

Your Business Is Only As Fast As Your Data

Executive Overview: The Data Management Playbook

by Michele Goetz

January 15, 2021

Why Read This Report

What you know — and how well you use that knowledge — fuels your competitiveness and growth. To keep up with empowered customers and nimble competitors, you must change how your firm provisions and manages data. This executive overview lays out the imperative for enterprise architecture (EA) pros to enable self-service access to real-time data. It explains how you can use the reports in the data management playbook to empower your data management practices.

This is an update of a previously published report; Forrester reviews and revises it periodically for continued relevance and accuracy.

Key Takeaways

Focus On Speed, Quality, And Self-Service: The New Data Management Mantras

Replace old guiding principles, such as centralized control and rigid requirements, with agility and flexibility to enable business users to explore and find what they need.

Tell Me How Good Your Data Is ... I'll Tell You How Well You'll Perform

There's plenty of available data. But how good is it? EA pros who concentrate on consistently building on data quality will bring the business and technology organization together. With high-quality data, executives are generating new business models to win, serve, and retain customers, not merely reporting on what already happened.

Data Is The First Stop In Your Digital Business Transformation Journey

Data builds a better picture of what your customers want across different channels, and it helps you understand how well you are serving them. Innovation within data management practices will make new insights possible.

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Competitive Advantage Is No Longer First To Market; It's First To Value

Contemporary approaches to data require a new way of thinking about its value, one that requires new analytics and new technologies. However, the early adoption of lower-cost, higher-performance data capabilities does not guarantee success — as we've seen with first-generation implementations of big data and cloud platforms that languished in the pilot stages. Today, fast followers can take advantage of more mature, modern, and packaged data solutions that require less coding, less integration, and lower cost to performance.¹

Slow And Inaccessible Data Is The Kiss Of Death

In the age of the empowered customer and the cloud, executives, employees, partners, and customers are connected and encouraged to access information and communicate. This open, always-on, and always-ready ecosystem demands real-time access to trusted data.² As a result, enterprise architects must cope with complex requirements for users, applications, and processes regarding the availability of business data. Any data bottleneck in this digital network can mean millions in lost revenue due to missed sales opportunities, lost customers, inefficient supply chains, and uninformed strategic decisions. Forrester finds that:

- **Businesses can't get the data they need fast enough.** Data's relevance and value are tied to how current it is and how available it is to use. A global food and beverage company uses data prep to accelerate the wrangling of data it uses to build customer forecasts from disparate systems and files. The firm converted its data-wrangling process to automated workflows, reducing runtime by 70% and build time by 90% while alleviating product data-quality issues across disparate systems.³
- **Data volume and variety are crushing business systems.** Global data and analytics decision-makers grapple with the growing volume and variety of data when orchestrating their business intelligence (BI) strategies.⁴ And Forrester clients struggle to know what data is available and how

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to wrangle it from various sources. Today, enterprises build most big data deployments in silos, largely to address specific business needs: collecting sensor data to support smart metering, web clickstream data to support customer analytics, or geolocation data to support customer personalization. These silos create a major challenge for EA pros, especially when it's time to integrate the silos.

- **The empowered customer requires a complete, single view.** Improving customer satisfaction, improving customer service, and acquiring new customers are firms' top priorities for customer engagement on mobile devices, according to global mobility decision-makers.⁵ To meet each objective, a marketer must know about customers' needs, likes, and dislikes. Of course, digital engagement with customers creates an upsurge of metadata, which needs to be classified, linked, and exposed. At many organizations, a customer master omits the thousands of metadata attributes it takes to create mobile moments.⁶
- **Rigid prioritization and planning processes meet yesterday's demand.** Long-term projects lag behind business demand, creating significant technical debt and ineffectiveness for the business.⁷ Technology can partially provide fast data, but EA pros also need to change the way they develop data capabilities.
- **An agricultural equipment maker pivoted from waterfall to agile development for BI.** At this firm, the tech organization favored large architectural investments over time-sensitive needs; its response to business data needs tended to be "We'll slot you in." But the initial transition to agile pushed off much-needed architectural building blocks and data governance requirements that dragged down the value delivered. In the end, the tech team had to adapt agile development processes to account for both ad hoc and architectural requirements to speed up the time-to-value for tactical projects and deliver on foundational platform investments faster.⁸
- **Tougher compliance requirements make a more secure data platform obligatory.** Amid an increase in both internal and external threat levels, enterprise architects are seeking new ways to enhance data security. Today, many mission-critical data management repositories are highly vulnerable due to poor security practices and weak access-control measures.⁹ Data privacy laws are getting tougher, and regulations, such as the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the Payment Card Industry (PCI), the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), and the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act (GLBA), are requiring firms to implement stronger global data security measures.

Leverage Data Management To Meet The Demands Of Digital Disruption

For an organization to delight its increasingly empowered customers, it must rethink its approach to data. Rigid, centralized data management practices won't work. To remain competitive, organizations must have flexible data management practices that provide the business with answers to strategic questions. Forrester's data management playbook provides a fresh approach that helps enterprise architects build a next-generation data management practice. To succeed, enterprise architects should:

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1. **Discover how to use data to win.** Envision a next-generation data management practice designed for agility and context. The main priority? To keep up with your customers' needs by enabling business users to explore data to fuel innovation. Adopt data capabilities that help unify the front and back offices and flexibly link to a variety of information channels. Build the business case with business metrics like revenue and profitability rather than total cost of ownership. Employ design thinking to narrow the gap between business priorities and data capabilities.
2. **Plan with the intention of fueling a digital business.** Collectors, investors, and innovators are useful archetypes against which organizations can measure themselves. Once an organization knows its archetype, it can lay out a strategic plan that mirrors its business plan. Plan for the fact that modern data strategy and architecture mature in stages. Build a roadmap that will take you beyond maintaining systems of record.
3. **Act to build an agile, elastic data management practice.** Successful firms have frameworks to understand how data management capabilities map to organizational resources. Agility, however, doesn't mean skipping over data governance. It means investing in data governance to more closely measure and drive performance. In this light, enterprise architects should evaluate tools and technology on proof of capability first, rather than on features and functions.

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Endnotes

- ¹ See the Forrester report "[Data Technology Pathfinder](#)."
- ² For more information on empowered customers and the technology they use, see the Forrester report "[The Consumer Tech Stack](#)."
- ³ Data preparation tools have emerged as a vital method for analysts to quickly source, blend, and wrangle data independent of EA's data management processes. See the Forrester report "[Now Tech: Data Preparation Solutions, Q3 2018](#)."
- ⁴ In 2019, 37% of global data and analytics decision-makers said "sourcing, gathering, managing, and governing the data as it grows" was one of their firm's biggest challenges when using systems of insight. Base: 2,927 global data and analytics decision makers whose firms are adopting "systems of insight." Source: Forrester Analytics Global Business Technographics® Data And Analytics Survey, 2019.
- ⁵ Source: Forrester Analytics Business Technographics Mobility Survey, 2020.
- ⁶ The challenge these days isn't the data; the challenge is ensuring data has the right context. When it comes to insight, the semantics provided by metadata is everything. See the Forrester report "[Reclaim Your Semantic Desert To Monetize Your Data](#)."

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⁷ See the Forrester report “[Digital Transformation Requires Development Transformation.](#)”

⁸ Enterprise architects can use data to transform their organization from tortoise to hare and keep pace with the speed of business if they adopt agile processes. See the Forrester report “[Create A Roadmap For A Real-Time, Agile, Self-Service Data Platform.](#)”

⁹ See the Forrester report “[Guard Your Competitive Edge And Maintain Trust With Data Privacy And Security.](#)”

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