Describing Data Governance

TALKING POINTS FOR LEADERS

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Help your team understand data governance and what it means for them.

The Opportunity

Thinking about managing our data often conjures up images of data warehouses, servers, and complex technical processes. Data management certainly has a technical component. But we can only get value out of our data and related technologies if we properly govern our data. Right now, our data is stuck in silos, and we often format and store the same data in different ways depending on the system. This makes it difficult to coordinate across groups and leverage data the way we need to. Such decentralization also makes it difficult to secure our data properly. Data governance is critical to ensuring a coordinated data management effort leads to identifiable business outcomes.

How to Describe Data Governance

Data governance's core purpose is to create and enhance business value by improving quality, availability, usability, validity, and understandability of the company's data. This means that we will work to create a common business vocabulary, set quality standards, and prioritize data literacy education. Data governance is centrally focused on people and enabling the outcomes that matter most to the business.

Data governance should not be confused with information governance, although there may be cases in which the two intersect. According to industry standards, information governance deals with the governance of unstructured data—i.e., records and documents. Data governance, on the other hand, deals with the management of structured data, or data that lives or can live within a database or information system. As a rule of thumb, I like to say that information is "data plus context." These definitions resolve about 90-95% of the situations, but there is some gray area between what is "IG" and what is "DG." For these situations, the two groups work together to ensure consistent results.

Quick Facts

- Data governance is the thread that runs through other data management services (e.g., data catalog, virtualization, and visualization).
- Data governance exercises authority through an operating model comprised of multidisciplinary firm leaders (a board and a council).
- Data governance is not focused on governing all of the company's data. We are focused on critical data that is highly regulated, is present in a large number of company systems, or has been identified as serving a strategic business objective for the company.
- Any questions should be directed to DataGovernance@YOURCOMPANY.com