The Importance of Data Governance

In the Age of Digital Disruption and Regulated Privacy

A report by IDG Connect on behalf of Collibra
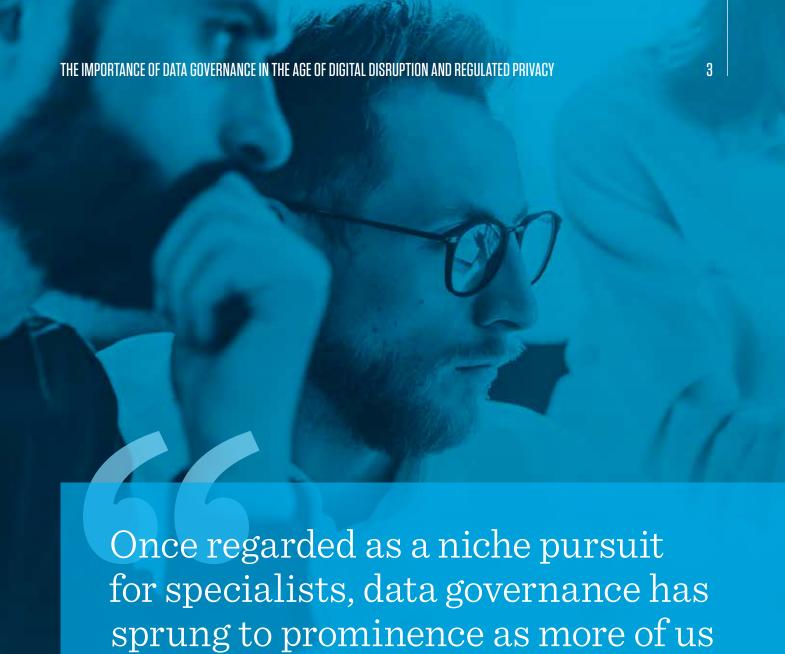
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Introduction:
The re-birth and rise of data governance

YOU WOULD NEED to have been living under a rock to have missed the fact that today, the governance and management of data is — amazingly enough as it sounds for veterans of the sector — very hot. Once regarded as a niche pursuit for specialists, data governance has sprung to prominence as more of us recognize a pressing need to assess, secure, understand, classify, control, reuse, share and make consistent our approach to information assets. This fascination also manifests itself in the resurgence of interest in tagging data, metadata, workflows, policy management and operating models.

It has certainly not always been this way but, today, how organizations manage data and govern the ways in which it is consumed by individuals have become front-page news. This is in part thanks to the hurricane-like effect of the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), and a never-ending flood of stories covering data breaches and violations from organizations.

On the other hand, there is also a strongly progressive element in play as firms obsess over digital transformation and see huge strategic value in accelerating speed of access to data and opening APIs for faster insights and sharing. Data governance and making data accurate and suitable for curation will be a cornerstone to »

presenting services digitally across mobile, desktop and web, and opening up access to data across systems. Effective transformation and becoming truly data-driven will require that businesses address weaknesses in processes, data workflows, metadata management, creating rules and addressing trigger events.

Concerns have also grown because we are all more aware of how so many firms depend on leveraging our personal data to transform, grow or achieve their desired results. The Facebook-Cambridge Analytica disclosures in particular revealed what can potentially be done if you know the interests and preferences of a huge number of individuals and are willing to share that information — or don't have the mechanisms in place to restrict the scope of its usage.

There is generally a much greater awareness of how fundamentally important data is to organizations. This is far from being a purely IT concern and it's critical that data governance is treated holistically with strong alignment between business and IT and, often the creation of more data scientist, chief data officer and similar roles.

This short paper will take a high-level view and examine data governance in two ways: first, the need to meet regulatory mandates and build in transparency, and second, the very real benefits that state-of-the-art data governance can deliver. ■

Next:
Take Care of
Business

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Take Care of Business:

Dealing with waves of regulations and the need for data protection and personal privacy

THE TABLE STAKES of the modern organization demand a comprehensive data governance regime that is continually reviewed and optimized, together with having appropriate processes and the right people to act as data champions.

Today, there is no excuse for not having data lakes, warehouses, or data sources in order. Data protection and regulatory changes are all pointing towards increased accountability, visibility and trust.

GDPR has had a seismic effect but it is only one high-profile element in a sea of regulations in Europe and in other parts of the world. These span industry codes and agreements such as PCI in payments, HIPAA in US healthcare, Know Your Customer for banking transparency and anti-corruption measures, International Financial Reporting Standards, and many others. In Europe, GDPR will soon be joined by ePrivacy, covering individual privacy rights in electronic communications.

Staying compliant and conformant means having a healthy data management regime. Organizations will need to educate staff and regularly train them to ensure they are familiar with the right code of conduct for data handling. »

Components of a strong data governance model

↘ Robust processes and data workflows that are repeatable and well understood by users.

↘ A reliable metadata repository that incorporates the ability to reveal the meaning, lineage, usage and format of data.

↘ Policy-based rules and the ability to act on trigger events.

↘ Alignment between business needs and IT, incorporating data scientists or data officers.

Having the right workflows so only appropriate people can see and move data is also important. And setting software rules and permissions levels will help to automate compliance and build guard rails to protect data.

But outside of the regulatory landscape the broader challenge lies in aligning the business with the data that it keeps. Good governance starts with a strong operational model, business glossary and a comprehensive understanding of the data that is being stored and processed and the provenance of that data. ■

Next:
Seize the Data

Data Governance in Action: Adobe Systems
Digital experiences giant Adobe Systems has made a hugely successful transition from software applications to offering its tools as cloud services. With that direct connection to purchasers, Adobe was able to study forensically how its services were being used and adapt accordingly.

Seize the Data:
Harness opportunities and disrupt peers

SO MUCH FOR the traditional defensive position on data governance but all too often discussions of data governance obsess over this area and neglect the other side of the coin that progressive organizations experience by excelling in data governance.

At a time of wide-scale digital disruption, just eight per cent of companies feel that their business models will remain economically viable through digitization, according to McKinsey. And so it is more important than ever to harness opportunities by governing data resources so they become genuine assets, rather than risks or liabilities incurred by 'databergs' where data that has not been parsed, identified or tagged is obsolete or unimportant. Data governance should also support the ability to extend the reach of data across the organization or to partners, including reuse.

But when data is well governed the results can be game changing. Think of the way that utilities are better serving customers and driving efficiencies with the use of smart meters, how insurers are asking drivers to put black boxes to reward good drivers with discounts, or the way that companies such as John Deere are using weather and soil status information to create a smarter approach to "precision agriculture." ❯❯

You don't have to be an internet giant to capture the power of data and use it as fuel for better products, great customer services and data-driven strategies. But earning the right to do so will involve addressing workflows, processes, collecting metadata, data lineage and operating models. Systems will need to be robust, reliable and open to querying by those permitted to do so. It sounds simple and, for startups, it is. But, for companies that have built a legacy of databases, ERP, CRM, HR and other systems, building a cohesive data governance regime can be a highly complex exercise.

Bringing data back into some sort of uniformity, understanding data lineage and classifying data will provide the opportunity to seek out actionable information, see patterns across systems, make it available for reuse or even reselling and generally increase the opportunity to address opportunities with confidence. Wise data leaders will often make the most of a compliance watershed event such as GDPR to win the budget to address siloes and weak processes and win the wider benefits of data integration in one movement.

Next:
Steps towards
excellence

Ultimately, the defensive and offensive aspects of data governance go hand in hand so aim to reach the data engagement sweet spot where there is a perfect balance between offense and defense, of appropriate control and freedom to innovate. ■

Data Governance in Action: Dell EMC
The combination of Dell with EMC is one of the largest combinations in IT history. By absorbing customer, product and vendor data sources, Dell was able to create data lakes to study trends in a vast and complex new organization.

Steps towards excellence

EVERY COMPANY WILL have a slightly different approach to reaching data governance excellence, depending on their maturity, needs and budgets. But many of the stages to governance excellence will be familiar to most. These stages, as defined by IDG Connect, will help to find, understand and trust a broad set of data-related assets including data sets, algorithms, rules, metrics, dashboards and reports.

1. **SHARE.** Communicate plan and progress throughout; explain what you are doing, why and what successful outcomes will be.

2. **AUDIT.** Discovering data sources and systems, data warehouses, data marts, data formats and metrics/definitions will be the first step to building an inventory of disparate assets.

3. **SECURE.** Ensure data security tools and processes are applied.

4. **DEFINE.** Catalogue assets including metadata tagging and develop an overarching business glossary.

5. **CLEANSE.** Improving data quality will make search and analysis more reliable and deliver better results. »

6. **FIND PEOPLE.** Identify roles and responsibilities for protecting key assets.

7. **MODEL PROCESSES.** Develop workflows that are secure and effective to manage asset lifecycles.

8. **TEST.** Create internal usability feedback loops then go live with a trial process.

9. **REFINE.** Improve iteratively and repeat trials across cases and business units.

10. **SPREAD.** Make available to knowledge workers and partners, not just data scientists, architects and business analysts.

11. **ADVANCE.** Explore more sophisticated approaches such as predictive modelling and artificial intelligence. ■

Offence

↘ Collate data and assess workflows for the most effective use of information assets.

↘ Improve collaboration internally and externally through data sharing.

↘ Support omni-channel approaches so users, partners and customers can view data across devices and platforms.

↘ Become data-driven and transform business through controlled but selectively accessible data that can be used for insights and revenue-earning opportunities.

Defence

↘ Stay compliant with emerging governance rules and laws to protect against probes, fines and reputational damage.

↘ Maintain strong workflows to secure data.

Next:
Conclusion

Conclusion

AT A TIME WHERE the 'Uber for X' phenomenon is upsetting established hierarchies and digital transformation is ubiquitous, it's more important than ever for all organizations to optimize their use of data, mine it for insights and monetize it.

But getting to the point where that is viable will require more than smart enterprise architects, integration geniuses, storage gurus, middleware mavens and data structure specialists. It will need business and IT to work hand in hand to create a governed, organization-wide, executive-sponsored data engagement strategy with clear accountability, responsibility, transparency and trust.

Nobody ever said data governance was easy, and for companies with decades of accreted platforms, applications and services it will be even more of a challenge. But the hardest part is getting started and every business will reap huge returns on the efforts that are put in. »

But we also need to have conversations about data governance that aren't massively weighted in favor of the defensive, self-protection stance. We have to stop seeing meeting regulatory mandates as the dull-but-necessary element of doing business and start seeing it as a platform for business dynamism and data-driven decision making. In other words, data governance is like the boxer who attacks with one glove and defends with the other: one hand is going for the knockout victory, the other is for basic self-preservation. ◼

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