Democratizing data to transform the business.

The CMA CGM story

CMA CGM uses Collibra to enable data democratization and drive enterprise-wide change at a company with over 100,000 employees.

CMA CGM

CMA CGM is a leading provider of global shipping and logistic services. Founded in 1978, the business has turbo-charged its growth through a series of acquisitions, the most recent of which brought combined group revenue to over 30 billion Euros per year. Such a broad and diverse group has amassed a wealth of data assets. But unlocking value from those assets can be a complex challenge.

In recent years, CMA CGM Group Data Officer Laetitia Chassefiere has risen to that challenge, looking to drive a business transformation program that has been underpinned by better data governance. In doing so, the first hurdle she faced was defining a strategic vision and plan for its data operations. This vision needed to be aligned entirely with the group's business goals. "I looked at their strategic objectives and asked myself 'how can I help them'?" notes Chassefiere.

In doing so, CMA CGM's data team sought to answer questions most pertinent to their business colleagues, such as 'how can the company improve customer satisfaction by providing the right information at the right time about cargo?' and 'how can the company optimize sales by providing fresh, up-to-date market information to sales staff across all channels?'

Understanding what it takes to answer these questions helped CMA CGM define a clear vision of what it sought to achieve and a plan on how it sought to achieve that vision, organized around four key pillars.

First pillar: Enterprise Data

Large organizations that have grown through acquisition will typically house data across multiple subsidiaries, operating units and physical data stores. In the case of CMA CGM the group even had two centralized data teams; one housed under its IT operations and another supporting sales and marketing. "Our question was 'how do we put critical master data under our control?'," notes CMA CGM Group Data Officer Laetitia Chassefiere.

In choosing the right organizational structure to take control of its data assets, CMA CGM chose at first to pursue a centralized model. "The business was not ready to federate around data, so we had to take over," says Chassefiere, adding that the centralized team was able to standardize processes and roll out common tools to support master data management (MDM).

By establishing a common platform and standard processes, the group was able to ensure new datasets from a variety of applications and business lines could be on-boarded in a more agile manner.

Having succeeded in driving internal efficiencies, the company is now looking at initiatives to collaborate more broadly on industry standards. Chassefiere notes that the group is collaborating with peers on "interesting blockchain initiatives" to improve the way shipping and logistics firms communicate with each other. "We're no longer at enterprise level but at industry level, asking 'how do I standardise data at industry level to communicate efficiently (with my trading partners)."

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Laetitia Chassefiere
Group Data Officer,
CMA CGM

Second Pillar: Data Quality

Data quality is a moving target. CMA CGM first focused on assuring the quality of its critical enterprise data assets, yielding very positive results. However, as the breadth of data managed and the variety of use cases have grown, the challenge of maintaining data quality has become significantly more complex. "Every day we have new use cases landing on our table," notes Chassefiere.

To support those use cases CMA CGM's data team has broadened the scope of the data it manages beyond enterprise data, to also include operational data and key performance indicators (KPIs). This expanded scope has also triggered a rethink in organizational structure. "It means federating to the business, because not everything can be centralised anymore," says Chassefiere, adding that more data has also required an upgrade in toolsets as the organization has sought to automate more of its "business data quality rules."

Third Pillar: Data Governance

Data Governance can mean different things to different organizations. "For us it's just a framework – with people, methodology and a toolbox with metrics," notes Chassefiere. While tools and methodologies serve as enablers, the most important success factor for data governance is people. In that respect, Chassefiere notes that she has seen a significant cultural shift across the organization with much more engagement from her colleagues in the business.

"Today I can enter a meeting room and people are talking about data governance and ownership," says Chassefiere. This engagement is supported by a collaborative framework that helps data citizens interact and uncover new ways to assure data quality and use data to improve business processes. And as word has spread across the organization, the scope of data governance now spans a greater range of operating units and use cases – including finance, sales and marketing, as well as BI and analytics.

Fourth Pillar: Virtual Data Store

The final pillar supporting the group's data strategy has been the creation of a virtual data store. This has closed the gap between the initial vision sold by IT – that a data lake would be a panacea – and the reality that without data quality and proper governance, data lakes can too easily turn into swamps. "We came back and explained that it's good to have data in one place, but you have to understand what data assets you have in the group, where they are created, who are the actors around the data, and so on," says Chassefiere.

This is where CMA CGM targeted Collibra to solve its requirements. Collibra Catalog was deployed to help the group capitalize on all its information assets, which had previously been difficult to access. "We designed a certification path to progressively take our data up and build trust with the business – the objective is not to take all data to golden stage – but to have the right level of trust in all our data," shared Chassefiere.

The Most Important Ingredient: People and Culture

The four pillars defined by CMA CGM – enterprise data, data quality, data governance and a virtual data store – have provided a foundation for the group's digital transformation. However, Chassefiere notes that there is one important ingredient missing from that equation. "To move all of these things forward, you need to have the right culture; the right people," she adds.

Being a data leader brings many responsibilities, not only over the data itself but also more broadly as a change maker for an organization. However, in order to effect change, one must first get buy-in from colleagues and peers at all ranks in the organization. And that involves lots of communication.

Chassefiere emphasizes that good communication begins by listening. "We [as data executives] are here to help the business and bring value to them. You need to understand what they are doing, to speak their language, to make it simple for them – to understand not just their problems, but also their priorities and their ambitions. Ask yourself 'how can you serve their ambitions'?".

Communication also involves spreading a consistent message and educating colleagues on the role that data plays to the business. At CMA CGM this involves many different channels, both formal and informal, and including everything from chats by the water cooler, to email updates showing KPIs, video tutorials, internal social media platforms, through to special events.

The company recently organized a 'data day' that brought together 100 of its top executives with senior representatives from Collibra and partner rail operator SNCF, who were able to share their experience and vision into the potential for data to transform organizations. The day saw tremendous engagement and idea generation – with more than 30 use cases collected from business colleagues who were keen to get involved in the discussion and offered resoundingly positive feedback. Learnings from the day were also communicated more broadly to all 37,000 potential Data Citizens via the group's newsletter, including an in-depth interview from the group's chief executive communicating the potential business transformation.

For additional questions, contact us at:

United States
+1 646 893 3042

United Kingdom
+44 203 695 6965

All other locations
+32 2 894 79 60

By email
info@collibra.com