

Plus Minus

It is probably safe to call me a data junky. I might even let others call me that without a fight! Granted, I wrote a quantitatively driven dissertation. Still, it would be hard to refer to myself as an expert; yet that experience does give me a sense of both the value and limitation of pretty numbers.

While I use data, I am definitely a sports fan. Team executives and fans alike historically used statistics to distinguish the best players from, well, everyone else. Data analysis has turned this method on its head and changed how we identify productive players from those needing to trade the bat or helmet for an insurance license or teaching certificate.

One of my favorites is the +/- because the value lies in simplicity. It tracks individual player performance but definitely helps coaches determine which players should play together, when to play certain team members, during what part of the game, etc. Basically, you calculate the score when a player was in the game. Hockey created the tool but several NBA teams measure +/-, so we will use a basketball illustration since it is a more popular sport and a richer example.

Say your favorite hoops squad dropped a weeknight game 100-95 but the +/- for a seldom-used guard was 40-23. This means your team outscored the evil opposition by 17 points when this ball handler graced the court. Maybe your favorite team needs a new coach.

The +/- offers numerous ways to help teams best utilize personnel. That said, this is not an NBA analytics article. This is a spiritual and eternal calling piece. So my question would be, *What is your calling, +/-? Also, how can we measure it and improve it?*

Your +/-

The +/- measures value. How much value does a player bring on the court? Likewise, we should ask how God could use us to bring value to His kingdom. How can we be kingdom influencers or more effective kingdom influencers?

In addition, how do we measure eternal value and then develop a value improvement plan? First, what about creating a nice list of value-driven activities:

- Time in the Word
- Quiet Time
- Prayer
- Bible Studies
- Finding godly mentors

This is a good but hardly all-encompassing list. Still, we grow by spending time with God and other positive believers. Bottom line, these activities should enhance our value.

However, data analytics is a limited tool, as I mentioned in the first paragraph. What is the most significant limitation? Well, people analyze data and our cranial capacity remains finite regardless of degrees and accolades.

Yet the biggest data analysis limitation is the chosen criteria. While quantitative information provides perhaps the best form of measurement, stunning numbers are worthless unless we know what we are measuring or what we are measuring for in many cases. People fail to understand that we cannot measure value without defining value. Moreover, our value definition is worldly, temporal and ultimately worthless in God's scheme.

So measuring your value and seeking to enhance your value

begins and ends with seeking God's definition of value. He measures our value using an eternal metric or rubric. Therefore, we should contrast worldly criteria with the eternal standards and focus on the latter list. The Wonkyfied podcast includes episodes devoted to both lists and how to craft a calling built on eternal criteria. Please check us out and subscribe! Also, look for similar articles in the coming months in Charisma! {eoa}

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