Making the leap: how to choose the right data management platform

The right choice puts your business on solid ground for future growth.
Table of contents

3  Introduction

5  Questions to ask when considering a data management platform

12 Making the business case for the C-suite

13 Making the leap from siloed spreadsheets to a data management platform
It’s easy to feel like you’re drowning in data, but the right data management platform can be a lifeline.

Introduction

From a data perspective, your business may be at the tipping point, drowning in lakes and oceans of data. Day to day, you might be able to ignore the sheer vastness of it because it’s dispersed in internal silos, within dozens of patchworked software platforms. Application programming interface (API) layers may allow for some interoperability, but the reality is that many departments still rely on spreadsheets or different data management tools to do the heavy lifting for reporting and analyzing departmental data.

Meanwhile, the C-suite struggles to get a holistic picture of what’s going on at the organizational level because all those departmental spreadsheets and data tools just don’t play nicely together. True digital transformation may seem to be a goal beyond reach.

Despite these challenges, enterprise companies know they must evolve from data collectors to data integrators to, ultimately, data-driven organizations that extract true value from data and use it to accelerate your digital transformation initiatives for true competitive advantage.
Data management platforms hold the key to truly integrating your organizational data into a single source of truth. First-generation data management platforms solved some problems, but many are centered around marketing and the customer data they capture. To fully address the challenges of how to capture and collate all the multi-channeled data from disparate organizational silos and then turn it into actionable insight, you need a properly integrated data management platform. These next-generation tools are game-changers, shifting the paradigm for how organizations think about and use big data to drive productivity at every level.

This ebook examines the criteria you’ll need to determine which data management platform and vendor to choose. You’ll learn:

» The right questions to ask internally to set the stage for a technology transformation

» The top three strategic imperatives behind your data management platform selection process

» The right questions to ask your integrated data management platform vendor

Here’s what you need to know to take the next step toward becoming a data-driven organization.
How is your organization using its data? Do you have too many manual, error-laden processes?

Questions to ask when considering a data management platform

Before looking at an external data management platform, do a little organizational soul-searching to build the foundation for data-driven success. What is the strategy around your data integration initiative? Right now, each department in your organization would likely answer this basic question differently, which illustrates the level of data dysfunction you’re dealing with.

However, the challenge doesn’t need to be overwhelming if you break down your core strategy into these three action items:

1. As a company, gather, integrate, and manage multiple data sources from external and internal channels under one analytics dashboard.

2. This analytics dashboard must feature a powerful underlying engine to automate and streamline data functions, predict outcomes, and yield better decisions.

3. Organizational leadership must practice change management strategies to establish a data-driven culture that delivers results.
With these three goals and strategies in mind, companies must reverse engineer the vendor platform selection process. Rather than looking at what the data can do for your company, focus instead on how the underpinning business strategy aligns with your platform requirements.

Key questions to ask organizational leadership center around an exercise to get them to think outside the box regarding the data they are currently using. Chances are very high that internal departments are unable to leverage unstructured data from video, photos, conversations, and even social media. The amount of data from Internet of Things (IoT) devices is staggering; are you confident your teams are using even a fraction of the data that’s coming in?

Sit down with your management teams and ask:

- What decisions would be easier if you had the right data?
- Who controls the data in your department now?
- What is the trigger event for a data initiative?
- How do you anticipate your need for data will change in the coming years?
- What is the least complex data model that would improve performance?
- How are you using data today?
- What compliance and reporting rules do you need to follow?
- What are your barriers to getting the information you need?
- How would you like to use data?

Stakeholder buy-in is key to the selection process. Companies that suffer from misalignment between current culture and future strategies to become more data-driven will run the risk of poor end-user participation.

Adding an integrated data management platform is about more than learning to use a new tool. You will also be shifting from established workflows and cultural norms to a new data-centric mindset. Considering how you will manage this process is the first step to success with the initiative.
Selecting a data management platform requires stakeholder buy-in strategies.

Top questions to ask your data management platform vendor

Organizational culture analysis and business case analysis are preliminary to choosing your data management platform vendor. Determining how well the data management platform fulfills your technical and functional requirements is the next step in the process.

Needless to say, you have a lot riding on this investment. While your technical requirements will be unique to your particular use cases, there are a few general questions that speak to the quality of the data management platform you select.

Does your data management platform vendor:

→ **Support all kinds of data?**

This is an incredibly important factor to consider. Your organization collects data from many disparate sources in multiple forms and types every minute of every day, including real-time, batch, and streaming data, big data, structured and unstructured data, cloud-based data, machine-generated data, and data from social networks and mainframes. Your data management system must centralize and use that data efficiently and effectively.

The ibi difference: ibi uses an enterprise information integration platform to aggregate data from numerous systems in real time and then presents the data as if it exists as a single source.
→ **Have a good reputation in the industry?**

Your data is one of your biggest assets, and you don’t want to entrust it to just any vendor. Look for one that maintains a strong reputation in data quality, data management, and data integration.

**The ibi difference:**
ibi was named a Visionary by Gartner this year in both the 2020 Magic Quadrant for Data Quality Solutions and the 2020 Magic Quadrant for Data Integration Tools.

→ **Have a track record of customer satisfaction?**

Your relationship with a data management platform vendor will be ongoing, so you want to ensure you choose a vendor that provides exceptional customer service over time. Your vendor should treat you as a real partner, not just another invoice.

**The ibi difference:**
ibi has a 45-year track record of dedicated customer success. Our references and case studies prove our know-how, and our client base reflects our industry expertise.

→ **Create a smooth onboarding experience?**

Transitioning from using spreadsheets to a digital approach can create a culture shock, but choosing a vendor that provides a smooth onboarding experience mitigates some of the initial challenges and smooths potential bumps in the road.

**The ibi difference:**
Some of the leading global enterprises from General Motors to the Royal Bank of Canada, FedEx, AutoZone, Ford, and many more trust ibi’s data transition team to ensure a seamless onboarding experience.
Provide continuing education, training, and customer support?
Your data is not stagnant, so your data management platform vendor should be available and ready to provide continuing assistance, education, training, and customer support as your needs evolve over time.

Consistently provide business-ready data?
Data integrity is an issue that affects every area of your business. Your data vendor should be able to help you quickly assess your level of data maturity, and then move from reactive, siloed data to coordinated, integrated, and predictive data analytics at every level of your organization.

Have knowledge in your specific industry?
Industry expertise helps your data management platform vendor understand your particular needs. What data sources are most important to you? What reporting features are most significant? What compliance requirements do you have? The right vendor will understand the answers to these questions.

The ibi difference:
ibi works to continually improve its platform by staying ahead of the latest innovations in technology to bring you better products. Our customer service team works one-on-one with our customers throughout our partnership to help them achieve their goals of business and data excellence.

The ibi difference:
ibi’s data tools enable rapid integration, real-time analysis, and organization-wide access to your data to ensure everyone has essential data at their fingertips to do their job effectively.

The ibi difference:
Whether it’s regulatory compliance at a modern health organization or the challenges inherent in supply-chain management for transportation and logistics companies, ibi knows your business and can help you succeed.
Making the leap: how to choose the right data management platform

→ **Offer cloud, on-premises, or hybrid options, wherever you need it?**

Big data solutions should be configurable to fit just about any structure you can design. Wherever you are in your journey to the cloud, you need to have a vendor to support your strategy, including on-premise.

**The ibi difference:**
ibi’s solution was designed as plug-and-play so that you can use these tools a la carte or as a whole solution. It’s fully customizable to your specific needs.

→ **Provide data access at scale across the entire organization for both IT and non-tech stakeholders?**

The whole point of moving towards an integrated data management platform is to democratize your data. An integrated platform allows stakeholders across your organization to access, analyze, and use data every day as they make important decisions that drive your business forward.

**The ibi difference:**
ibi’s solution was designed as plug-and-play so that you can use these tools a la carte or as a whole solution. It’s fully customizable to your specific needs.

**The ibi difference:**
At ibi, being data-driven isn’t just a philosophy; it’s embedded into our DNA.

→ **Embrace forward-looking innovative technologies?**

When choosing a data management platform, consider what you will need one year, two years, and five years down the road. Look ahead and project where your company will be, where technology will be, and where the state of data will be. Then, choose a data management platform that has advanced technology such as artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) that will continue to evolve over time.

**The ibi difference:**
The ibi platform actively uses AI algorithms and ML to automate and innovate our smart technologies. With ibi, you can be sure you’re adopting the most forward-thinking technologies that will evolve and improve at the speed of our digital disruption.
The best integrated data management platforms leverage AI tools.

Provide self-service reporting and analytics?

Ultimately, we recommend the goal of embedding analytics in simple frontline tools that everyone can use. The old use case for business analytics centered around requests to an IT team member to run a report. That paradigm was unwieldy at best and created unequal power structures between IT and the rest of the company and plenty of backlogged requests for data that was already out of date by the time it arrived. Cloud architectures enabled the power of real-time data. The right data management platform leverages the immediacy of the Internet, of course, but it also creates a more open framework that makes this information a part of everyone’s workflow. Data that is integrated, real-time, and available to all completely changes how every department functions. To say that this is a revolutionary idea is really an understatement.

Look for a data management platform that is truly integrated into everyday tasks at every level in your organization. Set the expectation with your staff and any potential vendors you interview that you’re looking for a smart, intuitive software platform that offers frontline workers the tools they need to do their jobs more efficiently. Expect nothing less than full interoperability of all siloed platform data and intuitive dashboards that put democratized data in the hands of your employees.

That’s how you move toward true digital transformation.
A data management platform can transform your organization. Are you ready?

**Making the business case for the C-suite**

IT leadership should be well versed in the first step toward seeking funding for a new initiative: identifying high-level sponsors. Ask yourself these questions:

- Which organizational leaders have identified the need for better data analytics?
- How do business goals align with the use case for the data management platform?
- Are there departments where you can pick up quick wins and establish the ROI of your investment early on?
- What is your budget?
- Where can you deploy pilots that coincide with data-friendly interdepartmental sponsors?
Making the leap to an enterprise data management platform

A data management platform can transform your organization. Are you ready?

The business imperative for 2021 and beyond is to embrace digital transformation, moving beyond mere data capture and embracing a data-driven culture that leads to enhanced insights, better decision-making, and, ultimately, business growth.

Whether you’re a front-line manager trying to understand how to improve your team’s efficiency, an IT director worried about all the data silos in the organization, or a C-suite executive concerned that the competition is encroaching on market share, your business imperative is clear: harness the true power of your data to improve the bottom line. Customer relationships, workflow efficiency, and reduced costs – all of these things can improve with better data that captures the entire picture of your organization.

Siloed and disjointed data, manual workflows, and even relying on a basic spreadsheet to collate multiple channels of information slow you down and make you weaker in a marketplace that is volatile and evolving.
There is a better way to do this. The answer lies in fully integrated data within a sophisticated yet user-friendly analytics hub that can drive decision-making at every level of your organization. ibi has the tools and the know-how to help your business thrive.

**Checklist for your integrated data management platform vendor**

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<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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<tr>
<td>Supports any kind of data from any source</td>
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<td>Has a good reputation in the IT industry</td>
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For 45 years, ibi has been innovating the technology field by developing state-of-the-art tools to harness data. Our goal is to offer our customers a better way to make decisions by leveraging all of the data at their fingertips. It is only by embedding business intelligence into every corporate structure that we can improve the companies we serve.

**No matter the channel or the software, ibi helps our customers realize the true value behind the data they capture. Our open platform and industry-specific tools improve your go-to-market strategies, improve customer experience, and increase your operational efficiency.**
About ibi

ibi is a data and analytics software company that embeds intelligence into – everything. From the beginning, ibi has known the importance of using data and insights to make better decisions. We help organizations get their complex and disconnected data in order so they can build, embed, and automate intelligence into everything they do.

By preparing organizations for the future and turning them into builders – information builders – everyone can use enterprise trusted data at scale to drive their growth. Whether our customers use pre-built applications or build their own solutions for their data and analytics challenges, ibi powers their innovation and reinvention. ibi’s open platform and industry-specific building blocks accelerate speed to market, improve operational efficiency, and enhance their customers’ experience.

ibi. build a better future.

There is power at the intersection of data and AI, and ibi can help you wield that power effectively for your organization.

Request a demo today

and let ibi show you what your data can really do.

Request a demo

See ibi in action and imagine what you will build. ibi.com/request-a-demo.

Contact us at ibi.com or email askinfo@ibi.com.

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