

Delivering Compliance and Actionable Insights with Data Governance as a Service

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Today, data is money – it offers a way for businesses to understand what separates success from failure, what makes customers tick and where to focus investment. However, alongside the opportunities, comes the responsibility to protect and safeguard data so it's appropriately used and can't fall into the wrong hands.

These factors have led to a significant growth in the importance attached to data governance – a vital but often inexact set of methodologies/tools used by organisations to manage and exploit their data assets and stay compliant.

The problem is, many struggle to exercise the control or deliver the benefits they are looking for, with the result being that data governance strategies can hit some critical (and expensive) roadblocks, including:

- **Organisations decide they need to act on data governance, but don't know how.**
- **They have bought some data governance tools, but are unsure how to drive business value and outputs, despite spending substantial sums.**
- **Despite investment in tools, there remain unoptimised gaps in their approach to governance.**
- **They initiate a data governance strategy with the intention of running it in-house, but struggle with expertise, skills shortages and delivering usable outputs.**

Whatever the scenario, the downsides of directing time and resources into data governance strategies that don't work can be serious. Some organisations that we are aware of have been working for over 18 months with no real demonstrable outputs.

Instead, organisations should be in a position to embrace data governance as a positive route to business improvement and robust regulatory compliance. The emergence of Data Governance-as-a-Service (DGaaS) is bridging the gap between objectives and results, taking the risk away from investments and delivering the experience, skillsets and proven technologies required to ensure data governance projects succeed.

This white paper explores a range of key issues of interest to organisations and their stakeholders where data governance is a priority. Topics include:



The State of Data Governance



Common Data Governance Challenges and Risks



Good Governance – Key Drivers



What is Data Governance-as-a-Service?



Conclusion and Further Reading



“Data Governance is a system of decision rights and accountabilities for information-related processes, executed according to agreed-upon models which describe who can take what actions with what information, and when, under what circumstances, using what methods.”

- The Data Governance Institute.

Effective data governance empowers organisations to make major improvements across a wide range of key operational and performance issues. These can range from data integrity and accuracy to compliance, decision-making and bottom-line growth.

Done well, the impact can be truly transformative, enabling leaders to act with new levels of insight and confidence. As a result, organisations are increasingly investing in technologies in an effort to balance compliance with performance and unlock the power of their data.

This is not without its challenges, with organisations the world over finding their data governance efforts are more complex and frustrating than expected. And, without an effective approach, delivering on compliance and business objectives is by no means guaranteed.

In fact, a recent Gartner report - “The State of Data and Analytics Governance is Worse Than You Think” - found that a quarter of those surveyed achieved nothing they set out to accomplish with data.

In contrast, data governance that is effectively planned and delivered offers huge potential for improving business performance. According to a report by McKinsey, “Leading firms have eliminated millions of dollars in cost from their data ecosystems and enabled digital and analytics use cases worth millions or even billions of dollars. Data governance is one of the top three differences between firms that capture this value and firms that don’t. In addition, firms that have underinvested in governance have exposed their organisations to real regulatory risk, which can be costly.”

This is driving a rapidly growing market, which is expected to reach a value of \$5.28 billion by 2026, with growth running at over 20% per year, while another recent industry report revealed a 15% increase in companies that have embraced data governance.

By any measure, the arguments behind the adoption of data governance are increasingly compelling. The big question, however, is how does a commitment to the process translate into tangible success?

Common Data Governance Challenges and Risks



“Without quality-assuring governance, companies not only miss out on data-driven opportunities; they waste resources. Data processing and cleanup can consume more than half of an analytics team’s time, including that of highly paid data scientists, which limits scalability and frustrates employees. Indeed, the productivity of employees across the organization can suffer.”

- McKinsey Digital, 2020.

Having taken the decision to focus on data governance, the most common mistake organisations make is to immediately focus on outcomes without first addressing the need for effective data discovery and classification.

For example, teams with the responsibility for delivering data governance will often assume that there are tools out there that can be given access to data sources to analyse and identify governance violations instantaneously. In reality, this process is impossible without first understanding what is being looked for in the first place. The net result is that it’s unlikely governance initiatives will deliver any tangible results or benefits.

Therefore, it’s vital that data governance best practices should first define what data classification looks like for each unique situation. Customer data, for instance, will be held in different locations and databases in every organisation. What level of classification of that data is down to each individual company, but whatever the situation, good governance is only possible if this data is correctly identified and classified. From that point onwards, it becomes practical to apply gap analysis to understand whether there are violations, such as misclassified data or residency issues. Without it, any attempts at data governance are going to be made much harder from day one.



The Trouble with Tools

Building an effective data governance strategy can be challenging, with organisations too often assuming that technology investment alone offers a guaranteed route to success. All too common, however, are the experiences of organisations and their data governance teams who see their efforts frustrated by software tools that promise much but deliver relatively little.

Part of the problem is that there is no single tool available that can address the entire spectrum of data governance needs. As a result, IT and governance teams have their hands full managing more tools as data and technology infrastructure evolves over time. In addition, many of the issues faced by businesses trying to modernise their approach to data governance stem from the difference between legacy and contemporary tools.

Legacy governance technologies were designed for an environment where organisations hosted all of their data within their own data centre. They were also implemented in an era when there was far less data residing on far fewer servers. They simply aren't built for modern architectures where, for instance, multiple authentication systems reside in multiple places.



The Dangers of Data Sprawl

Today, data is stored and processed across an increasingly broad range of execution venues. Many organisations store multiple data types across a complex strategy of on-premise, in-cloud and SaaS locations, making compliance both complex and costly. What's more, the average company has dozens or even hundreds of apps, each generating, manipulating and storing data volumes that are growing exponentially.

As the complexity of infrastructure increases, this resulting data sprawl is one of the biggest issues facing those responsible for governance. In many situations, legacy software tools are at the heart of failed governance projects and are identified as the weak link between objectives and delivery.

The challenges don't end there. Today, many businesses have effectively lost control of their IT estate. It's now so easy for almost any department or team to subscribe to new apps or cloud services without the need for any kind of procurement process. This can leave IT and governance teams in the dark about where data is being generated, stored and shared, adding to the complex governance challenges they face.



Skills Shortages

Organisations also face the widespread problem of a data governance skills shortage, with a dearth of recruitment candidates to choose from. What's more, few organisations have a management hierarchy in place to support those given responsibility for data governance, let alone effectively integrate it into the wider organisation.

This generally results in a major disconnect between senior executives and those with 'data governance' in their job title, job description or on their to-do list. As a result, governance projects stall because the people given the jobs don't know what to do. Many are put into the impossible position of being given broad objectives with no insight into the processes, documents or people they need to achieve them - let alone how this maps against the toolsets they have bought.



Time to Value

Due to the combination of the points mentioned above, the time to value can just drag on, with senior executives asking about updates, outputs and dashboards to see progress that just doesn't exist.

Organisations are realistically talking about an 18-24 month rollout of a data governance programme and toolset, to start seeing value. That is just too long for any modern business

Good Governance – Key Drivers



“Data governance is not a big bang initiative... Instead, global initiatives are highly complex and long-term projects. They therefore run the risk that participants might lose trust and interest over time.”

– Business Application Research Center.

At its core, data governance is a complex process with many moving parts. From data quality, master data management and the challenges presented by encryption, to choosing the right technology tools and the enforcement of policies, there are a range of key components that will separate success from failure.

Adding to these challenges is that when focusing on data governance, organisations simply can't do everything at once. Not only do most lack both the insight and oversight to establish and maintain good governance, they also tend to focus on short-term standalone data projects, rather than the benefits that a long-term, holistic approach to governance can deliver.

For instance, part of the difficulty organisations face in determining their approach to good data governance is understanding what value looks like. To an extent, this is understandable in that its inherent impact often only becomes evident when something goes wrong, there is a regulatory breach or they are fined. From a leadership perspective, this is an investment that potentially never delivers a return, so they kick it down the road in favour of more immediate priorities.

Instead, good data governance requires a different mindset, because when viewed in the context of bottom line benefits, there is a much more compelling value proposition. For instance, organisations might be storing restricted data on public sources – good governance identifies and eliminates those potential violations, and in the process, addresses risk while also offering potential for improving processes and efficiency.

In taking this approach, businesses are more likely to benefit from a win-win scenario where not only is their exposure to poor governance reduced and mitigated, but they can deliver an integrated governance-led data strategy that adds significant operational and bottom-line benefits.

What is Data Governance-as-a-Service?



“Data Governance-as-a-Service bridges the gap between objectives and impact. It frees organisations from the resource and technical limitations that cause so many projects to fail, and instead, allows them to focus on the transformational potential of data while also delivering on compliance.”

- Michael Queenan, Co-Founder and CEO, Nephos Technologies.

Taken together, these challenges and opportunities require a different approach. The way organisations are currently addressing data governance is frequently incompatible with their objectives or their ability to define, implement and evaluate a strategy that can meet them.

Instead, they should be freed from the strategic and operational restrictions imposed by the current inadequate data governance ecosystem.

In this reality, they can approach the planning, design and delivery of a data governance strategy focused more clearly on their key objectives. Instead of defining and limiting their capabilities, technology becomes the enabler in a service-led approach to data governance.

And rather than hitting implementation roadblocks or experiencing the frustration of failed investments, data governance becomes part of their standard business toolkit that delivers a win-win of effective compliance and business innovation.

Nephos has built a unique approach to delivering Data Governance-as-a-Service (DGaaS). It is designed to meet a broad range of today’s most important use cases, from creating a repository of all data assets to deliver a centralised view of data governance, to building a risk profile and the ability to map governance to corporate risk.



```
mirror_mod.use_x = False
mirror_mod.use_y = True
mirror_mod.use_z = False
elif operation == "MIRROR_Z":
    mirror_mod.use_x = False
    mirror_mod.use_y = False
    mirror_mod.use_z = True

#selection at the end -add back the deselected mirror modifier objects
mirror_ob.select= 1
modifier_ob.select=1
bpy.context.scene.objects.active = modifier_ob
print("Selected" + str(modifier_ob)) # modifier ob is the active ob
    mirror_ob.select = 0
name = bpy.context.selected_objects[0]
bpy.data.objects[name].select = 1
```

Applicable to a wide range of use cases, Nephos DGaaS is built around four proven components:



Discovery and Classification

In any successful data governance strategy, Discovery and Classification needs to be ubiquitous, and tools must be able to scan all data wherever it might reside. Without this detailed insight, organisations are unable to identify if they are mishandling data – and by definition – identify their level of risk. This is a core part of any data project, because without accurate discovery and classification of data it is also very difficult to implement and integrate any other upstream data services.



Process Creation and Documentation

This provides customers with the integrated consultancy to help drive their ideas and objectives through to execution. For example, if an organisation needs to implement a data minimisation project, Nephos works with them to understand what that entails, what people and processes are required, alongside the choice of technology tools to ensure success.



Business Intelligence for Data Governance

Giving organisations the ability to take the raw outputs from the toolsets and turn them into tangible business outputs is the next phase in the evolution of data governance. Nephos DGaaS brings these capabilities together, allowing businesses to deliver on even the most ambitious data governance objectives.



Operationalise Data Governance

Nephos enables organisations to operationalise data governance, and in the process, give them the ability to create and design the policies and processes they want to enforce rather than having to worry about how to deploy and manage them. This takes all the operational and expertise requirement overhead away from customers and leaves them free to focus on value creation from data.

Conclusion



Since the turn of the millennium, data governance has grown in relevance and importance as businesses saw the potential in 'big data'. Close behind, governments legislated to impose minimum standards and protect privacy. More recently, the urgency behind delivering data governance has grown massively as its commercial impact became more tangible and compliance rules grew significantly stronger.

Today, organisations are increasingly faced with a binary choice: embrace the opportunity effective governance offers to deliver business growth, innovation and compliance, or risk competitive advantage and the wrath of powerful regulators when it falls short.

Nephos Technologies Data Governance-as-a-Service offers organisations a proven route to deliver on the transformational potential of data. Our technology stack, service portfolio and deep process experience enables us to bring clients closer to their data.

By doing so, they understand their businesses with greater insight than ever before. In these organisations, data becomes an actionable asset, where risk is fully assessed and managed.

The result? A lasting cultural shift where data truly delivers. For further information about Data Governance-as-a-Service from Nephos Technologies, [click here](#).



Why Nephos DGaaS?

Nephos DGaaS enables organisations to plan, implement and deliver a data governance strategy focused more clearly on their key objectives.

Instead of hitting implementation roadblocks or experiencing the frustration of failed investments, data governance becomes part of a business toolkit that delivers effective compliance and actionable insights. What's more it is supported by our consultancy team to help you understand where to start, or support where you have started.

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