

Executive SUMMARY

GOVERNING DATA Across the Healthcare System



We're in the midst of nothing less than a data tsunami. Market research firm IDC indicates that the volume of data is growing by more than 40% annually across all industries, and there's little question that those growth rates are substantially greater in highly regulated markets like healthcare.

This is putting tremendous pressure on healthcare IT, practitioners and business teams to evaluate, select and put in place new solutions that help overcome the challenges associated with runaway data growth. These challenges include:

- Pressure on data center infrastructure such as storage, servers and network bandwidth
- Escalating storage management costs and complexity
- Improving operational efficiency in locating and producing essential data—quickly and reliably—not only for compliance and legal discovery, but also for ensuring the organization is fulfilling its core mission of improving healthcare delivery and patient outcomes

As a result, it's becoming increasingly important for healthcare organizations to put in place a data governance policy. But what does that mean, and what does it entail?

When you talk to a healthcare company official about compliance, they more than likely understand the many challenges associated with handling data in a regulatory environment because their organizations likely have initiatives underway. But data governance is a term healthcare organizations may be less familiar with. Data governance is defined as “the exercise of authority and control over the management of data across an entire enterprise,” according to the Healthcare Financial Management Association¹. In the healthcare industry, that will include a heavy focus on ensuring proper monitoring and enforcement of security protocols, including policies and procedures about handling electronic data.

Putting in place the proper data governance strategy and framework can be complex, time-consuming and resource-intensive program. But healthcare organizations that think of data governance as a journey, rather than as an event, will likely be more successful in handling and securing healthcare data.

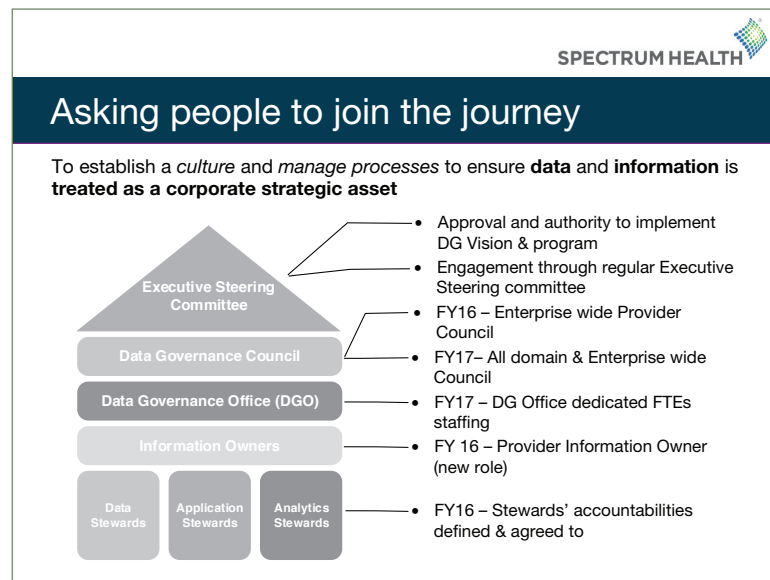
A recent webcast presented by Health Data Management and sponsored by Collibra examined how one leading healthcare organization—Spectrum Health—embarked on a well-planned and tightly executed journey to data governance. According to Lisa Sikkema, manager of project portfolio management at Spectrum’s health plan entity, Priority Health, is treated as a strategic asset at Spectrum because of its long lifecycle and widespread impact on every aspect of the organization’s operations.

She and her colleague Josh Stephens, who manages Spectrum’s information services and real-time intelligence and master data management, pointed out four key aspects to Spectrum’s data governance journey:

- 1. Integration.** Spectrum made it a goal to integrate its health plan, hospital system and physician group.
- 2. Speaking the same language.** Create a model that spans all divisions and operating groups in order to improve collaboration and align with key business goals.
- 3. People.** A structure for organizing human resources that included participation from all constituencies, from an executive steering committee to a data governance office. Spectrum also identified the need for what it calls “data stewards,” who oversee the analytics necessary to turn seemingly disparate data into actionable insights.
- 4. Tools.** A dedicated tool—purchased from and integrated in partnership with Collibra—was essential to support the initiative.

¹ “Developing a Data Governance Model in Healthcare,” HFMA, 2013

One of the keys to ensuring that Spectrum could get the most value from its Collibra data governance tool was recognizing that the technology was just one part of the journey. “Some of our data stewards were working in Collibra, but there really wasn’t a data governance office that was meeting regularly,” he said. “One of the first things we needed to do was to get our processes down, so we started meeting with the data governance office on a regular basis.”

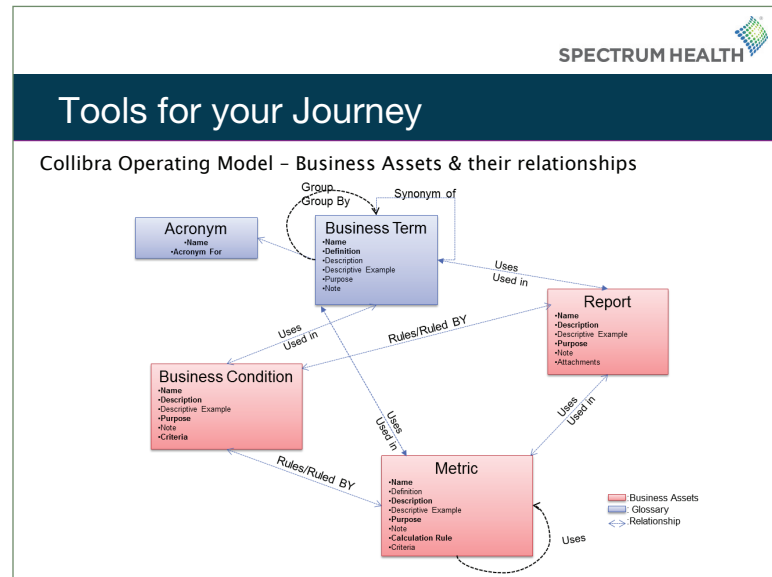


Once the data governance team established its priorities, processes and goals, it started digging into the finer points of the Collibra tool in order to get a better understanding of what it was capable of. What the team discovered was that the tool was very strong in searchability and hyperlinks. In particular, according to Stephens, Collibra is very strong in metadata management—the definition of terms and metrics for conditions and reports, which is essential for arriving at a standardized business language.

Daniel Sholler, Collibra’s director of product marketing, said one of Collibra’s biggest contributions to the creation of Spectrum Health’s data governance was its ability to provide self-service data governance for data stewards. Specifically, it helped to:

- Bring data governance to the business
- Contextualize data
- Log data issues
- Propose new data assets and code values
- Automation consideration and approvals
- Include the correct stakeholders in the process

Essentially, this helped to create a “data stewardship platform” that acted as a one-stop shop for building, executing and monitoring data governance at Spectrum Health.



Sikkema also pointed out that one of the important lessons learned from the data governance program deployment was the need to step back and recalculate where the organization was, determine what changes may be necessary and figure out how best to adapt the model to accommodate those changes.

“As we got up and running in our data governance program, we were trying to figure out where we would focus, where would we start, what assets are we going to start to define,” she said. It’s important to stay agile and flexible along the journey, she added, because things are always changing and you need to recognize how those changes impact the route you need to take.

Still, in the end, it all comes back to ensuring that the data governance program aligns with the organization’s key business objectives. At Spectrum Health, the focus is on improving the health of the communities they serve. That focus is what Spectrum Health believes will allow them to become the national leader in the healthcare industry, and the data governance initiative is a key element in ensuring that can happen. “What we’re trying to do with our data governance program is to align with our company’s goals and visions: How is the data governance program going to be able to be the foundation of that?” according to Sikkema.