



Helping organisations get more value from their data: the role of the CDO

For any organisation that wants to get more value from its data, the chief data officer (CDO) has a critical role to play. Nic Orton, Principal Consultant at Civica, examines the challenges a chief data officer is likely to face in helping an organisation achieve its data-related objectives, and makes some recommendations for success.

Data, data everywhere

Every organisation depends on its data to operate, and many want make better use of their data to support business decision-making — becoming 'data driven' is a frequently articulated ambition. But achieving this ambition will be an uphill struggle if, as is often the case, data is fragmented around the organisation. Fragmentation can typically be traced back to teams operating within silo's, taking a product (offer) instead of a customer view. Issue often exacerbated by mergers or acquisitions; and further hindered by teams / individuals creating their own spreadsheets. In many cases due to a lack of trust in the accuracy, validity of their organisations data.

The upshot of such fragmentation may be inefficiencies and misunderstandings, as well as data duplication and quality issues.

If data isn't reliable and well managed, business processes may not run as smoothly as they should, and the organisation may not have the insights it needs to measure, analyse and improve business performance.

To achieve its business goals and its aim of becoming data driven, an organisation needs to gain a holistic view of its data, and to treat and manage that data as an asset. Doing so will also help the organisation to deal with increasing volumes and complexity of data, and with evolving regulations that place constraints on its use and require effective data lifecycle management.

The role of the chief data officer

The chief data officer (CDO) will be instrumental in helping their organisation to gain a holistic view of — and realise much more value from — the data it has, or can generate or acquire. To this end, the CDO will typically need to help the organisation improve data management and quality. Reducing risk whilst increasing the opportunity (value) an organisation can realise from its data by implementing or enhancing data governance. This will involve the CDO:

- Establishing basic principles for sound data management, such as terminology, definitions and quality
- Bringing the whole organisation together and getting everyone behind the data
- Developing, executing and supervising plans, policies, programmes and practices that deliver, control, protect and enhance the value of data and information assets throughout their lifecycle
- Undertaking a significant co-ordination task across all areas of the organisation, including compliance, risk, IT and finance
- Identifying the right place to start

There may, of course, be resistance from individual areas of the organisation — often those that have traditionally managed their own data well. To counter such resistance, the CDO will need to:

- Set the strategy and direction for becoming a data-driven organisation — changing how the organisation deals with data, not just what it says about data
- Ensure data is treated and valued like any other business asset
- Run a change management programme — to change the way departments, teams and individuals view, structure, manage and handle data

Data governance: integrated with the wider business strategy

Most importantly, the CDO will need to ensure that data management and governance isn't treated as an isolated project in its own right.

Rather, they must ensure that any data management and governance initiative is fully aligned and integrated with the organisation's overall business strategy and goals,

and that the business benefits it will deliver are clearly understood. For the vast majority of organisations, those benefits will include:

- Better performance as an organisation with smoother processes and better, more informed decision-making
- Reduction in data protection and security risks, and lower exposure to cybercrime
- Improved insight into and understanding of the business and its customers, and of its opportunities and risks

Although business benefits may vary by industry - For example, organisations in a heavily regulated industry will benefit by streamlining compliance and having fewer data-related issues to remediate; while those focused on customer satisfaction will benefit by having a consolidated view of each customer, enabling better service and increased opportunities for up- and cross-selling- those that adopt strong business enabling data management and data governance mind-set and approach (Data Enablement) are better place to adapt and respond to an ever changing and demanding environment

Critical success factors

No matter how an organisation expects to benefit, the successful introduction of a data governance programme will depend on a number of critical factors.

To promote organisation-wide understanding and adoption, the CDO will need to gain executive sponsorship for the programme. They will also need to provide training and education to ensure a certain level of data literacy throughout the organisation,

so that everyone starts talking the same language about data. (See our earlier blog on data literacy.)

The CDO will also need to strike the right balance between high-profile analytics for strategic decision-making, and the routine day-to-day management of operational data in the engine room of the business.

How Civica can help

Our data management experts can help CDOs develop and launch successful data enabling (governance & management) programmes to support their organisations' business strategies. We provide advice, guidance and practical support in areas such as:

- Establishing data standards (quality, management, measurement)

- Ensuring data accuracy and consistency so that it can be relied on to support business decisions
- Ensuring data can be accessed by the right people at the right time to inform decisions and help them take the right actions
- Establishing a set of definitions to support data literacy throughout the organisation
- Bringing data to life so that the organisation learns to treat it as an asset and gets the best value from using it.

If you're a CDO whose organisation wants to get more value from its data, contact Nicholas Orton, Principal Consultant today to find out how Civica can support you with a tailored consultancy engagement.

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