

The Data Governance Minimum Viable Product (MVP)

*An agile approach to implementing your enterprise data
governance program*



MALCOLM HAWKER
DISTINGUISHED ARCHITECT,
DUN & BRADSTREET

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A major challenge facing all companies in the successful execution of their Master Data strategies is *data governance*. Companies large and small across all industries – regardless of their respective Master Data maturity – struggle to some degree when it comes to finding the right mix of policies and procedures needed to manage what is arguably their most important corporate asset.

This whitepaper explores the concepts of data governance and why it's a challenge for many companies. It hypothesizes that many governance initiatives are often coupled with the launch of new software (primarily MDM software) and therefore that a failure to successfully implement either will likely mean a failure for both. To address these challenges, this whitepaper recommends taking an agile approach, which focuses on a governance *minimum viable product* (MVP). Initial priority is deliberately limited to four key governance concepts in order to help maximize your company's chances of successfully implementing a Master Data program.



INTRODUCTION

DATA GOVERNANCE DEFINED

In its simplest form, a data governance program defines the people, processes, and systems your company needs in order to maximize the value of your enterprise information assets. Data governance as a discipline includes both the protection of value (through effective prevention and mitigation of risks associated with data loss) and revenue generation (through data-enabled optimization of core business processes). Effective data governance improves decision-making, and it allows you to scale by providing a foundation for communication and collaboration across disparate business systems and processes.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

There are many reasons why effective data governance is increasingly becoming a business imperative. IBM estimates the cost of poor-quality data in the US alone is \$3 trillion a year,¹ while *Harvard Business Review* estimates that knowledge workers waste up to 50 percent of their time searching for and validating data they don't inherently trust.² Companies in regulated industries have long known the benefits of effective data governance, but thanks to the explosive growth in the volumes of business data³ and heightened scrutiny around data security and access (often because of high-profile data breaches or government regulations), more enterprises recognize that having well-defined practices for enterprise data management is a strategic necessity.

Poor data management is costly, but in the emerging economies of the new industrial revolution, effective data management is a competitive differentiator.⁴ To leverage data for effective decision-making across an enterprise, at scale, it must be consistently interpreted, inherently trustworthy, and broadly accessible. To meet these requirements, your business needs a consistent and cohesive approach for how you manage data – which will inevitably require taking a centralized approach and, ultimately, achieving enterprise data mastery.

For most companies, this transition from ad hoc, departmental, or application-specific data management tactics to a more centralized strategy is exactly when governance becomes a foundational requirement.⁵

 To leverage data for effective decision-making across an enterprise, at scale, it must be consistently interpreted, inherently trustworthy, and broadly accessible. 

THE CHALLENGES

Moving from local/departmental data management to a centralized approach is challenging enough in itself. But this challenge is exacerbated by the fact that, though all companies expect a return on their investments, most companies don't treat their enterprise data as a corporate asset⁶. Nor do they adequately quantify the value that their data provides to their business. So, while most companies know how much it costs to implement or run a data governance program, only a select few explicitly measure how much they benefit from it.

THE GOVERNANCE PARADOX

This inability to quantify data value creates a paradox: Companies acknowledge data governance as a dependency to obtain scale and value from their enterprise data, but because they don't measure the value of their data, they often struggle to justify a material or prolonged investment in governing it. The failure to view data and its governance as a corporate asset will often lead a company to misperceive the policies and rules required to properly manage data as roadblocks to their goals rather than as enablers of business success. This phenomenon is especially apparent in organizations that lack the required senior-level support for the governance program.⁷

¹ See <https://hbr.org/2016/09/bad-data-costs-the-u-s-3-trillion-per-year>.

² See <https://hbr.org/2013/12/datas-credibility-problem>.

³ DC estimates that the [volume of all data will grow](#) tenfold in the next eight years.

⁴ See <https://www.economist.com/news/leaders/21721656-data-economy-demands-new-approach-antitrust-rules-worlds-most-valuable-resource>.

⁵ Data governance can happen at multiple levels in an organization – including within individual enterprise applications (like a CRM, ERP, etc.). However, for the sake of this whitepaper, the reader should assume the context for the application of data governance practices should be the entire enterprise.

⁶ In a 2015 study, Gartner Research asserted that fewer than 10 percent of all companies quantify the value of their information assets: "CIOs typically lack any reliable inventory of what information exists throughout the organization – for example, where it is, what it means, or the measurement of its value." See <https://www.gartner.com/doc/3106719/measure-value-information-assets>.

⁷ The challenges noted here are obviously less acute for companies in highly regulated industries, where in some cases maintaining a given level of data governance controls is a legal requirement.

SOFTWARE TO THE RESCUE

For many companies, attempts to resolve the governance paradox often lead to the implementation of software. Two reasons for this, ironically, are that the cost of deploying and supporting software can be easily measured and that on-premises software (and supporting hardware) – unlike the data that fuels it – typically appears as a capital asset on a balance sheet.

Not surprisingly, the implementation of software supporting a governance initiative will often only partially – or temporarily – address a company's data governance challenges. Too often, companies will successfully execute the one-time data tasks that are initial milestones in their governance-software implementation plan (tasks, for example, like creating data catalogs and dictionaries). But then they later fail to make the ongoing investments in people or processes required to ensure those technologies can adapt to business changes over time. The result of prolonged lack of investment in governance is always the same: zombie software platforms that continue to run so long as the hardware runs (and the capital assets are being depreciated) but that don't generate tangible business benefits anywhere outside the governance organization.



If software isn't the answer to the question of how a company can improve the odds of data governance success, then what is?



Businesses ultimately discover that software alone fails to overcome a lack of data governance, because governance is required for the software to generate value. This governance paradox is a common reason for the considerable number of MDM software failures we see across many of our customers, both large and small.

If software isn't the answer to the question of how a company can improve the odds of data governance success, then what is? This whitepaper suggests that the best way to improve the likelihood of both governance and MDM success is to (1) minimize the initial scope of the governance program to focus on some quick wins and (2) focus on four must-have deliverables in an early-stage governance program. These four deliverables are the *data governance MVP*.

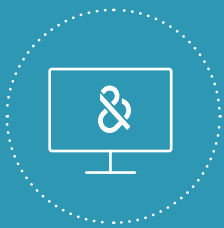
THE DATA GOVERNANCE MVP (MINIMUM VIABLE PRODUCT)

Based on Dun & Bradstreet's experience of supporting hundreds of Master Data initiatives with our clients over the last several years, we suggest that an early-stage governance program focus on these four areas:



⁸The three most common software platforms deployed in support of data governance programs are master data management (MDM) software, data governance software, and data quality software and related tools.

⁹Since they are not truly "owned" assets, cloud-based software solutions are typically not considered capital assets for most companies and are instead considered an operating expense.



STRUCTURE

DATA STRUCTURE AND DEFINITIONS FOR A GOVERNANCE MVP

Defining your enterprise data definitions and having all your business units align to those definitions are step one. If a goal of your program is to have consistent and trustworthy data that can provide a means for the organization to scale, then there cannot be multiple competing definitions for the most important business entities within your information systems (customers, partners, suppliers, products, etc.). Having different variations and interpretations of your data across sources is likely a big reason why you're embarking on a governance program in the first place. Yet time and again, we see company after company commit to implementing MDM software without having a clear idea of how a customer, for example, is going to be defined within those systems.

Does this mean that every business unit must reach a consensus on a single customer definition and then change their business processes to adapt to it? Ten years ago, the answer for many companies would have been yes, but these days it's increasingly less common to have a single, enterprise-wide version of the truth (as supported by some form of top-down operational MDM¹⁰) – not to mention incredibly hard to implement.

Today's master data management technologies can support multiple instantiations or views of a given business entity, so individual LOBs or applications don't necessarily need to be completely re-architected to adapt to a new definition. However, there's a given level of operation in every organization where consistency becomes necessary. CEOs, for example, tend to expect a single definitive answer when they ask questions such as, "How many customers do we have?" So, while individual departments can potentially operate with differing functional definitions (and those differences can all persist within an MDM hub), the ability to consolidate data into a single definition for executive reporting is critical. There are seven demonstrated best-practice considerations when formulating Master Data definitions and supporting data architectures:

7 BEST PRACTICES FOR MASTER DATA DEFINITIONS AND DATA ARCHITECTURES



1. Understand your business requirements



2. Limit your initial scope and focus only on a single entity (e.g., "customer" or "supplier")¹¹



3. Define an extremely limited set of governed data for your chosen entity



4. Use industry-standard reference data, or Master Data



5. Understand the lineage and business usage of your governed dataset

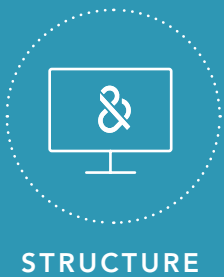


6. Avoid forcing or requiring drastic business process changes



7. Get the data architecture right – don't cut corners

¹⁰ Gartner recognizes four styles of MDM deployments: consolidation, coexistence, registry, and centralized. A centralized MDM is more commonly referred to as an operational MDM.



STRUCTURE



1. Understand your business requirements

- You cannot embark on a governance program without first understanding exactly what you're trying to accomplish. What are your core business goals? Which data challenges is your governance program trying to resolve? Your requirements for data structures and definitions will be a subset of your overall governance requirements.
- Documenting what success looks like is a useful tool for specifying requirements for your data definitions.
- Two examples of such requirements are “having a consistent measure of customer satisfaction across business units” and “having accurate and consistent customer counts across our ERP and CRM systems.”



2. Limit your initial scope and focus only on a single entity (e.g., “customer” or “supplier”)¹¹

- This best practice is about keeping your scope manageable at the beginning of a governance program. Eventually, you may want to govern all your enterprise data, but resist the temptation to try to do too much, too early.
- In determining your initial scope, consider both the number of source systems and the total volume of data to be governed. The more data and the more systems being touched, the more business rules will need to be defined and the more exceptions in your data will likely need to be resolved.
- Consider the amount of governance that may already be in place. Typically, sales/marketing organizations will be more fluid and have fewer existing data policies, while the opposite is true in downstream ERP systems.
- Consider the organizational cultures involved. Finance and legal organizations will naturally be more open to having data governance rules and policies; however, they also tend to be the most rigid.



3. Define an extremely limited set of governed data for your chosen entity

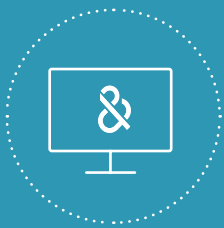
- Do *all* fields of metadata for your chosen entity need to be governed? No. At an absolute minimum, you'll need to establish governance around all the fields used to determine record uniqueness. Typically, this will include a handful of record fields, such as name, address, and phone number.
- How do you decide what other metadata absolutely needs to be governed at this early stage of the program? A best practice is to “reverse engineer” from the perspective of your executive reporting. Which data elements (e.g., industry codes or customer revenue) must have common definitions and structure to provide enterprise-wide consistency? In the end, you may find that a relatively small number of fields actually needs to be consistently defined across all your business units.
- Governance may be applied to data elements that are only relevant to a given application or LOB (by a “local” governance committee), but the rules applied to those elements would not necessarily be the same as the rules applied to the data that's within the scope of the enterprise-wide governance program.



4. Use industry-standard reference data, or Master Data

- A best practice for all governance programs is to use industry-standard reference data, or Master Data, wherever it's available.

¹¹ There are many ways to express the concept of a business entity. Party and business object are two other commonly used terms. These terms are then often used interchangeably with other nouns (most of which typically define relationships and not the entities themselves) such as accounts, customers, partners, vendors, etc. For the sake of consistency, this whitepaper will use the term entity or business entity.



STRUCTURE

- Using Master Data helps you focus your scarce resources on value-added tasks instead of establishing standards and definitions for data that likely already exists.
- Using Master Data (offered by providers such as Dun & Bradstreet) will also give the leaders of a governance program additional credibility and defensibility for their program across its core business stakeholders.



5. Understand the lineage and business usage of your governed dataset

- Once you have determined the Master Data that will be in-scope for your initial governance launch, you need to understand, at a detailed level, its lineage within your organization.
- Where is the data created? Who has the rights to create or modify it? What systems are supporting it? How is the data that you want to govern being used in the business today? How is this data being used to make decisions or drive specific business processes – both upstream and downstream from the systems used to create the data?
- This is a crucial step in building your entity definitions, because any changes to that data will impact business processes and any changes to business processes will impact the data. So, if your governance program requires you to change the attributes of your data, knowing its lineage will help you understand the impacts of that change and the scope of work required to support or implement it.



6. Avoid forcing/requiring drastic business process changes

- In early-stage governance programs, a best practice is to focus on implementations that can provide incremental value without requiring drastic business process changes – especially when MDM software is involved.
- Knowing the lineage of your governed dataset is a requirement for understanding exactly how much change you're likely to try to enforce. An example here is a situation where a company determines it needs to align on a new set of industry codes to segment and define its core customers. But what happens if the legacy industry codes are used for sales compensation purposes? If changing these industry codes affects how your salespeople are paid, what is the likelihood that the sales organization will resist the change?



7. Get the data architecture right – don't cut corners

- Once you align on your core data structures and definitions, work closely with your IT organization to ensure those definitions are correctly supported within the systems and databases that are housing your enterprise data.
- Changing existing customer definitions will have an enormous impact on your legacy systems, and budget and timeline pressures will create a temptation within IT to try to shoehorn any required changes. An example would be adding identifiers to morph a legacy field by adding/concatenating new metadata instead of creating a new field.
- Seek to model the lowest atomic level of detail in your data architecture and avoid trying to support more than one attribute in a single definition. For example, a customer may be defined at a specific location, but does your data model support the ability to logically separate the company from the location itself? What if more than one company exists at the same location? Can you model relationships between entities independently from the entities themselves?
- If you get your data architecture wrong, changing it later will cause 10 times the disruption versus changing it at the beginning of a new governance program.



DATA QUALITY AND SUPPORTING METRICS FOR A GOVERNANCE MVP

Everyone can generally agree that decisions based on incorrect data will produce suboptimal results. Stakeholders from every line of business can almost always agree that data in their systems should be high quality. If we all agree on the importance of data quality, then why do 97 percent of all companies fail to meet basic data quality standards?¹²

The short answer to this question is that while companies can agree that data quality matters, they cannot agree on how to define or quantify it. A second core requirement of a data governance MVP is having well-defined and measurable data quality standards. Remember, these standards won't apply to *all* your enterprise data but only to that limited set of governed objects/entities and fields defined by your enterprise-wide data definitions.¹³ The three most important ingredients to this phase of your MVP are:



1. Agreement on the dimensions of data quality



2. Implementation of a process to measure data quality



3. Regular distribution of quality metrics to rest of the organization



1. Agreement on the dimensions of data quality

The first step at implementing an MVP for governing enterprise data quality is to define exactly what data quality means. There are five dimensions of data quality that should be measured and managed in a data governance MVP:



It's in the task of measuring data quality where the use of a Master Data provider, such as Dun & Bradstreet, can drastically accelerate the time-to-value of a governance program. Using Master Data helps you skip the step of developing measures for all these attributes, because the ability to assess quality – particularly where accuracy and uniqueness are concerned – is inherent to the services offered by these providers.

In the absence of using a Master Data provider, your data governance leads must work with your business executives and stakeholders to determine workable measures for these attributes. And this can often be a time-consuming task, because for most companies this requires developing quantifiable metrics where none have historically existed. Time is also required to build consensus among the consumers of that data on how to define and interpret those metrics. This task requires as much political savvy as it does technical acumen, since business stakeholders will almost always hold significantly different ideas about how “good” should be defined. Finding the balance between the needs of stakeholders and the needs of the enterprise, especially when it comes to quantifying data quality, is a major reason why charismatic leadership is often touted as one of key attributes of CDO success.¹⁴

¹² Harvard Business Review, <https://hbr.org/2017/09/only-3-of-companies-data-meets-basic-quality-standards>.

¹³ This doesn't mean individual applications or business processes shouldn't attempt to measure their data quality – they should. This data governance MVP refers specifically to an enterprise-wide data quality definition.

¹⁴ See <https://www.forbes.com/sites/bernardmarr/2016/05/20/want-to-be-a-chief-data-officer-heres-what-you-need-to-know/#3be090b1278d>.



These quality attributes and measures only need to be consistent for the data within the scope of your governance program. Any data outside the scope of your program can continue to have differing quality definitions. This dual approach to data quality measurement acknowledges that the “fit for purpose” of one group (e.g., marketing) may be different than for another (e.g., compliance), and it will help you find that critical balance among all of your various stakeholders.

As with establishing standard data definitions, a good starting place to find ways to quantify data quality is to work backwards from executive dashboards or company-wide financial statements to determine the requirements for completeness, accuracy, timeliness, and uniqueness. When a given executive report “breaks” or can no longer be trusted due to perceived shortcomings in any quality attribute, at the very least you’ll know you’ve reached a minimum data quality threshold.



2. Implementation of a process to measure data quality

Once you’ve determined how to define data quality for your governance program through an alignment to the five key dimensions of quality, you need to implement processes to measure those dimensions. As noted, the use of a Master Data provider can drastically accelerate this process as the systems and tools they provide can allow for ongoing checks of your existing data quality.

Software tools that are purpose-built for helping automate data quality management can also drastically reduce the implementation time of this portion of your governance program. However, as previously noted, these tools are entirely dependent on well-defined business rules, which means the tools themselves are largely worthless without having some articulation of the quality dimensions noted above. Another benefit of these tools is that they can continuously poll your source data for quality anomalies and notify data stewards at the time of data creation. Whether you’re applying quality standards after a record already exists or when it’s created, a wide array of data quality software solutions exists for practically every imaginable application and use case (CRM, PRM, ERP, etc.).

The last, and most obvious, solution for measuring data quality is to use enterprise reporting or business intelligence tools. This is the quickest means to measure data quality for most enterprises, but the downside is that quality reports themselves don’t afford the ability to resolve any of the issues they highlight. Even so, using an existing BI solution may fulfill many companies’ requirements for this portion of their governance MVP.



3. Regular distribution of quality metrics to rest of the organization

If you’ve agreed on how to define your attributes of quality Master Data and have systems in place to measure those attributes, then the last deliverable in this phase of the governance MVP is to regularly publish the quality metrics to the consumers of your enterprise Master Data. For most companies, the natural choice here is to leverage whatever solution already exists for providing recurring reports to the rest of the organization.



RELATIONSHIPS

MODELLING BUSINESS RELATIONSHIPS THROUGH HIERARCHIES FOR A GOVERNANCE MVP

The third focus we recommend for a governance MVP is relationship hierarchies. These hierarchies should describe the relationships between your business and the companies you interact with, and they should define any relationships those companies might have with each other. Hierarchy definition is a critical component of your governance MVP because a robust hierarchy is the most effective tool to enable each of your individual operating units to maintain differing functional definitions (at various levels of the same hierarchy) while still facilitating a common enterprise-wide definition.

An example of how a well-defined hierarchy can provide this flexibility is a situation where a bank is a customer of your company. Internally, your marketing organization considers the individual bank branch locations as customers – because buying decisions are made at that branch level. However, the finance and compliance departments of your company don’t view an individual branch as a true customer, since the regional parent or bank headquarters typically has the legal authority and accountability over those branch locations. The hierarchy provides room for differing perspectives to co-exist at the department level (marketing or finance) and allows for data describing the totality of the relationship to be aggregated at the enterprise level.

Another reason why hierarchies are a must-have component of your governance MVP is because they provide the ability for your company to understand the full breadth and depth of your relationship (or potential relationship) with other companies. In a sales context, a robust hierarchy helps you to understand what incremental sales opportunities may exist in the “white space” of a given corporate hierarchy. In a supply context, detailed hierarchies can provide the insights to show what risks may exist within your existing supply chain. For example, without a detailed corporate hierarchy, you wouldn’t know that five suppliers who appeared to be distinct, unrelated companies are actually part of the same organization hierarchy – putting you at significant risk should the parent go out of business (taking all its operating units down with it). In short, managing hierarchies and establishing the business rules to govern them are requirements to achieving the full value out of your business relationships.

There are three distinct types of company hierarchies typically supported by an enterprise governance program:

LEGAL HIERARCHIES:

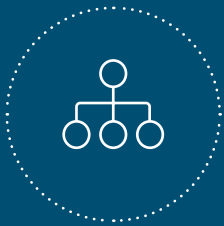
These describe the legal relationships that exist across the organizational structures of the companies with whom you do business. Typically, the top of the hierarchy will be the ultimate corporate family parent, with various levels of child entities below it. The corporate parent will have ultimate legal responsibility and ownership for all the entities below it.

OPERATIONAL HIERARCHIES:

These are typically defined and created by contractual or transactional relationships that might exist within your business. Unlike legal hierarchies, which are externally defined based on the legal structure of companies you do business with, operational hierarchies and the relationships modelled by them are internally defined through the existence of specific business interactions (deliveries, contracts, receipts, invoices, etc.).

GO-TO-MARKET (GTM), OR FUNCTIONAL HIERARCHIES:

Also internally defined, these hierarchies model relationships that are needed to optimize specific internal business processes. A common example here is a sales hierarchy, where a company customizes the hierarchy to best describe the relationships managed by its sales organization – many of which are often industry or geographically based.



RELATIONSHIPS

For companies embarking on a governance program, finding the consensus needed to create consistent definitions of your enterprise-wide hierarchies may be particularly challenging where one (or more) of these hierarchies already exist. Salespeople will think their GTM hierarchies define the customer relationship, manufacturing will think their operational hierarchies define the customer relationship, and finance may think their legal views define the customer relationship. All three are right from the perspective of their individual areas of responsibility. But if the goal of your governance program is to align on a single definition that your CEO can consistently trust within your customer reports, there needs to be a single view at the enterprise level.

The Hierarchy MVP – Focus on a Legal Hierarchy

The operational and GTM hierarchies are important and can be incredibly valuable. But for an enterprise-wide data governance MVP, it's best to begin with defining your legal hierarchies for the following reasons:

- A. Legal hierarchies are not internally defined (and are not subject to leadership or operational/GTM changes) and thus tend to be more consistent over time**
- B. Legal hierarchies describe how your customers (partners, vendors, etc.) prefer to be defined as publicly expressed through the legal relationships that exist within and across their individual operating units**
- C. Legal hierarchies can be used as a “cross walk” to model relationships between legal hierarchies and the two other hierarchy types**
- D. Legal hierarchies can be provided by Master Data providers (such as Dun & Bradstreet), and therefore:**
 - I. They are quicker to implement**
 - II. The rules that establish/govern them can be managed by external rather than internal resources**
 - III. They provide a highly defensible, industry-standard view**

A team of highly knowledgeable experts within Dun & Bradstreet, led by Distinguished Architect Liz Barrette, recently published a whitepaper on the best practices for implementing a legal hierarchy using Dun & Bradstreet data. See “[Master Data: Implementing Dun & Bradstreet Hierarchies and Custom Hierarchy Views](#)” for more details on the benefits, applications, and implementation of a legal hierarchy.



CHANGE MANAGEMENT

THE MVP FOR MANAGING DATA CHANGES IN YOUR GOVERNANCE PROGRAM

Your business is constantly changing, and so is the data it's generating. If you've successfully executed the first three aspects of the governance MVP (structure/definitions, quality, hierarchy), a failure to implement processes to manage changes to the data supported by your governance program will ultimately lead to its demise. The good news is that you don't need to apply your governance policies to all changes to your enterprise data – just to changes affecting the data elements that are within the scope of your governance program (as defined within the data-definitions deliverable noted above).

Types of Enterprise Data Change

Within any enterprise-wide data governance program, changes to governed data will fall within one of three distinct categories (see diagram below). We recommend a focus on the first two categories of change as a best practice for a data governance MVP:

Changes affecting all users of Master Data (or all the systems/applications within the scope of the governance program)

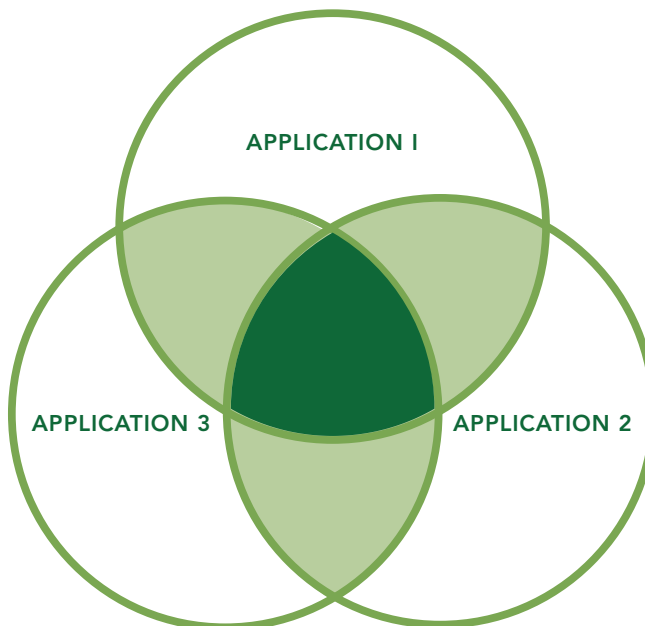
This is your core enterprise Master Data. These changes are represented in the diagram below by the area shaded in dark green. Typically, changes to data in this category will also affect the core definitions of those entities. Examples of this type of data could include entity names, addresses, or the type of relationship those entities have with your company.

Changes to data with material impacts across more than one LOB (or application/system)

Represented in the diagram by the areas shaded in light green, some common examples include (a) changes to data that's needed to support the transition of a sales opportunity or quote into a contract within an ERP system or (b) changes to invoice data from an ERP system that needs to be shared to an upstream CRM system.

Changes to data at the application-level

Changes to data that reside only in a single system lie outside the scope of a data governance MVP. This data may be highly relevant or important to that individual system or the business processes it supports, but since the data is fully contained in a single environment, it's generally assumed that the business unit responsible for that data will have autonomy to define its own governance policies.





CHANGE MANAGEMENT

Monitoring for Change

How do you even know a change has occurred? There are three common ways to both monitor your data changes and to apply your governance policies to those changes when they occur:

1. **Automated processes and tools**
2. **Manual monitoring via data stewards**
3. **Combination of 1 and 2**

Master Data and data quality tool/software providers can help in the automation of change management, as their solutions will typically support the ability to proactively assess when an update to your enterprise data should be made. When integrated at the point of data creation or into a downstream MDM hub (or both), these solutions can be configured to alert you to changes in your data that are material (in scope) to your governance policies.

A second option for change monitoring is to use data stewards. This will require review processes to be integrated into the data create/update workstreams that already exist in your organization. For example, every time a record in your CRM is created or updated, a steward would be alerted to review it. Unfortunately, business users will typically see the addition of a data review process as slowing down their workstream, which can sometimes be troublesome for customer-facing teams such as sales or customer service.

The data governance MVP for most companies will rely on some combination of both automated tools and manual stewardship – where often a priority for time-to-market will favor the use of data stewards in the short term but move toward the gradual deployment of technology over time.

This will put even more of an emphasis on making sure there is an equal focus within your governance program on measuring the positive business impacts stewardship is having. Without this – or any other aspect of the MVP – your stakeholders are likely to question the value of both the program and the data review itself.

MVP Change Management Process

Most data changes are introduced via an alteration to a record within a source system under the scope of the enterprise governance program. Governance policies can be applied to those changes at the time they are made, or they can be applied after the fact in a downstream Master Data hub. The recommended best practice is to evaluate data changes immediately, because of the “rule of ten,” which states that fixing data after the fact will cost 10 times what it costs to fix it at the time the change is made.

When a change to your governed data occurs, the first three steps of the data governance MVP define how your organization will respond to these changes. For each change, the following questions must be asked:

- A. **Does the change conform to your policies for enterprise definitions and structure?**
- B. **Does the change conform to your standards for data quality?**
- C. **Does the change conform to your policies for your data hierarchies?**

If the answer to all these questions is yes, then it's a valid change. If the answer to any of these questions is no, then the change is contrary to your governance policies and should be rejected.

¹⁵ See <https://hbr.org/2016/07/assess-whether-you-have-a-data-quality-problem>.

CONCLUSION

Overcoming the data governance paradox through the implementation of robust policies and procedures to manage enterprise data is a challenge for most companies because it requires entirely new methods of approaching age-old business challenges, and it often necessitates individual business units to sacrifice some of the autonomy they have traditionally exercised over their application data. But in losing this autonomy, these same groups gain a greater capacity to achieve effective enterprise workflows, execute better decision-making, and maintain consistent interactions with all key business relationships.

Taking an agile approach to the implementation of a governance minimum viable product can significantly improve your organization's chances of successfully launching a sustainable Master Data program, and this ultimately supports revenue growth, better risk management, increased efficiency, and business transformation.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



As a Distinguished Architect at Dun & Bradstreet, Malcolm maximizes client relationships by ensuring that Dun & Bradstreet data and solutions align with enterprise information management (EIM) and Master Data best practices. Malcolm's deep knowledge and experience in data governance and Master Data make him a trusted advisor to organizations across the world who are looking to optimize business processes and capture the transformative benefits of data.

To learn more about how Dun & Bradstreet Master Data Solutions and best practices can have a powerful impact on your enterprise data governance program, visit www.dnb.co.uk/masterdata

ABOUT DUN & BRADSTREET

Dun & Bradstreet (NYSE: DNB) helps companies around the world improve their business performance. The global leader in commercial data and analytics, we glean insight from data to enable our customers to connect with the prospects, suppliers, clients and partners that matter most. Since 1841, companies of every size rely on Dun & Bradstreet to help them manage risk and reveal opportunity. For more about Dun & Bradstreet, visit DNB.co.uk.

In the UK, Dun & Bradstreet Ltd is certified to ISO 27001 and is authorised & regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority in relation to providing credit references on non-limited companies.