

Don't Compromise Your Data Strategy by Sacrificing Fidelity

Finding and consolidating data are antiquated tasks that can defeat overwhelmed data strategists. Here's what to do instead.



Introduction

Developing a unified data strategy that works for every scenario can be an elusive task. The C-suite needs a modern strategy that furthers corporate goals, improves operational productivity and effectiveness, and drives top and bottom line growth; non-technical users want quick answers to critical questions whenever needed, without waiting on help from swamped IT staffers; and IT doesn't want to feel like the impeder of business velocity and growth. Even the brightest, most enlightened data leaders have a hard time fulfilling any of these requests—if they can fulfill them at all.

That's because scarce technical resources still spend an inordinate amount of time and money on the same two foundational data tasks that have plagued them for years: locating organizational data, and trying to synthesize it for single-source reporting via data modeling and Extract Transform Load (ETL).

But not anymore. Now, any size of organization can drive more consequential results from a data strategy by quickly dispositioning these menial tasks, and eliminating data modeling and ETL forever.

Meet the Chief Data Officer (CDO)

Data strategy's fast-rising importance prompted the emergence of a new, C-level role responsible for putting data and data-driven decision-making at the center of everything a company does: Chief Data Officer (CDO).

The first task to be checked off his/her to-do list? Data management—synthesizing the data that exists in many formats and is stored across hundreds of sources in a typical enterprise.

The Problem with Data Strategy

Properly developed and applied, data strategy immensely benefits organizations. The opposite, however, also is true: improperly developed and applied, data strategy fails to deliver the intended results.

To fully grasp data strategy's potential and the issues surrounding its typical implementation, let's first review a few basic elements about it.

Why Data Strategy is Needed

Businesses need data strategy for both operational and technical reasons.

Business leaders and their teams—primarily non-technical business users—need access to data-driven insights that help them make smarter decisions.

IT leaders want to implement a formal data strategy in order to intelligently overcome the challenges—and greatly reduce the cost—incurred from locating data, sharing data, and reusing data.

All in all, companies know they need to make data much more accessible to workers using it to make the thousands of daily decisions that determine a single business's success or failure. And, to best support the company's goals, the tools purchased and built to meet this need ideally will align with an established data strategy.

"Data Strategy" Defined

Data strategy is intended to be a repeatable, sustained, and governed process typically consisting of five core components:

1. **Identifying and consolidating** data and/or match processing on all systems in order to understand data's meaning
2. **Centrally storing** data lineage and movement activities in a structure and location that enables easy, shared access and processing
3. **Provisioning** data in a way it can be reused and shared while abiding by preset business rules and access guidelines
4. **Moving and combining (processing)**—identifying, matching, cleansing, standardizing, analyzing—data stored in disparate systems to enable a unified, consistent view of it by downstream systems (a single source of truth)
5. **Governing** data, so specific data cleansing and/or standardization rules are followed whenever data is moved or used

Where Most Data Strategies Fall Short

Despite its well-intentioned goals, however, data strategy historically only has centered around finding and consolidating data. That's because the technology systems used by a business typically contain multiple applications organized to process data, not share it.

Companies further compound the problem by investing in multiple tools, technologies, packaged applications, and custom solutions to help end users access the data they need to do their jobs—data that, for the most part, is out of reach.

So scarce technical resources—in an attempt to give users the information they need—spend an inordinate amount of time and money on the same two mundane data tasks that have plagued them for years: locating organizational data and trying to synthesize it for single-source reporting.

And they employ unattractive, legacy approaches—data warehouses, data modeling, and ETL—to do it.

Data Services: Not a Magic Bullet

Often, to try to satisfy the data needs of the business without moving data from source systems, companies offer a catalog of data services via data virtualization. They quickly find, however:

- New or change requests still end up in IT's 3-6 month long project queue;
- IT still needs to figure out which data is needed and how to present it;
- Data requests often are rendered useless by the time they're fulfilled; and
- Data services become a distraction later when IT needs to tend to the negative impacts and heavy loads placed on mission-critical source systems needed to run the daily business.

Forward-Thinking Businesses Demand Modern Data Strategy

Unfortunately, most newer technologies developed to help modernize data strategies only alleviate some of the pain of ETL processes—the inherent slowness and limitations of legacy strategies remain.

What's needed is a modern data strategy that overcomes the above, prevalent issues associated with data management while advancing an organization's business insight capabilities—one where:

- Data access and integration is easy and assumed;
- All users enjoy an integrated view of customer information;
- Developers and end users align as data consumers, enabling better decision support and increased organizational agility;
- Data is better shared at all times—when it's at rest or in motion; and
- IT teams efficiently and seamlessly manage data volumes, data complexity, and data movement.

Data Strategy Needs to:

- Support and align with a company's **business strategy**.
- Support the obligations and future needs of a company's **operational productivity and effectiveness**.
- Support and align with the needs of an **IT organization**, and the technologies they deploy and maintain.

“ [With Incorta] we eliminated the need for the preprocessing and extraction of data, which explains how we completed the project in only four months and saved \$800,000. ”

IT DIRECTOR,
GLOBAL COFFEE COMPANY

Key Benefits of Truly Modern Data Strategy

Modern data strategy reduces the unnecessary movement of data.

Modern data strategists know the optimal data strategy approach is to manage data in-place, rather than move it to a data warehouse. Some movement and integration of data is necessary, however, and they don't want to limit that. But they do want to reduce data's unnecessary movement.

That's why modern data strategists design a data strategy that seamlessly scales for large and complex data sets while eliminating the need for data modeling, unnecessary parts of ETL, and data pre-aggregations.

Modern data strategy inspires and enables secure and uninterrupted "data curiosity."

A modern data strategy encourages business users to follow their curiosity into details, and self-serve in real-time their report and dashboard needs as requirements change.

Users are empowered to easily ask and answer different questions every day; adapt to market changes and make better decisions in real-time; and use data in new and different ways—all while the proper security settings remain in place, and without needing data model or ETL updates.

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We're using [Incorta] to report on HR data, so there's very sensitive data being manipulated and handled. It's critical we control who sees what data and when they see it, otherwise it becomes a privacy issue as well. Incorta gives us much more granular control over who's permitted to access and view data than the other options we looked at.

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FORTUNE 10 CONSUMER
ELECTRONICS MANUFACTURER

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With Incorta, we're able to access the information very quickly. We can drill down the orders to see the detail information, as well as take a look at the overall supply chain and where the inventories are at. ... We're able to see the entire picture of the order.

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DANIEL LIM, CIO,
GUITTARD CHOCOLATE CO.

Modern data strategy retains all data fidelity.

When IT teams apply ETL and reshape data to avoid the performance perils encountered by legacy data approaches, data fidelity is forever lost, and the business is prevented from asking questions that only can be answered by those transactional details.

With a modern data strategy, data doesn't need to be reshaped, so business users can easily access the transaction-level data detail residing in source systems, and ask any question they want.

Modern data strategy drives greater confidence in business decisions.

Since modern data strategy eliminates the need for data warehouses, data modeling, and ETL, it completely bypasses the inaccuracies introduced during complex data transformations. As a result, businesses make more confident, smarter business decisions that positively impact their bottom lines.

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Incorta lets us more quickly fine-tune our business strategy, which ultimately increases revenue. Before, it could take weeks to sort out all the noise when we needed to get a handle on our previous month's performance. Now, we know in real time what's going well and what isn't. It's incredible to have that kind of information at our fingertips.

TIM BARASH, CFO,
TOAST

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Due to Incorta's self-service capabilities, IT no longer has to predict what business users are going to ask, but can instead create flexible frameworks that let business users slice and dice the data themselves.

AJIT OAK, SR. MANAGER OF BI,
BROADCOM

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Modern data strategy unites business leaders with IT.

Line-of-business leaders and their IT counterparts often are at odds when it comes to data strategy: desperate business leaders need accurate insights to deliver the expected operational results, but frenzied IT teams usually lack the budget, resources, know-how, or technology required to deliver those insights, in an appropriately secure manner.

Modern data strategy unites IT with business leaders across multiple functions because it allows IT to enable business users to do what they need to do—faster, with increased productivity and less reliance on IT resources.

Modern data strategy simplifies the process of acquiring new data when required.

Organizations often need to synthesize new data and data sources with their existing systems, and modern data strategy meets this need.

For example, vast amounts of data residing in companies bought during merger and acquisition (M&A) efforts need to be easily combined with the buyer's existing data. The buyer then needs to quickly create analytical applications incorporating this new data, so employees can make faster, more-informed decisions during a time of rapid change.

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We're an organization generating more than 10 times the revenue of 10 years ago, and Incorta has managed that growth flawlessly. The analytics solutions we've used in the past couldn't scale fast enough to handle that rate of expansion.

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AJIT OAK, SR. MANAGER OF BI,
BROADCOM

Want a Modern Data Strategy that Succeeds?

Make It Easy to Find and Consolidate Data

The above benefits might seem like overly aggressive goals, but they're well within reason for organizations able to easily find and consolidate their data.

The key to easily finding and consolidating data? Eliminating data modeling and ETL!

That's because modern data strategy does not merely simplify IT's involvement—it gets IT out of the way altogether.

Without IT holding the keys to which data the business can or cannot see, business analysts easily can select data sources, integrate data, and analyze data on their own—without needing assistance from already overwhelmed IT resources.

As a result, the organization becomes more efficient and results-oriented, and is better prepared to leverage exciting new technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) to further its business goals.

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[Using Incorta] I can join data from multiple sources in an extremely easy manner that we would not be able to do with any other tools.

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BHARATH NATARAJAN,
BI ARCHITECT, KEYSIGHT

Find out how Incorta can make obtaining data the easiest part of your data strategy—download Incorta's [The Modern Replacement for Your Data Warehouse](#) whitepaper.

incorta

The Data Direct Platform™

ABOUT INCORTA

Incorta is the data analytics company on a mission to help data-driven enterprises be more agile and competitive by resolving their most complex data analytics challenges. Incorta's Direct Data Platform gives enterprises the means to acquire, enrich, analyze and act on their business data with unmatched speed, simplicity and insight. Backed by GV (formerly Google Ventures), Kleiner Perkins, M12 (formerly Microsoft Ventures), Telstra Ventures, and Sorenson Capital, Incorta powers analytics for some of the most valuable brands and organizations in the world.

For today's most complex data and analytics challenges, Incorta partners with Fortune 5 to Global 2000 customers such as Broadcom, Vitamix, Equinix, and Credit Suisse.

For more information, visit <https://www.incorta.com>