

Data, information and
business intelligence

FLYING BLIND?



Data, information and business intelligence

Does everyone in your company have the information they need to do their job to the optimal level and maximum efficiency?

Is your CEO making decisions based on 'right-time' information?

Whether it is viewed as raw data, expressed as information within a specific business context or reported in the form of business intelligence, data underpins every operational, planning and strategic decision your company makes. If your data is wrong, then your business decisions are wrong.

The challenge of data management

Data has too often been treated as the poor relation of the IT world, and as such has suffered from short-term workarounds and fixes when problems have occurred.

It is a complex area and one in which practically everyone in the organisation has a stake. It is collected, transformed and distributed by multiple applications. It supports numerous business processes, often across a range of geographies and independent business units.

As more processes become automated, it is increasingly difficult to ensure the quality of the data supporting them. Once human checks and balances are removed, errors in the data are not so visible. These can create bigger problems further down the line – and not just within your own organisation.

Many companies now operate an 'extended' enterprise, outsourcing key services and collaborating more closely with their suppliers and business partners. They need to be sure that the data they are passing across to their service partner is accurate. They also need to be aware of the risk of importing poor data from that partner.

If problems with data management are not resolved, they can result in operational inefficiency, increased cost and a poor basis for strategic decision-making. They can also cause legislative or compliance issues.



Who needs it?

All organisations need to manage their data effectively.

So, unless your company can respond positively to the following questions, you may need to address data management as a priority:

- Do we understand our data – where it resides, what it means, whether it is fit for purpose?
- Do our people have access to the right data, in the right place at the right time?
- Are decisions being made using corporate data, rather than on local data from manually maintained spreadsheets?
- Do our frontline services personnel trust the data we provide; does it support their operations?
- Is the data we exchange with our suppliers accurate and does it support optimal service delivery?

Glue Reply data management assessment

A neutral, unbiased assessment of your data problems, together with a pragmatic view of what needs to be done, and a roadmap of how to achieve this, focusing on such issues as:

- Does the data architecture deliver against your business vision and strategy?
- What are the domains of information and how accurately do they represent the actual business?
- Does the data architecture align to and enable the business, functional and technical architecture?
- Has the data architecture been used appropriately by the application technologies?
- Does the data method and tooling support or constrain the delivery of both data and technology solutions?
- How can you achieve your enterprise data vision incrementally?

Where does data management help?

The following are examples of situations where data management issues can be particularly acute:

- Within complex organisations, operating autonomous business units, where a common data model is required to exchange information between units.
- Following a merger or acquisition, where there is a need to consolidate systems. Data is one of the big challenges. It needs to be translated, cleansed and de-duplicated.
- Where consolidated financial reporting is performed across different business units, anomalies need to be identified and reconciled.
- In multichannel retailing, where the ability to run an integrated operation across the physical shops and the virtual store requires integrated systems. At a data level, this means that data formats need to be the same, identical nomenclature should be used and the data needs to be reconciled and de-duplicated. This is a huge task and one which is still causing customer service issues for some retailers.
- For companies operating with an extended enterprise, where there is a risk of importing or exporting bad data to, or from, service partners.

Why involve Glue Reply?

Glue Reply's consulting practice covers all aspects of data, information and business intelligence architecture, organisation, governance and execution. Our consultants have completed numerous engagements in the retail, defence and telecoms sectors. We understand how data issues impact on other domains within your organisation and will help you to identify these and resolve them, with practical help.

How long will Glue Reply be involved?

Our aim is to come into your organisation, add value then exit.

It is only worth 'fixing' the data that gives value or where the implications of using incorrect data have a tangible effect.

We adopt an incremental approach. We focus on specific pain points – a particular data repository or process, for example. Each project brings a premium. Over time, these form part of the bigger, improved 'data' picture.

Our consultants 'do it with you' rather than 'to you'. We aim to leave you with the skills and tools required to sustain quality data.

Where there is a need to significantly increase in-house skills or where particular focus needs to be applied, we can work with you to establish a data, information or BI competency centre.

We tell you:

- What should be done next, based on where you are currently.
- What are the issues and constraints to be avoided.
- What are the risks involved.
- How to implement a real world yet effective approach to ongoing data governance.

Glue Reply consultants offer a wealth of expertise and practical help in resolving problems with data, information and business intelligence, including:

- Information architecture
- Data architecture
- Data management
- Data profiling
- Data quality analysis, assessment and remedial action management
- Data and information ownership and stewardship
- Data governance
- Master data management
- Data migration
- Corporate data and information modelling
- Semantic data definition and reconciliation
- Requirements gathering and process modelling
- Report design
- Universe, ETL, and EDW architecture and design

Why the Glue Reply approach?

It is often said that the information that managers have readily available is not what they need; and the information they need is not readily available.

This is a complex area. Regrettably there is no 'silver bullet' that we can offer to 'solve' the data issue. From the work we have done with tier one organisations and in the public sector, however, we have developed a number of propositions focusing on the key problem areas. These include:

Information architecture

Information architecture provides a framework to organise the information you need to achieve your organisation's goals and objectives. We will work with you to implement this, helping you to define your enterprise's information value chains, current and future state. We help you to identify the information entities and their meanings, together with their relationships and flows. We also help you to establish the principles and guidelines governing their evolution over time.

Data management assessment

Our consultants will carry out an assessment of your current data management practices and overall organisational domain to review the current situation, understand the data across the organisation and compare this with the best practice target state.

The benefit of involving our consultants at this stage is that they will provide an independent, unbiased, and unconstrained view of your organisation's current situation, along with recommendations for incremental improvement. These recommendations come in the form of a realistic and achievable roadmap that will deliver real value and benefit to your organisation.

Data quality management

The goal is to determine why the data is 'broken'. Our consultants will put forward a plan of action, which will identify data anomalies; determine their implications for the business; analyse the root causes; and take remedial actions on those that are worth fixing.

Our aim is not just to identify issues, but to ensure sustained data quality for the future.

Iterative data quality management can only be performed if it is cost effective. We are able to monitor and measure data quality, with tools that are efficient and methods that ensure that there is a return on investment.

Data governance

Once the remedial activities have been applied, it is vital that your staff take responsibility for the data on an ongoing basis, both at an architectural level as regards new design and when changes to existing systems and processes are introduced. A data governance regime needs to be implemented across the organisation.

The challenge is to manage data effectively without at the same time slowing down the operation of the business.

Glue Reply takes a real world approach to governance, applying robust controls where necessary and a light touch where appropriate. We have developed an overarching framework that governs not only the data but also changes to the repositories and applications that store and process data, and the projects which implement these. This framework can be implemented incrementally and flexibly to suit the requirements of your organisation.

Added value

The benefits of good data management are best seen in the impact it has on the quality and timeliness of the information available to your organisation.

Effective information management will:

- Provide the basis for clear, concise and timely decision-making.
- Provide the vital link between business process and physical data, so helping to ensure that IT solutions deliver against the real business need.
- Establish a consistent understanding of the meaning of terms, and a point of reconciliation for disparate and duplicated terms.
- Support management reporting that is more accurate, timely, flexible, and cost effective.
- Deliver a unified view of all data relevant to frontline staff.
- Help to meet regulatory and legal requirements.
- Support improved information exchange with business or service partners.
- Support the transition to a service-oriented architecture.

At the business intelligence level, these translate into clear benefits.



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