Data Governance

Your Questions Answered

Achieving Business Impact with Data Governance

Data governance today is at the core of most initiatives to align data, and the quality of data, to meet business needs. However, the path to success is often riddled with bumps and barriers along the way.

Where are you challenged? What do you need to know to make your data governance program effective?

Trillium Software asked you exactly these questions – now you have the answers. Our data governance experts give you their perspectives to help you achieve your goals.
MEET THE EXPERTS

Kiran is a senior strategic consultant with Trillium Software. She has over 13 years of experience working within data management across various sectors. She has a strong background in data strategy and management as well as leveraging of data for marketing and performance measurement. She has focused extensively on business process improvement, data quality, data governance best practice and maximizing the utility of business data. Kiran advises clients to enable transformation, optimization and maintenance of their data assets. Her work covers disciplines such as applied data governance, regulatory compliance, global data management, single customer view and online/offline integration.

Kiran has expertise in creating and overseeing large-scale data management programs within both the public and private sectors. She has helped global businesses create aligned strategies to facilitate robust data management and data usage. She has worked with healthcare, automotive, financial, legal and technology organizations to embed a data-driven approach with an aligned business strategy.

Nigel works with Trillium Software clients to start, expand and accelerate their enterprise data quality initiatives. He spent much of his career at British Telecommunications PLC (BT), where he led an internal enterprise-wide data quality improvement programme. This ten year programme was praised by Gartner, Forrester, Ovum Butler and others both for its approach and proven benefits. Nigel has published several papers on data management and is a regular invited speaker at CRM and information management events. He is also a part-time lecturer at Cardiff University, where he teaches data management.


Jon leads the advisory consulting practice at Trillium Software, where he is responsible for delivering best-practice advice and guidance to Trillium’s many international clients. He has over 15 years’ experience in information management, data quality management and data analysis, gained through working for both global consultancies and software vendors across a variety of client industries.

Jon began his career advising on customer data integration, single customer view and customer segmentation programs. Through this work, he has amassed a depth of experience in leveraging enterprise data as a corporate asset. More recently, Jon has focused on assisting client organizations to plan their data governance and data quality strategies. This includes reviewing the organizational change and business case justification required to support a successful data governance or MDM program. Jon has held senior consulting positions at both HP Consulting and Deloitte.
All data are not equal. Is the approach to data governance different if the organization wishes to begin with governance for master data before tackling other types of data (transactional, unstructured, etc.)?

“The approach to implementing data governance may differ dependent on the organization and the way the data is structured within the Master Data Management System. When approaching an implementation of governance across the business, the overall strategy must be reviewed and the MDMS is certainly the best place to start. It is assumed that the transactional and unstructured data have some relationships within the master data that would all be reviewed under the implementation of an overall data governance strategy – therefore you would be paving the way to an easier transition in relation to all types of data if the master data is of primary focus.”

“It’s vital that any organization knows its starting point before embarking on any data governance initiative, whether it is tackling master data or other data types. You cannot map out a better tomorrow if you don’t know where you stand today. So in the first instance, whatever data you are trying to improve, get an empirical baseline – how good is the data now? What is the impact of defects? Knowing this will help you decide what data – e.g., master, transactional etc. – should be tackled first. From here the approaches will then vary in several ways, for instance, different stakeholders may be involved, a range of improvement approaches taken and so on. But all start from a common point.”
What is the best way to start/implement the policies and controls that can centralize who may create data?

“Policies, processes and procedures are all key elements of effective data management but are in effect the second tier of an effective data management process. The first issue that is often encountered is the compliance, buy-in and commitment of the users who capture, manage and maintain the key data items. Empowering users with roles and responsibilities that are prescriptive, documented and agreed upon enables easier implementation and enforcement of the standards required to build toward a fully functioning and effective data governance framework.”

Kiran Gill
Senior Strategic Consultant

“There is no single one-size-fits-all solution. It will depend on the exact circumstances of any particular organization. All organizations are different, and so improvement strategies will vary. There are however some key universal principles that would help you devise the policies and controls. First, make someone responsible for the data and gain agreement across all stakeholders that they will support him or her in improving it. Second, don’t build policies and controls in a vacuum. They should become an integral part of operational business processes. Last, don’t try to solve all the problems from the outset. Prioritise and pick out one or two areas that can deliver a real benefit to the organization.”

Nigel Turner
VP Information Management Strategy
How do you manage the rhythm of business of which internal data to share with which external partners via a data governance model in a very matrix organization?

“This requires an intensive assessment of the overall business with a dedicated resource (which is recommended to be external) to map and review all data activity and data crossovers internally and with external partners. An in-depth review would be recommended to assess the data journey in and out of the business, what data sharing is a fundamental, existing process and what existing agreements are in place. This should lead to an overhaul of internal business rules and updated data sharing and compliance agreements with partners. This is effectively the groundwork that needs to be done before implementing data governance solutions. This will lead to leaner working efficiencies and a deeper understanding of what data you have access to – who knows what you may find!”

“In matrixed scenarios, especially those where data is being exchanged with third parties, responsibility for data can often be ill-defined and unclear. The growth of cloud computing is already making this scenario much more commonplace. Here it is first critical to get a clear view of what data is exchanged with whom. Then allocate data owners (either internal or external) who have the primary responsibility to manage subsets of that data. Once these are in place, work with the nominated data owners to draw up data service level agreements (SLAs) that stipulate how data is to be exchanged and managed. Include also in the SLA how compliance with the agreement is to be monitored.”
Where should data quality project be initiated (by the end user or IT)?

“The important part of an effective data quality project is that the owner of the project understands the business requirements, the overall objectives and the importance of bringing on board the key stakeholders from all relevant parts of the organization. It is easy to get sucked into perceptions that one team will handle it better than another. What is critical is that a good influencer or project manager is appointed who will own and manage the project. Whether this person sits in IT or on an end user team, it doesn’t really matter. The person who takes on this role would be acting on behalf of the business and be capable of handling resistance, implementing change and implementing a robust program of data quality with all supporting processes and documentation.”

“Most conventional data governance wisdom will tell you that the business is ultimately the owner of data and so business end users should take the lead. In reality however I have seen many successful projects where IT has been the initiator of improvement. Any data quality improvement initiative can succeed only if business and IT people then work together to address the problems. Data quality improvement always involves business change and almost always IT change. It’s all about having a shared common goal and using collaboration and teamwork to achieve it.”
How do you identify the right catalysts for change? What are the critical success factors on a brownfield site?

“Insightful data and information enables executives and key decision makers to make more effective and quicker decisions based on accurate information to improve the results of the business. If you find yourself scrapping around for data, asking around for information and spending hours in front of a spreadsheet to get a few stats, then this is the type of scenario in which you need to rethink the way the business is functioning. This is one of many examples that indicate a need to rethink and redevelop a strategy and a program for change.”

Critical success factors:

- No preconceptions. Review the current business processes before deciding what to change or introduce
- Dedicated resource to manage change
- Senior stakeholder buy-in and accountability
- Data stewards/champions engagement across business
- Clear communication with the business
- Tight project planning with realistic milestones

“The only change catalysts in organizations are people. To make change happen means therefore you need to engage them, convince them of the need for change, and enlist them to help you deliver it. Start by drawing up a list of key stakeholders – those people who are impacted by the data problems you’ve identified – and talk with them. Use their language and try to see the world from their perspective. Then make sure you keep them engaged and committed by informing and involving them. These are the critical success factors of any data improvement initiative.”
What are your top three best practices for establishing enterprise data governance?

“Enterprise data governance is not easy to establish; as in any large organization there are lots of people to engage with and lots of complexity to deal with, so be prepared for the long haul as you won’t achieve it overnight.”

My three primary tips are:

- Start small, deliver early successes and use these as a nucleus to extend the scope of your work across the enterprise.
- Make sure your initial projects succeed, so aim to alleviate problems that you know can be overcome. Early failure spells the death knell for any enterprise initiative.
- Ensure that the business benefits of any early work are fully understood, ideally in financial or regulatory terms, and communicated to all key stakeholders.

For issues management, what is a data quality or data governance issue vs. a production issue, etc.?

“No data quality or data governance issue ever stands alone. Defective data will have an impact on production and operational and other processes. In turn poorly designed or executed processes usually generate poor quality data. All too often it’s a vicious circle. There will be occasions when a business problem has no data components, for instance a production error caused by substandard raw materials; But these are exceptions and not the rule. If the issue has no data cause or impact, it will be outside the scope of your data governance activity, otherwise data governance should be able to play at least a supporting part in resolving the issue.”
KPIs for data, what works and changes behaviors?

“KPIs can only be established once you understand what the business is trying to achieve. KPIs, be they regulatory or internally agreed upon, will need to be embedded within the core of the organization. What works can be determined only once an exploratory exercise is undertaken to understand the data and its impact upon the business. KPIs are then developed, tested and implemented, ensuring that key personnel who are critical to the success of the project are on board. This is a crucial part of the data governance model.”

“KPIs are nearly always financial, and related to the bottom line of any organization – cost, revenue, profit, productivity and so on. So any data quality project must be preceded by a business case, predicing the anticipated business benefits of the work. Being able to show how improvements in data will and have made a positive and enduring contribution to improving revenue, cost reduction, etc. is the best measure of all, encourages further behavioural change and discourages backsliding. Sometimes, especially in highly regulated industries, improved regulatory compliance can often be an important KPI. But the bottom line is ultimately the bottom line of the organization.”
How long does it typically take to begin to show the value of data governance in a way that is meaningful to executives?

“IT can take as long as you let it. The important thing is to scope a proof case where you can show some level of demonstrable change/value within a relatively short period. It does not matter that the data scope is narrow if you can show a measurable improvement in efficiency or reduction process failures due to improving data management. I would aim to conduct a ‘pilot’ that has demonstrable results within three to six months and no more.”

— Jon Asprey
VP Strategic Consulting

“It can take very little time at all, sometimes no more than a couple of weeks. I’d always encourage preceding any major data governance/data quality improvement proposal with one or more short proof of concept or pilot exercises, showing how improving a subset of data improves business performance. This is also a great way to build the business case for the broader project. Show the outcome of the pilot(s) to selected executives and use this to win their backing (and perhaps funding) for the bigger projects to come.”

— Nigel Turner
VP Information Management Strategy
How do you sell data governance to business leaders in terms of their role and cost vs. benefit?

“The way to engage business leaders in data governance is to link it to a business process for which they are either responsible (e.g., bad-debt collection) or in which they have a vested interest. Ultimately business leaders will see benefits only in terms of cutting cost, improving efficiency, increasing revenues or reducing risk.”

“Most important, sell it to them in terms that they would understand. Avoid the jargon of data management and highlight how improvements will benefit them and the people/business processes they are responsible for. Doing this well requires you to do your homework in advance. Understand their business and make it your business to understand the impact of data defects on it. It’s all about building a common view of their world and starting to bring them into yours.”
What’s the number one criterion for a sustained, ongoing focus on data governance?

“Link any data governance efforts to a measurable improvement in business processes where possible.”

“It’s hard to pick one but I would say create the policies, organization, roles and goals of a data governance programme and ensure it is embedded into the business as usual activities and processes of the organization. In that way it can survive the inevitable changes of personnel that are bound to occur and should endure if and when you move on to other things.”

What are some examples of metrics or measurements at the enterprise level that show changes/progress?

“Most important of all is that any enterprise metrics or measurements must directly relate to one or more strategic business goals. For example, if a key corporate objective is to reduce annual operating costs by 10% per annum for the next three years your granular measures should be rolled up to show how data quality improvement has contributed to that, e.g., by reducing the need to redeliver packages by improving dispatch address data. If you cannot show how improving enterprise data enhances enterprise performance, you won’t win many friends or sustain the work longer term.”
Data Governance Resource Library

Trillium Software’s Data Governance Consulting Services
- Data Governance: Impact You Can See

Data Governance Blog Posts
- Trillium Software Insights

Results You Can See – Data Governance Webinar Series
- Building an Operational Data Governance Practice
- Data Governance Imperative – Big Data, Big Process
- Master Data, Master Data Governance
- Data Governance Roundtable Discussion