

Data governance guide - What, why and how?

Get an all round view for improved data confidence



1. What is data governance?

The formal definition...

Data governance is a quality control discipline for the process of managing, storing, using, improving and protecting organisational information. The principle aim is to help maximise the value of an organisation's data and information assets.

In layman's terms...

Essentially data governance is all about getting your house in order. Making sure that the way you handle, store and process data is, amongst other things, legal, efficient, and right for your business. Quite often individuals with no background or specialism in data are tasked with the job of managing or processing it. Data governance is a way of making sure that, despite this, you get the most out of data as an asset.

A bit of background...

A data governance programme requires people, processes and technology to control and standardise the handling of an organisation's data across the business.

The title of data steward is given to the lead role in a data governance project. Data stewards take ownership of the data and work with the business to define the programme's objectives.

As part of a data governance project, the following key areas should be considered:

- Data quality
- Data security
- Data compliance
- Business processes and policies

How does contact data management play a role?

A key area of data governance is reviewing the quality of the data and developing a clear understanding of how that data flows through the business. The contact data a business holds on their customers and prospects plays an important role here.

Ensuring data is accurate and fit for purpose is not only essential to exploit its full potential, but also helps organisations communicate and interact more effectively with their customers.



2. Why is it important?

Data governance is all about realising your data is an asset to your business, and making the most of that asset. The aim is to help with a few key objectives – cost control, making money, improving efficiency and managing risk. Gaining knowledge about data and improving data processes, culture and technology will benefit the whole company with very real business improvements:

Make money

With accurate and reliable data, more informed and profitable business decisions can be made. Understanding your data and how you can use this valuable information is vital. In relation to contact data, if you know the profile of your customer base and can rely on this information, you can then target prospects with the same profile and propensity to buy. Information like this is gold dust for marketing departments and business planning.

Save money

Investing in data governance as an organisation-wide strategic initiative will cut costs associated with ad hoc data quality initiatives, repetitive data work and duplication of data projects. In relation to contact data, accurate details of your customers and prospects means that you can reduce costs associated with undelivered or late goods.

Improve efficiency

Investing in data governance will improve your understanding and view of your data. With this achieved you can benefit from streamlined business processes. Information can then be gathered quickly, easily and accurately, improving the efficiency of departments throughout an organisation. Process inefficiencies can also be ironed out by investing in technology to remove manual data work such as cleaning and deduplicating contact data.

Increase control

Understanding how your data is being used throughout your business is vital to ensuring you meet legal, ethical and policy based requirements. Over the past few years, the volume of regulations that organisations have to comply with has increased. In addition, fines and penalties for misuse of data are also becoming more common. Implementing a data governance strategy increases control over data processes and ensures

organisations are fully compliant with data regulations such as the Data Protection Act.

3. Where do you start?

The first place to start is with your objectives.

Data governance has the potential to spiral into a large project, so it is advisable to break it down into long and short term objectives. This also increases your chance of approval from senior management, as they will want to see results from the project before they agree to ongoing resource investment. With this in mind, it is worth considering short term goals that will have recognisable benefit. Most advisable are the benefits which tie into business priorities as this will have even more impact and help your business case.

After your objectives come the action plan and timelines. One of the first steps is to take a sense check of your data processes, technology and people by conducting an audit. This will help you to understand the day to day needs of the data and its usage and identify any immediate problems with the current processes. An audit does not have to be a scary thing. The key to being successful is asking the right questions and asking the right people. Getting key stakeholders from across the business means you will get a full and accurate picture of how data is used and a snapshot of the quality of it.

For more information on data governance and tips on how to get your project going visit:

[www.qas.co.uk/
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