



"TALK TO THE HAND!! COZ THE BUSINESS ISN'T LISTENING!!"

Whitepaper



From apathy and denial to active data management "Action is the fundamental key to all success" - *Pablo Picasso*

The "soft side" to Data Quality Management: The cultural changes required to achieve success

If there's one thing guaranteed to have employees glaze over. It's Data! Not exactly the stuff for dinner parties or first dates. Having said that, we all instinctively know that data is somehow important yet our attitude towards it is interesting. And in the main, it is negative. So let's begin with the biggest problem when talking to the hand. Attitude!

"There is a little difference in people, but that little difference makes a big difference. That little difference is attitude. The big difference is whether it is positive or negative" - *W.Clement Stone*

The Problem

If we are to achieve the cultural changes required to achieve success in DQ improvement, they must be inside the organisation and everyone must understand how their actions impact the entire company structure, either positively or negatively.

Having clean, accurate and trusted data is something all businesses strive to achieve, yet so many have not achieved the desired quality for their data and many will be unlikely to achieve this. Why? Because of their Attitude!

Most businesses have a long history and engrained methods they have used over time, such as the silo approach, where by data entry is handled by one department and the next stage of data being managed by a separate department. This can become the standard process and for many, is not questioned. It is the cultural structure of the organisation and the changes needed from staff that will achieve their desired results. It is all about challenging the process.

Actions: why? why? why?

"There are those who look at things the way they are, and ask why. I dream of thing that never were, and ask, why not?"
- Robert Kennedy

It is only when processes are questioned, that the true reasons are uncovered. This is where the change agents need to stand up and take account, helping to alter the attitude of those around them.

"But that's the way I've always done it!"

"A newlywed always cut her chicken in half to cook it. When asked why? She replied, that's the way my mum did it. When the mum was asked why she did it, she replied, that's the way your Gran did it. When Gran was asked why she did it? She said, I only had a small oven" Things only change when people make it happen! The cultural changes required are brought forward by adapting attitudes and helping to change the attitudes of those around them. By changing the beliefs, the behavior will change as well.

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Reasons to care:

Better results

Less time wastage

Greater efficiency of work

Greater fulfilment in job role Lower opportunity cost involved - more purposeful in different role

The Blame Culture

When it comes to data, often companies suffer from a blame culture". Many are annoyed with the state of their data, and the fact that it is not adequate for their needs, leading to re-working and scrapping of poor quality data.

Yet those who deal with the poor quality data, believe it is often due to another departments miss-handling of it, that has led to its current state and have passed the blame on to someone else.

"An error detected during the project testing phase can cost up to one hundred times more to correct than the same error found during the design phase" - *The Quality Assurance Institute*.

Invest in intelligent and future-proof data quality improvement tools which address integration with fast, easy implementation and scalability to help solve the critical problems identified, e.g.

As a result, a job which everybody can do was passed around and ignored until the last moment, where as it could have been dealt with early on, leading to a lower opportunity cost for all of those involved.

This is a data blame story about four people: Everybody, Somebody, Anybody and Nobody.

"There was an important job to be done and everybody was asked to do it, everybody was sure somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it, but nobody did it. The real situation you find yourself in as a result of defective data? What is the real state of your data and your data management process? Somebody got angry about that because it was everybody's job. Everybody thought anybody could do it, but nobody realised that everybody wouldn't do it. It ended up that everybody blamed somebody when actually nobody asked anybody." - (*Alar et.al*)

"Defeat is not the worst of failures. Not to have tried is the true failure" - George Edward Woodberry

If the problem was corrected at an early stage, there would be less time waste at each handover point throughout the process. It is possible to relate the data process to a relay race, if the baton is dropped or the hand over is incorrect, then it will slow down the entire process.

How to fix the problem

In order to fix the problem, it is best to attack it at its root cause. By taking charge and focusing on the problems at the beginning of the process rather than leaving it to be dealt with further down the line. Final inspection is sub optimal and too late.

The best approach to proactively solving the data quality issue within an organisation is to put a **S.P.I.N** on the process

S - Situation The real situation you find yourself in as a result of defective data? What is the real state of your data and your data management process?

P - Problems What problems are poor data quality causing you? Are they re-occurring? Where do they show up and how often do they happen?

I - Implications What does this mean to you? How is it affecting you? Does it mean unproductive work? Do you feel your time could be better allocated on more constructive things?

N - Needs/Payoff What do you want as a result of improved quality data? What progress do you want to see? What extra benefit would you get by fixing the defective process? What's the value of the difference between where you are now and where you want to be?

"The world cares very little about what a man or woman knows; it is what the man or woman is able to do that counts" - *Booker T. Washington*

Break down the processes, review each issue and recognize what is stopping you achieving. This helps identify the challenges and helps solve the root cause of problems.

Fixing the root cause of the problem is the key. If poor quality data is created at the beginning of its process and remains throughout, then low information quality will always be the result. It will be impossible to achieve optimal efficiency within any business, if the data you rely on for decision making is inaccurate, incomplete or invalid.

Building information on bad data is like trying to build a house on sand. The data must be a foundation that business information and decisions are constructed from.

Planning List

"There are two primary choices in life: to accept conditions as they exist, or accept responsibility for changing them" - Denis Waitley

- Find higher level management support to green light the project. Apply pull on the project.
- Find Data Stewards - who are prepared to be measured and accountable for the data.
- Fix the root causes of poor data capture and data processing.
- Investigate your data, understand what you have as your datum.

- Focus on your business requirements. Such as people, process, logic, purpose, etc.
- Does the data support the business objectives?
- Look at the downstream impact of actions – the pain chain.
- Focus on best practice and culture – define what good data looks like.
- Be accountable for actions and change processes where necessary.
- Measure performance – define KPI"s so you can measure improvements.
- Improve communication – ensure there is a common lexicon of terms to avoid confusion.

Conclusion:

"If you don't like something, change it. If you can't change it, change your attitude" - *Mayo Angelon*

By actively taking responsibility for the quality of data and following a structured plan, it will create long lasting benefits for the individual, in the form of greater job fulfilment, less time waste and improved results. For the company, it will reduce waste in time, financial resources and potential company reputation.

Remember, if the problem is not fixed at the beginning of the process, then it can have a negative snowball effect for the whole company. A simple miss spelled name that was not validated at entry level, can then become a much larger problem at the next stage of processing, and will continue to grow.

Can we help you?

We have been working with customer data and developing our data quality software for over 25 years now. Whether you are working with 1,000 records or many millions of records, we understand the challenges companies face when importing, deduping, cross matching and merging data. We will work with you to understand your data quality challenges and together we will improve the quality of your data allowing you to make better informed business decisions.

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