

Building An Effective Data Strategy

The Case for Data

A manufacturing company requires a clear understanding of processes and a well defined strategy for the management of its raw materials. In respect of the raw materials the manufacturing company needs to understand:

- how are they sourced?
- how to maintain and monitor quality?
- how will the raw materials be used in the most efficient way?
- who is responsible if something needs changing or goes wrong?

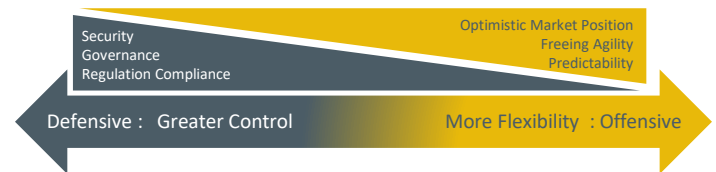
Financial Services firms often concentrate resource on getting processes as efficient as possible, overlooking the need to manage raw materials. The problem comes from not really understanding what makes up the raw materials in Financial Services. A car manufacturer produces cars from steel and pre-fabricated parts, but what is our raw material in Financial Services? The answer is of course data. We take data in from various sources, we do things to it and we send it on its way. It's quite a sobering thought to consider that most of our industry is dedicated just to the consumption, manipulation and supply of data.

Given that our raw material is data, it shouldn't be a hard sell to convince budget holders that we need to understand how we source, manage, secure and control our data. These key tasks along with some guiding rules and a common understanding of data in your organisation are the main elements of an effective data strategy.

Some say that a data strategy is overkill for organisations and if we consider this across all industries they are probably correct. But for Financial Services, where the raw material is data and the products are really just data, with a bit of maths, a data strategy is one of the most important parts of your overall operating model.

Discovering the culture

The first step in defining a data strategy is to discover the data culture appropriate for the organisation. To assist this we use a continuum ranging from a defensive culture on the right which prioritises control, through to an offensive culture on the left which prioritises flexibility.



The aim is to place the organisation on this continuum and define the strategy with the appropriate balance of control and flexibility.

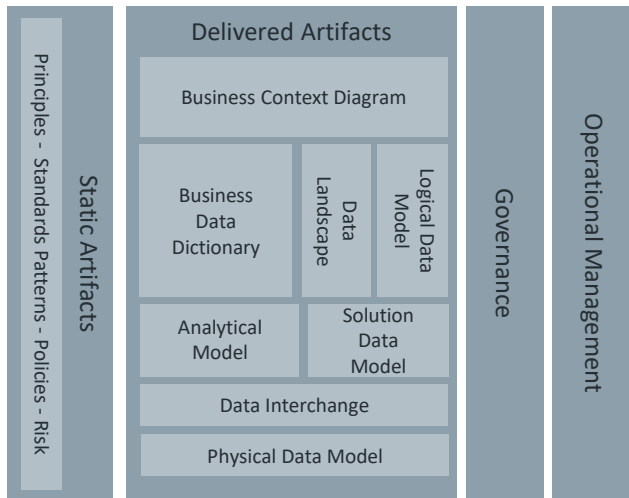
A common mistake is to define a “one size fits all” data culture for the entire organisation. The continuum should be used to demonstrate where different parts of the organisation sit. As an example, it is not uncommon for one function to require the flexibility to mine data across a wide landscape whereas others dictate that strict governance for all data items must be maintained. The continuum allows us to expose that these conflicting requirements exist in an organisation and build into the strategy ways to deal with the conflict. The option to just deploy the strictest controls inevitably leads to the function requiring the flexibility, diverting from the main strategy and leading to potential future conflicts.

Analyse what is right for you

The data culture across the organisation allows us to determine what elements should make up the overall data strategy. Sometimes stakeholders have a preconceived notion of what the strategy should deliver. It is not uncommon to hear that the expectation of the output is to create a brand new advanced analytics function or suites of data services ripe to be monetised for external use. We follow an approach that aims to deliver an appropriate data strategy tailored to the organisation, driven by requirements gathered from your business strategy, your industry sector and your staff.

Potential outcomes

Understanding the data in an organisation is at the core of the work we do to define the data strategy. We use a framework of data architecture assets and domain specific models to determine what is required as part of the overall strategy.



We like to think of this as an audit of the current environment, using best practice from our models along with the input from our analysis to determine the most important outcomes for the strategy. We do not pre-empt the outcomes and evidence the need for the elements of the data strategy to enable organisations to build the business case to deliver it.

It is not uncommon for a data strategy to have a strong focus on analytical capabilities as understanding the data is core to defining other potential outcomes. Data governance, quality, master data and integration are also often core to the strategy.

Implementing the solutions

Our whole approach is centred around ensuring the data strategy defined is appropriate to the organisation. In delivering this, we follow an approach that has high levels of involvement with key stakeholders within the organisation and also take opportunities to increase the exposure to the wider organisation. It is not unusual for some organisations to adopt a technology first approach to the data strategy. We find this often leads to diversion from the core business objectives and ends up not delivering the answers to the key business problems. We have developed a staged approach that can be implemented alongside partner organisations to define, deliver and maintain the strategy for the organisation.

Find out more:

www.altus.co.uk

+44 (0)1225 438 000

enquiries@altus.co.uk

Roadmap to deliver



We follow this stream of activity to deliver all aspects of the data strategy.

- People & Organisation** - Determine the roles and data areas to inform later work around security and governance.
- Discover & Define** - Create the general understanding of the data in the organisation utilising our framework and industry domain models.
- Build and Maintain Architecture** - Define and put in place the architectural building blocks to deliver the core technology elements of the strategy.
- Enhance Operational Procedures** - Use the insight gathered to enhance key operational processes. The previous work allows us to prioritise the processes and business areas.
- Embed Decision Making Based on Data** - Ensure that the data-based decisioning that has been used to determine the make-up of the data strategy expands to become a factor in all key business decisions. Enabling the ability to draw on key data, spot patterns and see the results of improvements is often core to a successful data strategy.
- Refine, Enhance & Optimise** - Recognises that the implementation does not end. Each of the delivery steps should be seen as delivering the core building blocks to effectively deliver the organisation, technology, processes and culture to constantly evolve the strategy to meet the changing landscape within the business. Our aim is to ensure that the data strategy delivered gives the organisation all the capabilities required to build on the strategy.

Engaging with our team

We offer a variety of engagement models to help deliver the data strategy based around our delivery roadmap, architecture framework and domain models. We can tailor these engagements to deliver alongside your preferred technology partner or include an exercise to choose a suitable delivery and ongoing support partner. In all engagements we include the option for ongoing consultation with our team to give an external perspective to your decision making and governance processes. To find out more contact our team using the details below.