

The **5** Things You Must Do Before Starting Any Data Governance Program



Karen López
InfoAdvisors

Governance is a Business Thing

Data Governance isn't an IT thing.

Most IT professionals realize what we do is important for delivering timely and high quality information to our business users, but sometimes we struggle with getting business users more engaged. This is especially true with new data governance programs and efforts.

A 2010 study on by The Information Difference entitled *Data Governance Benchmarking Survey* reported that only 23% of organizations have a



reasonable command of data compliance. That number is shockingly low. We need data governance in our organizations and we need it to be done correctly. We as data professionals cannot solve this problem alone. In fact, we can't solve it at all. This is a business issue. We cannot force compliance into systems after the fact, nor can we engineer it into solutions without business ownership of their governance and compliance processes.

This paper lays out 5 things we must do to ensure our data governance, stewardship and compliance programs are successful.

1

Understand your data: what you know, what you know you don't know

This seems so obvious, but I've seen many data governance programs start with very little knowledge of what data resources exist within the organization.

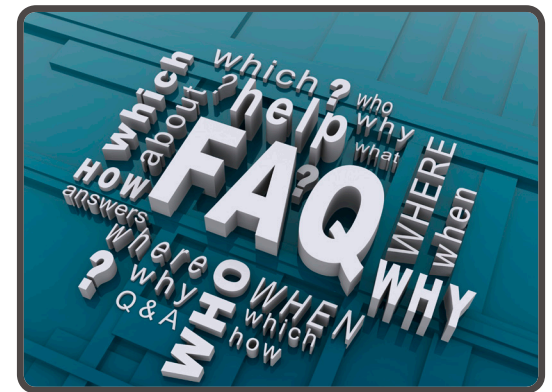
Ideally we'd have a complete inventory of all data, its metadata, business rules, transformations, source-to-target mappings, external data sources, internal data sources, data compliance requirements, and more. However, it's common for organizations to have incomplete understanding of

everything about all the data they steward. We should know, though, where these gaps exist so we can better plan for better understanding.

Knowing what we know usually starts with currently documented inventories:

- data models
- file definitions and documentation
- repository contents
- version control and configuration control systems

Knowing what we don't know involves matching those known resources against existing databases, files stores and other implementation artifacts. This matching usually includes the use of automated scanners and manual investigations, what I refer to as forensic data management. Channel your inner investigator and find that data.



We don't have to know it all to begin a data governance program; we should know what we know and what we don't know. If we start a program not understanding the scope of the issue, we risk incorrect estimates, budgets and resource allocations.

Get training in data governance, stewardship, modeling and quality

The most successful data governance programs are those where participants and data users are trained in the principles, tools, methods, and politics of data governance and stewardship

2

IT professionals need training and education to help them understand that data governance is not just a technical problem with a technical solution.

Organizational users need training to help them understand what are probably new roles and responsibilities they must staff and adopt. IT training is not enough; training must be focused on how data governance and compliance forms part of successful business processes.



With formal training, a team embarking on a new way of delivering quality can be assured they have better alignment to goals and will be able to deliver results faster. Organization change without proper foundation is bound to be painful and wasteful.

3

Find their pain, and then show them you know about it.

The first way to encourage business and organizational users to support a new initiative is to demonstrate how their support will directly benefit them. The easiest way to help a person draw that line between work and benefit is to focus on the pain points end users have to deal with every day, especially if it impacts their ability to succeed with their own mandates.

I suggest starting with the types of outcomes leaders are compensated on directly, and then moving to areas where organizations are measured: KPIs, bonus plans, external reporting requirements, audit requirements, etc.



Other areas pain points can be discovered and documented:

- Customer facing impacts: Investigate metrics on customer retention, citizen engagement, citizen satisfaction.
- Compliance: conformance measures, audit preparation time and costs, reporting processes
- Data protection: data security, information privacy, other risk-intensive data stores

Once the pain points are documented, data professionals can demonstrate their understanding by tying processes and deliverables to the sources of the pain.

It's not enough to just say we understand; we have to draw a link between the understanding and deliverables. If a process or deliverable isn't solving a problem, consider removing it from your portfolio of deliverables.

Identify Exceptions and Escalation Processes Before You Need Them

Nearly 45% of organizations who reported unsuccessful data governance programs said they had processes¹ for their programs. The problem with trying to establish a resolution process after disputes are identified is that people may feel that a process is being established to work against their position.

One of the key reasons we have so many data quality and compliance issues today is that we failed to collaborate when we built original systems. We optimized a solution to meet one slice of the organization's needs, and now we are trying to mash data together when it was created and stewarded in a way that makes aggregating it difficult, painful and costly. These conflicting

4



¹ Data Governance Benchmarking Survey 2010. 2010. The Information Difference, Ltd.

points of view come the surface as we are trying to build integrated, cross-organization data stewardship and compliance processes.

If we wait until the disputes are identified to establish our resolution processes, we risk not being able to resolve them in a timely manner. If we build up a large enough backlog of unresolved disputes, we risk the entire program being categorized as unresolvable.

Position data governance as a natural part of solutions development and deployment

5

One of the more difficult selling points for data governance and stewardship is the perceived cost to projects, both in time and funding. This is due to the fact that for too long we've let IT projects move ahead when there has been insufficient time and money spent on data quality and integrity.



Other professions don't call out their governance and compliance work as separate. In fact, they make these activities essential parts of their normal workflow: plan, design, measure, build, measure, approve, inspect, measure, report, revise, inspect, deploy. Governance and compliance are built right into their processes from day one.

Data professionals must ensure the organization understands IT and process shortcuts and gaps have been a key contributor to low-quality information systems over the years. One way to demonstrate these costs is to ensure re-work, refactoring, and revision efforts are categorized by contributing causes. It would then be easy to report on the cost of poor data stewardship and design. If you aren't doing that, you are missing out on a fact-based approach to encouraging data integrity.

One of the biggest mistakes I see made in establishing a data governance program is positioning it as something separate from solutions development and deployment. If your data governance and compliance initiatives sound and feel more like an outside auditing process, it's always going to be difficult to get others to buy into good data practices. In fact, positioning it as a separate body with conflicting responsibilities is going to make it easier to cancel or cut the program entirely.

We need to ensure that we are processing data to information correctly, not just quickly. Trading off software delivery pace for data quality is expensive. Data governance and compliance activities need to be fully integrated into our solutions processes.

Finally...

Data governance, compliance and stewardship are business programs IT professionals can support. They aren't IT processes or deliverables. We must understand our data and know what we don't know about our data before we can help.

We need to ensure that everyone in the organization understand the principles of the programs. We need to show the organizational users we understand where they have obstacles and demonstrate how we can help them overcome those pain points.

Data professionals can assist in resolving conflicting points of view about data and must ensure that processes and procedures are in place to resolve those issues.

The ideal data governance program ensures compliance and stewardship activities are integrated in the normal solutions processes.

My five to-dos aren't the only preparation steps in successful data governance, but I believe they are the must-dos for any organization.

1. Understand your data: what you know, what you know you don't know
2. Get training in data governance, stewardship, modeling and quality
3. Find their pain, and then show them you know about it
4. Identify exceptions and escalation processes before you need them
5. Position data governance as a natural part of solutions development and deployment

About the Author

Karen López is Principal Consultant for InfoAdvisors. She has more than twenty years of experience in helping organizations implement large, multi-project programs. In her role as an IT project manager she has coached many architects and developers on how to stay focused on the real goals of their projects. She wants you to Love Your Data.

InfoAdvisors is a Toronto-based project and data management consulting firm. We specialize in the practical application of project methods and tools. Our philosophy is based on assessing the cost, benefit and risk of any technique to meet the specific needs of our client organizations.

We would like to help you add business value to your information management resources.

For more information, visit www.infoadvisors.com.



Embarcadero Technologies, Inc. is a leading provider of award-winning tools for application developers and database professionals so they can design systems right, build them faster and run them better, regardless of their platform or programming language. Ninety of the Fortune 100 and an active community of more than three million users worldwide rely on Embarcadero products to increase productivity, reduce costs, simplify change management and compliance and accelerate innovation. Founded in 1993, Embarcadero is headquartered in San Francisco, with offices located around the world. Embarcadero is online at www.embarcadero.com

InfoAdvisors

2012 © InfoAdvisors, Inc. All Rights Reserved
11066 Sheppard Ave East • Toronto, ON M1B 1G2
Phone 416-410-2937
www.infoadvisors.com
Love Your Data