Data Governance Wiki

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 Gill
Senior Strategic Consultant
Trillium Software

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.

Michael Stiffler
Strategic Consultant
Trillium Software

Michael works with clients to implement data quality and data governance programs based on best practices and real-world experiences. He gained his experience in the corporate world, where he managed data quality and data governance programs at a variety of companies, including Fortune 250 companies in the high-tech and services industries.

Mr. Stiffler’s successes were experienced through trial and error while deploying and using various data quality and BI solutions, in addition to a number of best practices and methodologies. He has also worked across many organizations such as sales, marketing, operations, IT, and data warehousing, collaborating with both IT and business personnel. Having been exposed to a number of data quality technologies in different organizations, he is able to draw upon those experiences to come up with creative, effective solutions to satisfy the requirements of the most demanding businesses.

Jon Asprey
VP, Strategic Consulting
Trillium Software

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.”

“The general approach isn’t necessarily different. You still need to solve a business problem. You may even want to de-scope transactional and unstructured data if there are no impacts to the business. You need to understand why transactional or unstructured data are deemed a priority over master data.”
What is the best way to start/implement the policies and controls that can centralize who can 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.”

“Naming a data steward and empowering the person is one way to centralize data creation. Be sure to get buy-in from all the stakeholders. Once they understand the benefits to centralizing the creation of data (either within a specific domain or across the enterprise), you can start building the policies.”

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 deeper understanding of what data you have access to – who knows what you may find!”
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 this role on 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.”

“It depends on the type of effort and where the support is coming from. Ideally, initiating in the business is best (ultimately, the business should “own” the data), but that’s not always possible. If the support is in IT and they are pushing to get something in place, the same approach can be taken (start small, find business value, etc.).”

What are your top three best practices for establishing enterprise data governance?

- Keep the scope small initially. Limit it to one data domain or even a subset of that domain in order to work out the kinks and show success faster.
- Get executive buy-in. It doesn’t have to be at the very top to begin with, but as high as you can go.
- Embed relevant deliverables into the software/system development life cycle. For example, capturing business definitions is often easier while the requirements are being documented.
How do you identify the right catalysts for change? What are the critical success factors on a brownfield site?

“Insightful data and intelligence that enable key decision makers to make those key decisions effectively and quickly are an ideal place for any business to be. 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
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.”

“Most important, the KPIs need to be linked to a business process that people can identify with, one that is measurable and where the DQ pain is known (but not quantified). A client had a problem with rejected invoices (the business problem) due to issues with customer legal name data. Therefore I would measure the business process KPI [rejected invoices] along with KPIs about regarding the data that is critical to that process. The behavior change will have to occur within the business process anyway, so it is important to link DQ to process early.”

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 with three to six months and no more.”

“It’s going to depend on how quickly the program is implemented and how quickly the resulting data quality mitigations, process changes, documentation, etc., are put in place. Ideally, the success criteria should be defined up front, i.e., the executives and other stakeholders should define what will be of value to them. Once the structures are in place to support the needed changes, the value will be shown immediately.”
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 only see benefits in terms of cutting cost, improving efficiency, increased revenues or reducing risk.”

“If they have a stake in determining the business value, this will be an easier sell. For example, if you’re able to improve a KPI that is important to them, they will understand the benefit and be willing to support the costs.”

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.”

“Showing successes. One success leads to more success, etc. Set your self up for a greater chance of success by tying the effort to a business value (e.g., solve a business problem).”
What are some examples of metrics or measurements at the enterprise level that show changes/progress?

“From a data quality perspective, you can summarize the metrics to upper-level data quality dimensions (accuracy, completeness, etc.) and produce an overall score. However, you need to baseline the measurements first and show historical trends. Alternatively, if you are able to improve a corporate KPI, those results will already be understood in such ways to see changes/progress. For example, there could be a KPI related to support call duration. If through your data governance program you corrected data, consolidated data, etc., this could decrease the amount of time the representative would spend looking up data or validating it.”

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

“This should be defined in the scope of the data governance program and the data quality service level agreement (if you’ve adopted such). The data quality issue could be escalated to the data steward, who then kicks off a data quality process. In that flow, there could be a decision point that determines the scope of the problem. If it’s not a data quality/governance issue, it’s submitted through the production triage/resolution process. There are some models that have a single issue queue and the help desk determines the type of issue. Of course, this needs to be worked out ahead of time (criteria, questions, decision tree, etc.) with the help desk.”
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