

# How to Launch Enterprise Data Transformation in Six Months

## Lessons on Data Quality and Data Management from successful data leaders

### **Fast Data Transformation**

Drawn from hard-learned lessons of successful data leaders, this whitepaper provides a roadmap for quickly affecting the operational changes and cultural shifts your organization needs.

### **Yes, you can spur your organization to adopt an insights-driven culture—and do it fast. So what are you waiting for?**

You're in a hurry, so we won't waste your time. You need to turn your organization into one that collects, maintains, and uses data and analytics as efficiently as possible so it runs faster, smarter, and more effectively.

The mission is critical, and the prospect daunting. Information in your organization is spread over dozens of systems, often in different formats and rarely integrated. Getting everyone to think about issues like data governance is harder than getting kindergarteners to floss.

Rest assured, you are not alone. This challenge is the same for every chief data officer (and anyone else) interested in leading a data revolution throughout the worlds of business and government. But in that challenge, there is also comfort. You can benefit from the experience of others.

Drawn from hard-learned lessons of successful data leaders, what follows is a roadmap for quickly affecting the operational changes and cultural shifts your organization needs. We've organized the roadmap into six themes and included questions to answer or steps to take as you consider each one. Though you'll certainly address all these issues throughout your journey, identifying a particular theme for each month will help you prioritize efforts and communicate the urgency of the mission.

## Month 1: Reconnaissance

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The best way to get a lot done in six months is to do nothing in the first one except listen to people who deal with data throughout every part of the organization. (It can't hurt to meet with customers, suppliers, and other stakeholders too.) These aren't casual conversations; you're gathering knowledge to inform the trajectory of your plan.

### **Understand goals and needs from at least a business-unit (BU) perspective (if not more granularly)**

It's useful to have BUs run through their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT). Is their perspective unique from others in the company? What are their tangible measures of success or key performance indicators (KPIs)? Do they have any intangible measures of success?

### **Assess the current quality of organizational data**

- Where does the organization benefit from data and analytics?
- Where is it being let down?
- What functions or areas are spending time and money reconciling and cleaning data?
- Are people using tools such as Excel to bridge gaps in functionality, access, or training?
- Can everyone get all the up-to-date information they need about customers, operations, and finances? If not, where are the barriers?

### **Scan for risks**

- What are the organization's key compliance and reporting requirements?
- How are evolving privacy regulations affecting processes for keeping and using customer data?
- Are data-driven errors impeding any processes or operations?

## Month 2: Alliances

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Leading a data transformation is fundamentally a collaborative task. Data, after all, is produced and used by every part of the organization. Early on, you should prioritize who the most suitable collaborators are. It might pay to start with those units that are most data-dependent. Then again, you might want to beta test with those that are less so.

### Identify high-level sponsors

Which executives will be most likely to champion the data transformation? Some may have already identified data and analytics as priorities. Others have specific goals that can be furthered with better data. Showcasing the opportunities will help you get buy-ins.

### Find initial partners

- What units have immediate needs that you can help solve for quick wins?
- Which leaders and divisions have data-friendly attitudes that will assist pilot projects?

## Month 3: Infrastructure

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Your main responsibility here is to ensure that your organization's data is accurate, complete, up-to-date, secure, and available where and when needed. Unfortunately, this is a difficult, time-consuming, and generally underappreciated task. Start with the humble realization that you can't eliminate every duplicate, inconsistency, and error. Then set priorities and simplify the task as much as possible.

### Create and communicate an organization-wide data strategy — and provide a detailed plan for how to make it happen

- Who is responsible for setting data definitions and policies?
- How are those policies communicated to everyone who should know about them?
- What will ensure the appropriate data accuracy and completeness?
- What records should be kept on the origin of data?
- Who should and shouldn't have access to what data?
- How can data and analytics be made easily available to end-users while keeping an appropriate level of central control?

### Find short-term projects that highlight long-term issues

Build an understanding of concepts such as data governance and accuracy by finding areas where these concerns are hurting the organization now. Resolve data definition questions to assist corporate priorities. (You can't meet your target for new customers if you don't have a consistent definition of what a customer is). If data interoperability is an issue, pick a small area—say, one geographic location—to build a pilot project that creates a unified view.

## Month 4: Incubation

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Move fast to nurture projects that can produce quick wins. This is the best way to build broad support.

### Alleviate pain

- Where do flawed data systems create roadblocks that a quick, concerted effort can remove?
- Where can cleaning, enhancing, and reformatting information reduce delays or eliminate errors?

If you identified regulatory or operational risk from flawed data, address those concerns ASAP. Don't be afraid to use spreadsheets or other crude hacks at this point. You're identifying what the organization needs and building support for a more scalable solution.

### Show off new applications

Look for new opportunities for analytics that can quickly demonstrate how data can increase profits. Even if your function is limited, forge alliances with other groups so you can enable analytics that attract attention. Keep an eye out for predictive models or other AI-based applications that can be deployed with the resources now available.

## Month 5: Evangelizing

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Communicating the power of data throughout the organization is crucial to successful transformation. As results come in from pilot projects you started in months 3 and 4, broadcast successes far and wide. If you've improved the performance of some units, others will come for your help.

### Show your commitment through measurement

Find ways to measure and analyze every aspect of data in the organization and the efforts made by your own group. Create analytical tools that can assist the data transformation effort, such as identifying specific areas that need immediate attention. Set goals for your group and publish progress.

### Foster healthy competition

Publish key data metric comparisons between divisions to motivate and hold them accountable. Show how your organization's measures compare to industry benchmarks. Encourage management to refer to these measures in communications and reviews.

## Month 6: Transformation

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All this effort is meant to move the organization into the future, either by doing new things or doing old things in new ways. Ideally you will work in partnership with BU organizations to develop and test high-potential initiatives. Sometimes, you may incubate these projects within the data organization.

## Identify where data and analytics can redefine how business is done

Look for ways that a more accurate, comprehensive, and up-to-date view of your supply chain, operations, and customers enables more profitable business models.

- Would you benefit either from switching to dynamic pricing or changing how your product elements are bundled?
- Can you create a competitive advantage by putting more data in the hands of your customers?

## Create new products built on data

Work with BUs to identify how the organization's data can be turned into new products and services.

- Is there a layer of information that your existing customers will pay for?
- Are there secondary uses of the data you gather, such as for products in new markets?

## Month 7 and Beyond: Ongoing Assessment

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Are you done yet? Not hardly. It might even feel as if there are as many errors and incompatibilities now as when you started. Dataphobia might still be alive and well in your org. But none of that should keep you from appreciating what you've been able to accomplish in what really is quite a short period. Specifically, you've:

- Identified organizational priorities and how inadequate data inhibited them.
- Forged alliances among management and line units to create better data practices.
- Built organizational buy-in for a data-centric operational approach.
- Fostered several initial projects that demonstrated the value of data and analytics.
- Rallied support for the central goals of your initiative.
- Launched efforts to transform the organization via new products and business models.

