact on your revenue and guest satisfaction.

In today's competitive entertainment industry, relying on guesswork does not cut it. Your data is more than numbers; it is a powerful tool that can guide your business. When you commit to using data strategically, even minor adjustments can drive remarkable results.

Data does not just tell you what happened—it informs you what to do next! ●



Brandon Willey, ICAE, is co-founder of the LBX Collective and Premier LBX Group, co-host of The LBX Daily Show, and founder and CEO of Hownd. Brandon has an intense passion for the attractions industry and extensive knowledge of location-based entertainment. Brandon is the former chair of IAAPA's FEC Committee and now sits on the North American Manufacturers and Suppliers Committee. You can connect with him at [LinkedIn.com/in/bwilley](https://www.linkedin.com/in/bwilley).