10 design principles to boost data governance adoption and success
In recent years, the volume of data used within organisations has increased dramatically. However, unmanaged data is messy, lacks rules and inhibits productivity. Hence, being able to properly manage these growing volumes of data is rapidly becoming vital to harness data for business value. This increased recognition is driving governments and companies of all sizes to invest in data and its governance. Companies that are not will be or are significantly putting their value creation at risk. Think of it as purchasing a fancy new car: would you buy one without knowing how to drive it?

The essence of data governance revolves around specifying a cross-functional framework for managing data as a strategic enterprise asset. In doing so, data governance specifies decision rights, accountabilities and processes related to data assets with the objective of ensuring the quality, consistency, usability, security, privacy, and availability of the data. Good data governance helps to ensure that those who need to use data can find it, understand it and trust it, which fuels data-driven decision-making across your organisation.

Today, there is a widespread recognition that in order to successfully run a data-driven organisation it is vital to:

- Establish standards, policies, and procedures for the usage, development, and management of data
- Design the right organizational structure
- Implement the technology infrastructure to support data governance

Yet, the successful adoption of data governance remains a problem for most companies. Many organisations have conducted a proof of concept or successfully implemented the plethora of functionalities provided by data governance platforms. Proof of concepts manage to eke out small financial gains of the organisation and excitement often grows as functionalities are being materialised. But then months or years pass without bringing the big wins organisations expected.

Companies substantially struggle to scale from proving the functionalities of data governance tools to companywide leverage. These challenges are prominent across industries and irrespective of the tools, systems or models used. Why are many data governance programmes running out of steam, losing funding, and ultimately falling by the wayside?

**Adoption as the number one priority**

The right technology can ease the path, but any tool is only as good as what is put into it and the extent to which it is effectively used throughout the organisation. In order for data governance investments to produce business value, people have to actually enter, update and use the data definitions, business rules, and KPIs. The governance process needs to be a complete feedback loop in which data is defined, monitored, acted upon, and changed when appropriate.

Having worked with multiple companies across the globe, our experience shows that slow progress—with few exceptions—reflects a failure to rewire deeply-rooted and well-established habits throughout the organisation. Indeed, we’ve seen that data governance programmes, across clients and industries, face formidable cultural barriers. Ignoring this reality or simply putting it low on your checklist wouldn’t be a wise course of action.

As data governance won’t become less relevant any time soon, it’s time we start thinking about how to approach it differently, with adoption as the number one priority.

**How can we get data governance programs out of their ‘comatose state’ and bring life back to its adoption?**

In this article, we discuss 10 design principles to maximise proper adoption of your data governance programme. These principles have been inspired through our joint work with clients worldwide. In all of this, there is one absolute truth: automatic adoption of data governance programmes doesn’t exist (yet).
## 10 design principles to boost data governance adoption and value generation

### 1. Budget as much for culture and adoption as for technology

When companies plan their investment budgets for data governance, they typically consider license, implementation and maintenance costs. The cost of not properly nurturing and adopting data governance is huge. However, when it comes to budgets and priorities, data culture and adoption are often pushed down the checklist. Why? Evidence shows that companies that have been successful in scaling data governance spent more than half of their analytics budgets on activities that drive adoption.

### 2. Define an evolving operating model

There is no single way to do data governance. Therefore every data governance programme starts from defining (and evolving) the operating model that shapes the execution of it. The operating model can vary based on your company’s priorities, culture, organisational structure, … and even internal politics! Deciding on the operating model your organisation will adopt is part of the initial steps in setting up and establishing a successful data governance program.

### 3. Take a gradual approach and demonstrate value early on

One of the challenges is often that the value creation potential of data governance is indirect and can take time to show, while people tend to expect immediate reward for their investments. Therefore, instead of trying to build everything at once, focus on quickly demonstrating the value of data governance through a few carefully selected use cases that are tied to a significant business challenge. Define and prioritise a list of use cases and specify the benefits or business value they will bring to your company. Start working on the use cases with the highest feasibility and highest business impact. From there on you expand data governance and its impact across your company. For example, if there is a self-service analytics initiative going on, streamline business reporting by setting up a metric or report certification process. Use that value and momentum to expand into other use cases. Instead of communicating the value, show it to people and make the link between data governance and visible value. From there, leverage your successes and gradually remove more pain points.

### 4. Make progress measurable

In line with the previous point, make sure to develop success metrics for your data governance programme. These metrics can provide an opportunity to establish a baseline to know what bad data means, and potentially, what good data could mean. Hence, they create a starting point to get the broader organisation to understand the need for better data. Second, the right metrics can help your company to get aligned on a set of shared goals, which is key to success. Make sure to monitor adoption rates, which give an indication of the extent your data governance programme is consumable by people, whether they understand it and care enough about it to adopt it. This is where you may consider working with Key Behavioral Indicators (KBIs) or a set of concrete and measurable behaviors which promote clear ownership, minimize friction between stakeholders involved, increase awareness of individual behavior, and enhance the value being delivered by each stakeholder group. Clearly, you don’t just want to measure progress and adoption, you want to make sure that you’re measuring the value that you’re providing to the organisation. In addition to progress metrics, ensure you have well-established impact metrics too (e.g. improvement in report quality).

### 5. Go where the data citizens are

Data governance is a new concept for most people today, and whether it is change that scares them or the fact that there are additional responsibilities they fear, you have to get to people where they are. Don’t ask them to come to you but go to them and offer solutions in their work context. For example, consider working with an on-the-go application, which provides access to data anywhere, anytime. We know from neuroscience that high effort significantly reduces the likelihood of new behaviours to occur and be maintained. Hence, as highlighted in one of our previous articles on building a data culture, think about designing an easy (as effortless as possible), engaging and user-centric approach.

### 6. Be clear on roles and responsibilities

Imagine that your organisation put up an internal data marketplace using a catalogue. A data consumer finds an interesting data asset but might have questions about it. Who do they turn to? Or in case they want access to the data, who should validate the legitimacy of that request and approve or reject it? Typically, that would be the data owner, and just like that role and its responsibilities need to be clear, communicated, assigned and managed, there are other roles your operating model for data governance will require.
In their daily hustle and bustle, people often fail to remember to act upon their goals or intentions. In addition, people may not be able to recognise or seize the right moment or opportunity to act in accordance with data governance requirements. These challenges become even more pronounced when people are faced with tight deadlines or consumed by high pressure demands. Under these conditions, people tend to relapse easily into old habits and established defaults. One self-regulatory strategy that has been proposed to support both individuals and groups in reducing this intention–behaviour gap is the formation of implementation intentions. These simple plans specify when, where, and how to act on a given goal in an if-then format (“If I engage with and advise the business, I will support my advice with facts and figures”).

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**Work with implementation intentions**

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**Provide incentives for change**

Data affects every line of the business, from IT to marketing, from finance to supply chain, from analytics to legal. In order to develop a successful adoption strategy, you must get the right people in the room to help you endorse change and provide them with incentives to do so. Linking data governance to performance management is an essential part of boosting adoption and establishing new habits.

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**Don’t over-engineer**

People tend to foresee all possible exceptions in processes and try to design a governance tool that can manage every possible unique aspect about their company. Often, it results in a very complex system that becomes counterproductive or counter intuitive. We recommend keeping the guiding principles as intuitive and as simple as possible. Exceptions can be managed case by case later on.

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**Secure the highest sponsorship possible**

Even though you would succeed to generate rapid tangible results from governance implementation, it will require an initial investment that can effectively be delivered only if people are accountable to contribute and if people feel true sponsorship from top management.

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Most of today’s organisations recognise the benefits of implementing a data governance programme. Many of them, however, are unable to successfully achieve the expected results defined in the initial programme charter. A key step to overcome the barriers faced by data governance programmes is to focus your attention on driving adoption for these programmes. Apply the 10 design principles listed in this article at any stage of your data governance journey and you will soon realise the changes and value of being able to successfully find, understand, and trust your data.

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**About Deloitte**

At Deloitte we believe that data will determine the future of countries, companies, and citizens. Committed to leading the way in the data economy, we help organisations fully grasp the rapidly increasing amount of available data, focusing on three key domains: data value, data management, and data literacy. Our goal is to empower companies to thrive in the data economy by helping them to unlock and accelerate the potential value to be generated from analytics.

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**About Collibra**

Collibra is a data intelligence company. We accelerate trusted business outcomes by connecting the right data, insights and algorithms to all data citizens. Our cloud-based platform connects IT and the business to build a data-driven culture for the digital enterprise. Global organisations choose Collibra to unlock the value of their data and turn it into a strategic, competitive asset. Collibra and Deloitte are strategic partners since 2012. During this time, we jointly delivered more than 35 projects globally and over 250 Deloitte consultants were trained and certified. Deloitte was awarded Collibra Partner of the Year in 2019 and 2020.
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