

TAKING A HUMAN APPROACH TO DATA GOVERNANCE

OVERVIEW

Most organizations recognize the importance of data governance, although they often fail in their efforts to become data-driven. Investing in technology doesn't address this problem and may make it worse because data governance is a process rather than a software tool. Successful data governance requires organizations to address human factors such as cultural change, which is the greatest obstacle to implementation.

The number of firms identifying themselves as data driven has dropped steadily over the last three years, according to Harvard Business Review. 37.1 percent of surveyed organizations claimed to be data driven in 2017, followed by 32.4 percent in 2018 and 31 percent in 2019. The 2019 Big Data and AI Executive Survey reports that 93 percent of respondents considered people and processes to be the biggest obstacle to data governance. 40.3 percent cited a lack of organizational alignment as their main problem and another 24 percent identified cultural resistance as leading factor in failing to adopt data governance at the organizational level.

These statistics show that business leaders tend to greatly underestimate the difficulty of cultural change. They must become much more serious about addressing the human side of data if they wish to derive the business benefits of data governance. Most businesses still view data as a byproduct of business process and have a low comprehension of its tangible benefits. Furthermore, they have a weak analytic capability or fail to focus on the analytics that produce value. Only a few organizations exploit their data to obtain a competitive advantage by diversifying their business models, which improves their operational efficiency and helps them identify new market opportunities.



DATA MATURITY

The ways in which an organization uses its data depends on its data maturity. For example, organizations with no data maturity primarily use data for specific projects by creating documentation and generating physical databases. Those with an initial level of data maturity focus on conceptual, logical and physical uses of data for design purposes. At the managed level, the emphasis shifts to the entire enterprise with the use of governance metadata. The advanced level of data maturity integrates business glossaries into the data model, and the optimized level fully integrates data modeling with self-serve analytics.

PROCESS MATURITY

An organization's process maturity also affects its data governance. With no maturity at all, an organization only uses data for documentation. An initial level of maturity means the organization also it for business process management (BPM), and the managed level of process maturity adds process improvement to its uses of data. Advanced process maturity allows organizations to use data for process design, and the optimized level uses fully mature data processes like Lean and Six Sigma methodologies.

HUMAN FACTORS

The barriers to data governance are primarily a people problem due to our resistance to change and lack of planning. Life coach Tony Robbins asserts that 92 percent of the 17 million people who try to quit smoking each year fail, and 95 percent of people who lose weight fail to keep it off over the long term. Only ten percent of the population has specific, well-defined goals, and of those who do, only 70 percent reach their goals most of the time. Furthermore, the two forces that motivate people are avoiding pain and gaining pleasure, which often causes a back-and-forth pattern when trying to change behavior.

CHANGE MANAGEMENT

Implementing data governance requires organizational change management (OCM), which is a framework for managing changes to an organization's business processes, structure or culture. It addresses the human side of change management, including a common vision for change, strong executive leadership to communicate that vision and a strategy for educating employees and other stakeholders. Effective OCM also includes the use of metrics to measure success, contingency and communication plans, and rewards for stakeholders who take ownership over the change.

The solutions for overcoming resistance to change depend on the source of that resistance. For example, change generally requires extra work in the short term, even though it may result in a long-term reduction in workload. Leaders can address this source of resistance by securing the appropriate human resources, which often involves temporary assignments. They should also reward these participants for their extra efforts.

Uncertainty is another common cause of resistance, as people often prefer a known environment even when it's unfavorable. The solution to this problem is to create a process for the change using simple steps with a clear timetable. Leaders should also encourage participants to communicate their questions and concerns.

The ripple effect also causes people to resist change, which occurs when change in one area of operation disrupts other areas. Leaders can overcome this resistant by identifying the affected parties and considering their point of view. They must also work to minimize the disruption of the changes.

SUMMARY

The information of capability of most organizations is already poor and continuing to decline, which directly impact data governance efforts. Organizations need a high level of data and process maturity to implement data governance successfully. They should also use quantifiable metrics to measure their success in data governance over the long term.

IDERA'S SOLUTION

ER/Studio Enterprise Team Edition is the leading business-driven data architecture solution that combines multi-platform data modeling, business process modeling, and enterprise metadata for organizations of all sizes. With an extensive feature set, the ER/Studio suite provides robust logical and physical modeling with ER/Studio Data Architect, business process and conceptual modeling with ER/Studio Business Architect, business glossaries with ER/Studio Team Server, and more, to build the foundation for data governance programs.

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