

The Role of Data Governance in Data-Driven Businesses

Why Does Data Governance Matter?

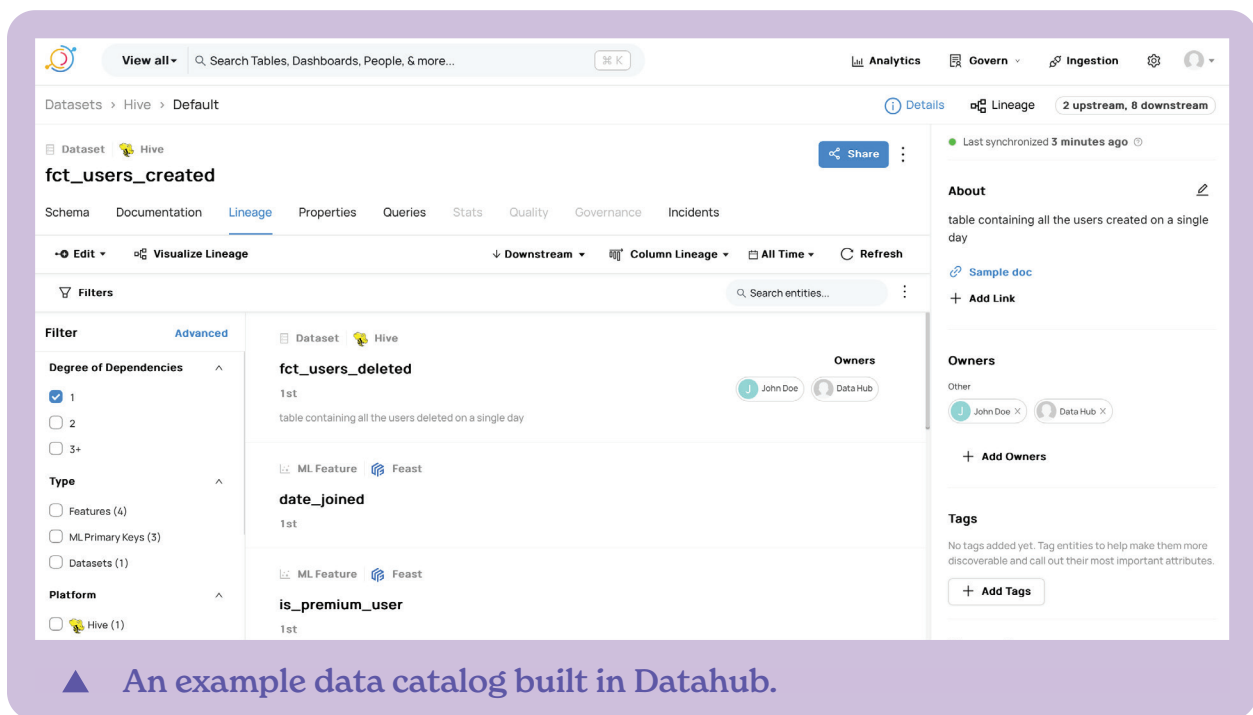
This white paper opens with a question: “Do you feel confident in your decision making based on your data?” Take a moment to think about this – the assumption being you are not 100% confident. Now, this question applies to everyone in your organisation, whether you are the CDO where your job is to answer this question positively, to the data analyst building data assets, to the business users doing their day-to-day work where they make decisions throughout their day.

In today’s digital age, data is the most valuable asset we have to understand our world and the effects our decisions have upon it. With our increasing reliance

Over 65% of data leaders highlighted data governance as their main focus in 2024, followed by data quality (47%), AI (44%), self-service analytics (32%) and DataOps (19%). *Source: Atlan*

on data to drive business decisions, streamline operations and enhance customer experiences, we all must ensure the quality, accessibility and security of our data. Data governance is a discipline – and culture – of managing, controlling and securing data that plays a vital role. At the heart of data governance is the principle that data should be easily discoverable, understandable and trustworthy for all users of that data.

This white paper outlines the importance of data governance in a data-driven business and presents the case for why cataloging and governing data assets are essential in building our confidence in data and make it safe for extensive use. Specifically, we're hoping to show you why a centralised data catalog that serves as the first point of contact for all data-related assets – including reports, dashboards and data sources – needs to be the core of your data culture and usage.



The Importance of Data Governance in a Data-Driven Business

Let's investigate the details of why data governance is essential.

Ensuring Data Quality

Poor data quality can lead to decision-making based on fundamental errors that can cost your business significant time and money. Data governance principles ensure data is accurate, consistent and complete. Most importantly, they provide processes for

detecting, rectifying and preventing data quality issues. While tools like Wiiisdom, Atlan or [Data.World](#) can automate some aspects, manual effort is still required. This work demands knowledge from your team to accurately convey the meaning of your data assets.

The goal of these data quality efforts is to instill confidence in the data's accuracy and relevance, ensuring your users and stakeholders trust the information driving their decisions.

Enhancing Data Security and Compliance

Privacy concerns and stringent regulatory requirements such as GDPR and CCPA make maintaining control over sensitive data paramount to C-levels, owners and users of data assets. Data governance provides the necessary frameworks for ensuring that data privacy and security regulations are met.

By controlling access and usage, data governance helps organisations avoid costly penalties while safeguarding sensitive data from breaches and unauthorised access.

Delivering Efficient Data Access and Collaboration

Data governance promotes standardised data access policies and procedures. In organisations with many teams and departments, having clear governance rules in place ensures that everyone has effective understanding and access to the data they need while maintaining a high level of security. It also enables collaboration across departments, breaking down silos and encouraging a more holistic approach to understanding data and aiming for a single source of truth.

Our recommendation is that the governance tool you use should be the first point of contact for data. Your users use the catalog to find the assets they need and trust. This is another step closer to the utopia of the “single source of truth” that we have all been aiming at for many years.

Supporting Informed Decision-Making

Informed decision-making is only possible if the data is trustworthy and easily accessible. This goes right back to the opening statement in this white paper and is the core reason for putting in the effort. Data governance provides the framework for managing the quality and accessibility of data allowing decision-makers to leverage reliable insights.

This is especially critical in industries such as finance, healthcare and retail, where quick and accurate decisions can have a significant impact on business outcomes.

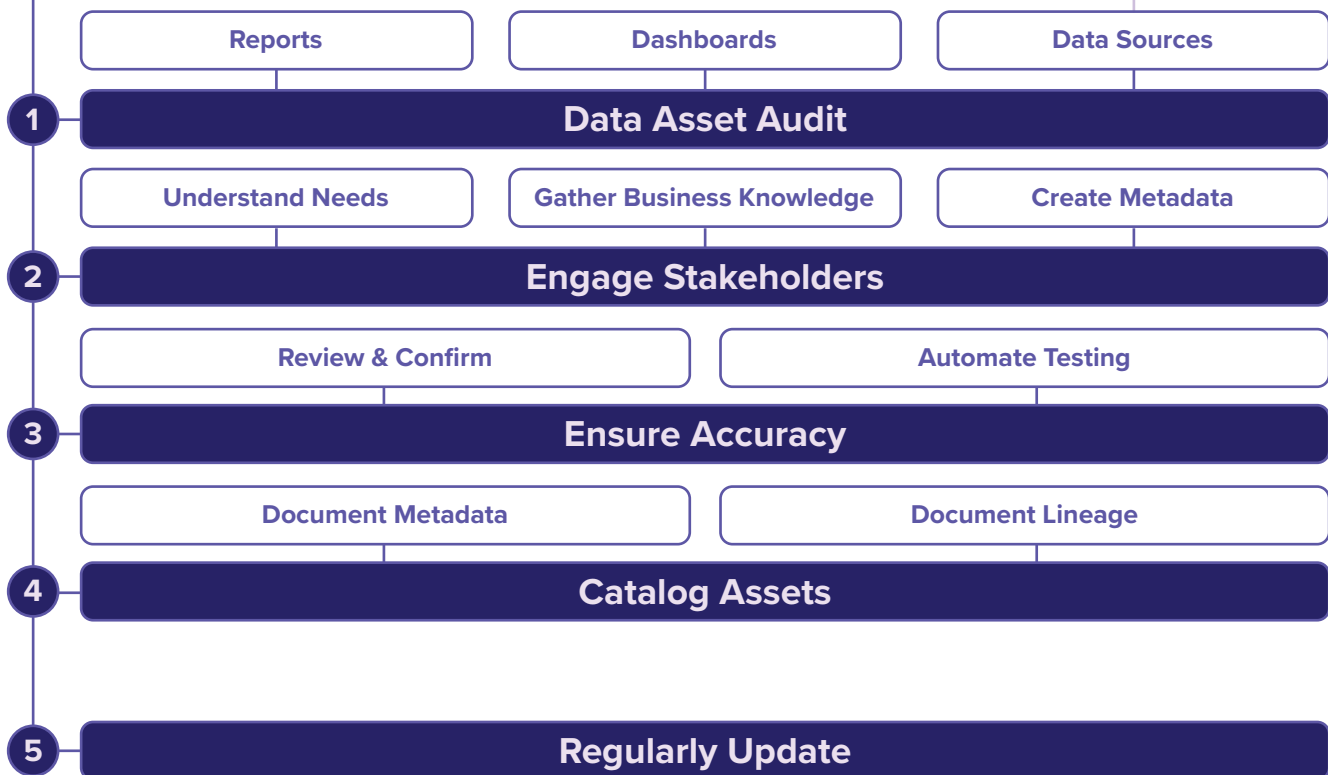
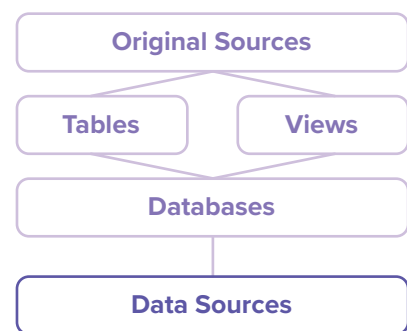
The First Step of Data Governance Is Deploying a Data Catalog

A data catalog serves as the foundation for any data governance framework. This catalog needs to be more than just a list of data assets; it must be the assets enriched with the knowledge of your business from your data generators and users. It provides a centralised repository where all data assets – whether reports, dashboards or data sources – are documented, organised and searchable.

A well-structured data catalog gives users the ability to discover the data they need efficiently and reduces the time spent searching for relevant information across multiple systems.

Deploying & Maintaining a Data Catalog

A basic flowchart of inputs and best practices when building a data catalog.



Improving Data Discovery and Usability

With a centralised data catalog, you can significantly enhance data discovery. Users from different business units can easily find relevant datasets, reports or dashboards, knowing that the information they are accessing is up-to-date and validated.

This capability boosts efficiency and reduces the duplication of effort by providing clear visibility into your organisation's data assets.

Standardising Data Definitions and Terminology

One of the key challenges in data governance is ensuring consistent use of data across the organisation – again, the age old “single source of truth.” A data catalog provides a centralised place to define terms, metadata and business rules.

This standardisation ensures that different teams interpret data consistently, which is critical for accurate reporting, analysis and decision-making.

Enabling Data Lineage and Traceability

Understanding where data comes from, how it has been transformed and who has interacted with it is essential for both compliance and quality assurance. A centralised data catalog allows your organisation to maintain data lineage and traceability, providing a clear audit trail for both internal and external purposes.

Democratising Data for Business Users

A centralised data catalog can democratise access to data by making it discoverable for non-technical users. It serves as a self-service platform that allows business users to find the data they need without relying on IT or data specialists. This not only enhances productivity but also empowers users to take ownership of their data-related tasks and decisions.

Best Practices for Implementing a Data Catalog Tool

1. Start with a Comprehensive Data Inventory and Put Effort into an Audit

Before building a data catalog, conduct a thorough audit of all data sources, reports and dashboards within the organisation. This ensures that no critical asset is overlooked and sets the stage for a complete and accurate catalog. Part of this audit needs to be the archiving, tidying, deprecating and deleting of old assets that are no longer useful. It will feel good to do a “Spring cleaning!”

2. Engage Stakeholders Across Departments

Effective data governance is not just the responsibility of the IT or data teams. Involve key stakeholders from all departments to understand their data needs and ensure the catalog serves the entire organisation. The business users have a wealth of knowledge on why and how data is used. Make sure you capture this information as this is the most important metadata you will collect.

3. Ensure Data Accuracy and Consistency

A data catalog is only as useful as the data it contains. Implement automated processes for updating and validating data entries in the catalog to ensure that it remains accurate and relevant.

4. Provide Clear Data Lineage and Metadata

For each data asset, ensure that detailed metadata and lineage information are included. This helps users understand the context of the data they are accessing and ensures compliance with governance policies. Include such metadata as how a calculation is derived as well as the original source of the data and all its transformation steps.

5. Regularly Update and Maintain the Catalog

Data is constantly evolving and so should the catalog. Regular updates and governance reviews will ensure the catalog remains relevant and continues to support business needs. A data catalog is not just for Christmas; you must care and tend for it constantly. Keep repeating the steps above preferably by a Data Steward or Owner.

Key Takeaways

In the increasingly complex landscape of data-driven businesses, a strong data governance framework is essential. Effective governance ensures data quality, enhances security and compliance, and promotes informed decision-making. A centralised data catalog is a critical tool within this framework, serving as the first point of contact for all data-related assets and providing a foundation for discovery, usability and standardisation.

By prioritising the cataloging of data assets and implementing best practices for data governance, organisations can unlock the full potential of their data, enabling smarter, faster and more confident decisions.

Summary: The Value to Business Users

A data governance tool brings a variety of benefits to business users by:

- Making data more accessible, trusted and easy to find
- Providing clarity around data definitions and metrics
- Enabling faster, more confident decision-making
- Supporting self-service capabilities while ensuring security and compliance
- Promoting collaboration and reducing risks related to data handling

Ultimately, for business users, a well-implemented data governance catalog transforms how they interact with data, driving better insights, decisions and overall business performance.

Looking for further data governance guidance or help with data governance implementation? InterWorks' multi-disciplined team of data experts has a deep understanding of the platforms and processes that can make a real difference.



[Tell us your data governance needs](#)

About the Author



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Kevin leads the InterWorks EMEA analytics practice, providing go-to-market strategy, managing partnerships and setting the group's collaborative consulting approach. His nearly two decades of analytics experience includes high-performance databases, systems engineering, new product development, R&D leadership and analytics CoE creation across a variety of verticals.

About InterWorks

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