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White Paper

Avoid Data Anarchy:
Balance BI Analytics with Data Governance

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Abstract

When considering the various factors that will influence data governance policies and procedures, businesses must reckon with the reality of open access, multiple platforms, expanding user devices, integrated data repositories and the burgeoning growth of self-serve business intelligence and data democratization. Before an enterprise engages in a discussion of data governance, data security and appropriate user access, it is important to understand the concept, and importance, of data governance, and how it contrasts to the chaos of data anarchy.

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Introduction

Every business must address the concerns of IT, users, management, customers and even industry and government regulatory bodies and develop processes and policies to protect its interests and the interests of its stakeholders with a solid foundation of security tools and techniques and appropriate data governance.

When considering the various factors that will influence these policies and procedures, businesses must reckon with the reality of open access, multiple platforms, expanding user devices, integrated data repositories and the burgeoning growth of self-serve business intelligence and data democratization.

Before an enterprise engages in a discussion of data governance, data security and appropriate user access, it is important to understand the concept, and importance, of data governance, and how it contrasts to the chaos of data anarchy.

What is Data Governance?

A solid Data Governance plan must include a detailed set of policies and processes that will protect data and data access and use and ensure that enterprise users and the Information Technology (IT) team can be confident of the provenance and dependability of data. The plan must include remedial processes to scrub and fix emerging data issues and it must offer a streamlined process for data access and analysis, while assuring that data does not fall into the wrong hands.

Technology plays an important role in data governance, but it is not all-inclusive. Data governance must also encompass the ways in which data is used, shared and edited within the organization within data warehouses, data repositories and manual data manipulation and storage.

Think of Data Governance as quality management for data, with all the correlating factors, like monitoring, maintenance, improvement and analysis.

What is Data Anarchy?

The simplest definition of Data Anarchy is: the absence of Data Governance. The term 'anarchy' causes most business managers to shudder but if those business managers are trying to implement a self-serve business intelligence product into the environment, they may believe that they must embrace data anarchy in order to open data access to every business user.

Fortunately, that is not the case!

Let's look at the specter of real data anarchy. True data anarchy can damage the organization on many levels. It can mean that users have inappropriate access to data, and it can also mean that the data they access is incomplete, undependable and out of date.

It can mean that data and access is not monitored, managed or safeguarded. It can also mean that data repositories are not catalogued and that IT and other departments may be totally unaware of the data being used to make decisions.

Another source of data anarchy is the selection and implementation of an incompetent business intelligence solution, one that does not allow for easy integration and management of data or help IT to implement data governance.

With the proliferation of data warehouses, legacy software, enterprise software, best-of-breed solutions, spreadsheets, data marts and corporate locations, it is easy to see how data anarchy can take root and grow in an organization. Users embrace software and tools and begin to create reports and dashboards and circulate data and the race toward debilitating data anarchy is on!

The Importance of Appropriate Data Governance in Data Democratization

Given the concerns about data anarchy and efficient, but unrestrictive, data governance, it is easy to see how an enterprise might struggle to implement self-serve business intelligence and achieve data democratization.

As business intelligence and business user empowerment and accountability grows in popularity, the wise enterprise will balance the need for data governance and data security with the organizational and business user need for solid, dependable information.

The business that attempts to over-enforce data governance may end up creating a data dictatorship and thereby depriving business users to critical information needed to perform daily tasks and make appropriate decisions.

Striking a Balance

As the enterprise considers the balance between data governance and data anarchy it is crucial that decision-makers include business intelligence and analysis in the equation and, wherever possible, use BI tools and a flexible business intelligence solution to integrate and protect data.

With the right tool, the balance of data governance and data democratization can allow for easy analysis while ensuring that the IT team has the ability to control appropriate user access and data security at the individual, team, department, division and corporate level.

The right business intelligence solution allows the organization and the IT team to achieve and balance its goals without sacrificing the data democratization initiative.

Self-Serve Business Intelligence Engenders Data Democratization

Data Democratization and self-serve business intelligence are crucial to the success of every organization today. The old paradigm of five-year strategic plans and long-term goals is gone. Today, the enterprise must create and sustain an environment that reflects the rapidly changing market, customer buying behaviors and competitive initiatives.

If business users are to participate in this process and perform at peak efficiency, each user must have tools that allow them appropriate access for their role, and the flexibility to create reports, alerts and analysis that can be shared, and used to address issues before they become problems and to capitalize on opportunities before they are missed.

Making the Right Choice

The issue of data governance looms large within the question of data democratization and self-serve BI tools. Corporate, industry and government regulations may drive data privacy policies and executive management teams and IT staff are most certainly going to want to weigh in on the advisability of open systems and business user participation and access. A solid data governance plan is more critical than ever in today's technology-driven, global business market.

- ✓ ***On the positive side*** of the scale is the new self-serve mentality and the opportunity for business users to avoid the delays and bureaucracy of engaging IT and skilled analysts to perform searches and analysis. With self-serve BI tools, business users can mash up data, analysis, share and present in a swift, meaningful way.
- ✓ ***On the negative side***, that same self-serve access is bound to make top decision makers nervous. While business users are empowered, the average executive or IT professional is likely to feel nervous about the possible outcomes and security risks. IT may also say that open access will create an environment where every department is using data to develop their own reports and run off in a different direction, thereby creating data anarchy.

Isolated data kingdoms may create more problems than the business intelligence implementation was meant to resolve. IT may lose control and the movement and management of data across boundaries may grind to a halt as systems are strained beyond limits. Sooner or later these issues will catch up to the organization and cause real problems.

It is imperative that every business combine and consider the implementation of data democracy initiatives and self-serve BI tools with a review of existing data governance policies and processes.

This review process will assure that the enterprise chooses the right BI tool; one that will allow the flexibility and the data controls required at every level.

Any self-serve business implementation should incorporate a review of:

- ✓ Data Integrity
- ✓ User, IT and Management Confidence in Integrated Data and Tools
- ✓ The Capability to Comply with Existing and Future IT Policies and Processes
- ✓ Data Security and Compliance with Regulation

Ensuring Data Governance Success in Self-Serve Business Intelligence Projects

Business Intelligence solutions are evolving quickly and it is important that the enterprise look at the proposed solution to ensure that there are ample controls and administrative tools and that the product is scalable and flexible enough to accommodate the changing needs of the organization in terms of user volume, new systems that may come online, and other factors.

The trend toward business user involvement in gathering and analyzing data is one that will not subside, so it is important that the organization plan for self-serve data discovery and self-serve analysis.

Here is a short list of crucial considerations and needs analysis:

Review and document data repositories and tools and data architecture
Document new or future data integration, hardware, network needs
Review business user and executive needs for data compilation, reporting, sharing and analysis
IT review of existing policies and procedures for data governance
Document user requirements vs. data governance requirements and establish new policies
Review all prospective BI tools against requirements and data governance capabilities
Estimate future user volume growth, scalability concerns, self-serve and mobile requirements
Develop boundaries to define self-serve vs. analyst and IT involvement in analytical projects
Review all regulatory and security requirements
Review and document all user access, security and administrative issues
Balance the central meta data layer with self-serve data preparation
Document goals for data integrity, data certification, watermarking, reduction in re-work, etc.
Review business users and IT training needs for prospective systems.

Every organization will, of course, have its own unique needs but it is important that the enterprise recognize that self-serve business intelligence and data democratization cannot be approached in a vacuum.

Conclusion

It is possible to achieve accurate and dependable data governance without opening the door to data anarchy.

But, if the enterprise is to achieve its goals and balance the self-serve environment with appropriate controls, it must take a broader and deeper view of all factors and of all the ways in which the organization will be changed by this type of initiative.

One cannot ignore the need for data governance, nor the risks of data anarchy, but, with the involvement of the right parties and the consideration of crucial factors and future needs, every enterprise can strike a comfortable balance between self-serve business intelligence and the necessary boundaries of solid data governance, data security and user access.

About ElegantJ BI

The ElegantJ BI business intelligence solution re-imagines business intelligence, and the possibilities inherent in business user empowerment. ElegantJ BI is a self-serve, mobile BI tool designed to support data democratization and transform business users into Citizen Data Scientists. The ElegantJ BI Advanced Data Discovery, [Smarten approach](#) to BI tools, includes Plug n' Play Predictive Analysis, Self-Serve Data Preparation and Smart Data Visualization. In 2016, ElegantJ BI was listed as Representative Vendor in the '*Gartner Market Guide for Enterprise-Reporting-Based Platforms*', and noted in the '*Gartner Magic Quadrant for Business Intelligence and Analytics Platforms*'.

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