

Championing the data quality cause

A guide for business users





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1. Introduction

Until recently data was a word that rarely made its way outside of an IT department, yet fast-forward to today and it's a very different story.

The reason for this change is simple; business users now need access to quality data and more importantly they see the value in it.



The reality is, all aspects of business operations are supported by data, and the extent to which that data is 'good' or 'bad' has a large bearing on business outcomes. The challenge many are finding is that traditionally data has been seen as a problem for the IT department to fix. However, the issue of data ownership is starting to shift as more business users actively participate in data quality practices. It's even becoming a board level issue with the role of the Chief Data Officer emerging to take control of information governance on a corporate-wide scale.

Let's face facts though, the number of organisations without a corporate-wide data quality strategy, owned by a single director, far outweigh the number that do. The reality of today's situation is that data improvement is often reactive, and where proactive projects exist they are limited to siloed pockets of the organisation. However, this is not something to be disheartened by, but something to be seen as an opportunity. Why? Because it demonstrates that data is now something that entire organisations hold a stake in getting right. This means there will be a wealth of resources and manpower for those business users that approach these projects with a plan in mind.

This guide is designed for those business users who want or even need to champion the data quality cause within their organisation. This paper will discuss:

1

How the increase in business roles participating in DQ is a positive thing

2

Common data quality issues and their impact on business outcomes

3

How to sell your initiative to stakeholders for broader business benefit

4

A step by step approach to delivering successful outcomes

While assessing data quality market offerings, consider the breadth of the capabilities in relation to your requirements as well as how easy it will be for business users to understand and exploit them.



2. The challenge of increased 'business roles' in data quality

There is a preconception that tends to surround data quality projects, that they are all too often doomed to fail by falling short of expectations laid upon them by the business.

The reason cited for this failure is usually a lack of collaboration between the business and IT departments. There is a stream of thought that believes inability to collaborate on these project stems from a fundamental difference in approach to data.



Take for example the difference in approach towards data between Marketing and IT. Marketing typically use data from Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems and data warehouses, which an IT department happily maintains with simple and systematic processes. Problems arise between these two departments when Marketing's demands change rapidly. Targeting, segmenting and insight data needed by marketers on customers changes on a regular basis and demands an agile approach to data, which is not something that IT departments have traditionally adopted.

“CMOs [chief marketing officers] realise that technology is a key enabler for any effective marketing programme, but easy access to technologies that do not require IT support perpetuates poor communication and the stereotype of the dysfunctional IT/marketing relationship. CIOs recognise that the definition of their customer is changing from employees on the payroll to anyone that uses technology to interact with the company.”

Simon Yates, a vice-president in the CIO Group at Forrester Research

Furthermore, there is a tendency for these initiatives to fail to meet expectations as they focus too heavily on solely the technology, not the people and processes that surround the targeted business outcomes. The issue of education around data quality across the business is one that should not be underestimated. Tools can only go so far to ensure that the data that is entering your system and being maintained is accurate, but for data quality to be truly successful it must be embraced by all those that contribute to it, from the ground-level up.



“30% of organisations with a data quality strategy manage it through a single director” Experian Data Quality Global Research 2014



“CIOs, Chief Data Officers and information leaders continue to struggle with getting data quality onto their business agendas. This is due to an overemphasis on technology rather than a focus on organizational culture, people and processes.”

12 ways to improve your data quality,
Saul Judah and Ted Friedman, 17 February 2014

However, with the steady rise of data as part of business users' everyday roles, organisations are finding themselves better positioned to educate their people on the link between data quality issues and the commercial outcomes it can produce. In their paper 'Measuring the Business Value of Data Quality' Gartner advise that organisations measure the business value of improved data quality by focusing on business processes, investment decisions and overall productivity.

The increase in business roles participating in data quality is also having a positive impact on the vendor landscape. Over the last 20 years there has been an exponential growth in the number of data quality software vendors from a handful to 100's within the UK market alone. This rise has led to a competitive and innovative atmosphere within this market leading to a focus on making tools easy to use, accelerating time to value.



Over the last 20 years there has been an exponential growth in the number of data quality software vendors from a handful to 100's within the UK market alone.



3. Championing common data quality issues and their impact on business outcomes

How does data affect those using it on a day to day basis? In order to answer this question we reached out to some of our customers who are both IT and business users to hear what they had to say.

How does poor data quality impact business outcomes in your department?

This is really simple – for us we rely on decent data capture to have a relationship with our customers going forward. It is critical for the data that we capture to be accurate to do that, or else our customers end up with a terrible sales experience. Furthermore the membership products that we sell are high value and we want to be able to keep in touch with these customers to maintain our relationship and ensure retention. From a strictly commercial point of view, having the data right is pretty important. If we find there is something wrong with the payment for example we need to be able to contact our customers and let them know, not just cut them off, risking a bad experience for our customers. For us it's really all about ensuring good customer experience and relationships.

**Marketing Manager,
Leisure**

For us business without good data would lead to bad decision making, misinformation for the marketing team, targeting the wrong types of customers or for our existing customers not serving them in the right way.

**Head of Geographical Risk and Data Solutions,
Insurance**

For me it is black and white, poor data quality means more work further down the line, which means that our resources are being inefficiently used and results in less profitable activity for business.

**Project Manager,
Retail**

We are an email specialist here. We send out large volumes of email everyday on behalf of brands. We need the email data to be 100% accurate or else we will get blocked by spam filters and that effects our reputation.

**Jt. CEO,
Marketing**



What improvements have you seen from investing in data quality technology?

Not a million years ago everything we did was done on paper and then entered into an old system. This was all manually done and, as is often the case, was prone to risk of error in either taking those details in the first place or when copying them over. We have moved over to giving people the power back and championing people to online self-serve, from which we have seen an immediate rise in data accuracy. Data quality and quantity have sky rocketed. Self-service has also improved our email opens, which again helps to improve our service and customer experience.

**Marketing Manager,
Leisure**

With high quality data we ensure that competitive edge, getting our cost savings down and being more efficient by targeting the right sort of customers.

**Head of Geographical Risk and Data Solutions,
Insurance**

Getting data quality right means that we get to spend more time on different projects around the business. Using our resources to their maximum potential keeps us commercially ahead of the game.

**Project Manager,
Retail**

BY 2014 END
17%

“By the end of 2014, 17% of larger organizations will have a Chief Data Officer (CDO) requiring CIOs to adjust their job role expectations.”

Gartner CIO Advisory: The Chief Data Officer Trend Gains Momentum,
Debra Logan, Mark Raskino, 13 January 2014



4. How to sell your initiative to stakeholders for broader business benefit

It's important to remember that you are probably not the only person pioneering a focus on data quality within your organisation. As data becomes more prevalent amongst business job roles we know the understanding of its value and the need for its accuracy grows too.

Organisations in the long run should consider the broader application of data quality investment across a range of departments and functions. Many projects pertain to just one function or use case marginalising the impact and returns available.

There is a common fear amongst organisations that looking at a corporate-wide approach will lead to a 'boiling the ocean' scenario, this is not the case. When planning your investment in technology, considering your organisations broader information management strategy does not stop you from implementing it gradually. A careful and systematic approach does however ensure that its roll out and application is planned and strategic, with organisational support.

What advice would you give to peers on advancing the issue of data quality within their organisation?

Get your data collectors on board by ensuring that they understand the importance of data quality. Educate them on the data quality process and its importance for the wider business, and how it will affect them and their role on a ground level. Point out what neglecting it really cost the business and them. The best way of this is to show staff what it means in terms of business outcomes.

**Marketing Manager,
Leisure**

Identifying a business sponsor is the first thing you should do. It is very difficult to get things done or any project that you want gets off the ground otherwise. There are two ways that projects get done, either senior management approaches you having already gained board level buy-in or you are able to demonstrate the impact of a project to senior management and gain their buy-in ensuring their promotion of the project to the board. Either way you need to identify the influencer.

**Project Manager,
Retail**

Don't try and fix everything yourself. There is the whole business there that has a vested interest in the data quality being high quality and getting access to that data. So use that resource around the business to help you on your way. When you get a database that is not of the best quality, don't despair. You can still work with what you've got. You can utilise intelligent software pieces at the other end to get the most value off the data you do have. Do get buy-in from the business, it is really important to allow you to do the job you are setting out to do.

**Head of Geographical Risk and Data Solutions,
Insurance**



“IT leaders struggle to make data quality improvements beyond the level of a project and do not embed them as part of their business information culture.”

Gartner 12 ways to improve your data quality,
Saul Judah and Ted Friedman and 17 February 2014



What are the most important points to have in a business case for a data improvement initiative?

Money. Make it clear data quality will save you money and make you money. Show how this works in real life scenarios through your service and staffing. Pointing out that Data Quality means that you can cut back on staff or have them doing something more valuable, saving your company's bottom line.

**Marketing Manager,
Leisure**

We did it by demonstrating and highlighting issues and potential savings that the investment in data quality tools would deliver to the organisation.

**Project Manager,
Retail**

What approach did you take for making the business case for data quality internally?

For us it was less of building a business case and more of a natural evolution as we moved from paper to online processes. This move drove our business processes forward as the role of data has become more important, and as a result its quality has become more important. This evolution has moved our organisation forward from acting on 'gut -feel' to having solid data from which to guide our business better.

**Marketing Manager,
Leisure**

First stop was the leadership team, making sure that the execs were on board and we had the mandate to go ahead. Getting data ownership delegated around the business and part of this process is ensuring these owners really understand what they are owners of and why, as well as writing specific lines written into their objectives.

**Head of Geographical Risk and Data Solutions,
Insurance**



5. A step by step approach to delivering successful outcomes





6. Summary of Key Points

1

Data quality is not just for IT. Business users are key to moving data quality up the corporate agenda.

2

All departments suffer from bad data quality in their individual ways but can all agree on the bottom line benefits – improved customer experience, boosted ROI and increased efficiency.

3

Buy-in from the board is key to any successful data quality project and presenting them with a monetary value against your data is the best way of getting it.

4

Siloed approaches work in the short term but to achieve good data quality that can be maintained over time you need to think about a wider approach.

5

Educate all your staff on the importance of data quality to them and the business.

About Experian Data Quality

Experian Data Quality has built up exceptional market coverage in the data quality software space assisting customers with their unique data quality challenges. We provide a comprehensive toolkit for data quality projects combining our market leading software with a vast scope of reference data assets and services. Our mission is to put our customers in a position to make the right decisions from accurate and reliable data. The size and scope of data management projects varies considerably but the common factor in all ventures is unlocking operational efficiency and improving customer engagement. We see the potential of data. Whether it's in enabling ambulances to be sent to the exact location of an emergency or attributing charitable donations to the people who need it the most - data accuracy makes all the difference to service provision.

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