The Link Between Data Governance and Digital Transformation

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With consumers growing ever-more reliant on digital information, the pressure is on for every brand to prioritize data consistency and accuracy. Recognizing the connection between internal data management processes and their downstream effects is a critical first step.

By establishing data governance programs based on global standards, organizations can create a culture that supports the strategic use of data, which can fuel consumer trust and keep them buying from your brand. In a recent survey conducted by Label Insight, more than a third of respondents said they would be willing to switch brands if their current brand did not provide enough information about its product.

Data governance programs are built on accountability and support innovation and sustained growth. With clearly defined parameters for data creation, management and usage, leading companies can more easily use high-quality data internally to improve business processes and externally to meet the needs of trading partners and consumers.

Consider the recent overhaul of Georgia-Pacific's data governance structure. The well-known brand of consumer products is working to continue building consumer trust through data. In centralizing its segregated data management approach, the company can now more effectively prepare to meet the company's digital transformation goals. The following is an overview of the steps Georgia-Pacific took to future-proof its business and gain more agility for the digital age.

CONVERGE FOR BETTER VISIBILITY AND EFFICIENCY

Georgia-Pacific's data creation processes and reporting were previously siloed in their consumer products division—a risky set-up for consistent data. Now, all data governance is centralized in one organization, which allows teams to stay better connected and maintain control over any data enhancements. Within this organization, Georgia-Pacific has dedicated data curators, as well as more clearly-defined lead roles. One reporting lead is responsible for analysis and reporting methodologies, and the data governance lead creates and maintains data governance processes within the organization.

GS1 Standards play a major role in this converged plan. The teams learned through a team-wide training program how global data standards can help to structure data consistently internally, and serve as a common platform to share data externally. GS1 Standards help organizations like Georgia-Pacific prepare for digital transformation, as they provide a foundation to systemically enhance data quality and maintain it as additional layers of technology (such as through blockchain or artificial intelligence) are applied to business functions. The Georgia-Pacific team will receive continual training in GS1 Standards and access to data is granted only to those having gone through the training.

> Ultimately, as brands seek trust and loyalty from consumers to maximize sales, a solid data governance program is a "must."

EMPOWER YOUR DATA STEWARDS

Data stewards are responsible for the creation and set-up of master data, including defining the content for each data field and product attribute, ensuring quality and helping to develop and enforce policies and standards around the master data. When a consumer product manager wants to capture new data about a product or customer, or wants to change how data is being used, it must be routed through the data stewards for approval.

For instance, a packaging engineer may be responsible for measuring and weighing a product. Those data points are reviewed and approved by the data stewards before the engineer can populate the appropriate data attribute fields. If a particular data point is in question, the team will return to the engineer for clarification before entering it into the master data system. If the weight of a product changes beyond established parameters, the team will create a new Global Trade Item Number® (GTIN®), following GS1 Standards and recommended best practices.

ENGAGE IN ONGOING DIALOGUE AND COLLABORATE DOWNSTREAM

After making the decision for each division to have its own data governance group, instead of one corporate governance group, the Georgia-Pacific team has made a concerted effort to keep communicating. By maintaining an open dialogue, each division is learning how peers in other divisions are implementing data governance, and how principles are organized and being followed.

A major lesson from the implementation of the new data governance structure at Georgia-Pacific has been for the team to more easily think of the implications of their actions beyond their own roles.

By sharing valuable knowledge downstream--including with the sales, category, marketing and supply chain teams—data quality is ultimately better sustained as it changes hands. Data stewards add value by looking across all processes and providing insights into what might impact other departments.

AUDIT DATA AND PACKAGES REGULARLY

Georgia-Pacific also pays close attention to the physical products themselves to ensure the right data is matched with the right product. By auditing the products' attributes, which are the characteristics used to describe products, the team can stay vigilant about how data is put into action. Many organizations use audits as a way to validate data governance processes and to bolster their collective knowledge base about their products.

For example, the team found through increased physical package auditing that weight measurements were impacting their supply chain performance. The errors were impacting accuracy scores, which can result in costly chargebacks from retailers, as well as transportation costs. Addressing the gaps led to significant cost savings on a high volume of products. Through the use of the Global Data Synchronization Network™ (GDSN) a continuously updated source of product information for brands to efficiently exchange data with trading partners, Georgia-Pacific is also able to share product data in real time with their trading partners for more efficient external data exchange. If a data point is questioned, the team can correct it internally and the changes flow externally.

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Ultimately, as brands seek trust and loyalty from consumers to maximize sales, a solid data governance program is a "must." To effectively respond to constant disruption, industry will need efficiency and consistency in data management to fuel future growth and to maintain a competitive edge.

For more information about industry best practices for enhancing data quality, please visit www.gs1us.org/dataquality.

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