UTILITY DATA GOVERNANCE

OUR SOLUTIONS

Today, more often than ever, utilities rely on digital tools to help them make operational decisions, meet regulatory requirements, plan capital spending, and respond to incidents. The key to all of these applications is accurate, complete, and timely data. The introduction of new systems, such as AMI/MDM, distribution SCADA, and field data collection automation, plus the availability of public data, including weather, public imagery, demographics, and population change projections, has resulted in an explosion of the quantity of data used by utilities.

While many of these tools can help utilities make better operational decisions; inaccurate, incomplete, and outdated information can lead to false conclusions, incompatible decisions, and costly errors.

Data silos often lead to discrepant data values being used for the same piece of data throughout the organization. A lack of data standards and unified processes will typically lead to misunderstanding and miscommunication between different groups. Most often, these groups won't see the disconnect and proceed as if everything is mutually understood. This leads to costly mistakes that could result in regulatory non-compliance, business inefficiencies, or threaten safety. At a minimum, these mistakes will cost time and manpower, which translates to money in terms of direct cost and lost opportunity. One of the most effective solutions to resolve these data problems is Data Governance.

ENDATA SOLUTIONS

HOW DATA GOVERNANCE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Data Governance is the process of effectively managing, utilizing, and securing data. It establishes internal policies and processes to protect the integrity, availability, and usability of data within the organization. This type of system generally includes a governing body, a defined set of standards, and a plan to implement and maintain the new data procedures throughout the organization.

With well-executed data governance, organizations can avoid the headaches that go along with inconsistent data, because it standardizes definitions and increases accuracy across diverse platforms and teams. More importantly, a well-organized data governance system will increase security and ensure compliance with internal and external data regulations while providing decision-makers with reliable information.

Utilities have vast amounts of data, and, with new technologies, the volume of data coming in will continue to increase. From data collection in the field to entry through a GIS and running network analysis, often utility data is used and created by multiple teams with different data standards due to an emphasis on each team's interests. This can result in poor data quality that affects the overall understanding of the utility network and assets. Accurate, good-quality data is essential for data analysis, and proper governance paired with a well architected data system strategy helps organizations keep data organized, secure, and usable.

CHALLENGES IMPLEMENTING SOUND DATA GOVERNANCE

Knowing data governance is crucial, why is it so hard for utilities to implement it effectively? There are many common issues organizations encounter when implementing a data governance system. They range from the culture of the organization to data security, efficiency, and cost. Below are some of the problems utilities may face when employing a data governance system.

Cultural resistance:
Changing protocols and technology can be stressful for end-users in an organization. If the employees collecting, utilizing, and analyzing the data do not see the value of data management, they may be less likely to create good quality data. It is essential that all stakeholders within the organization understand the importance of quality data governance in order to gain their support in data governance initiatives.

Data ownership:
Lack of agreement or understanding who is responsible for what data can lead to gaps or overlaps of data ownership. This inevitably leads to data having different values in different groups within the organization. Good data governance defines a system of record and designates an owner for each category of data. It also establishes the process for disseminating data throughout the organization so that everyone is working with accurate and current data.

Data standards and data quality:

Without data governance, there are inconsistent workflow practices between the various groups, teams, and projects that generate, maintain, and use data. There are often many different data sources, including corporate acquisitions, which bring historical data of varying quality, and other departments and regions with different processes and values. All of these factors lead to inconsistent data quality. Data governance is the solution to creating data and workflow standards for all teams and projects, ensuring that data quality is consistent throughout the organization and over time.

Efficiency and cost:

Implementing data governance may have short-term costs in both personnel and expenditures. Time is taken to hold meetings to gain agreement on standards and implementation processes. Consultants and technology may be employed to ensure a high-quality end result, but the ROI is well worth it in the long-term, as new data standards and practices increase organizational efficiency and the accuracy and currency of the data.

Security:

IT security is a critical issue for all organizations today. Security is necessary to prevent attacks on the corporate data structure and leaks of sensitive information. Good data governance will help enhance corporate data security by putting controls in place that specify where data comes from and where it is allowed to go while maintaining visibility to support business needs. Data governance is not a replacement for IT security, but it will make security easier to manage and control.

HOW EN DATA SOLUTIONS CAN HELP

EN Data Solutions offers a wide range of services to support our clients in all stages of a data governance implementation or review. During the early stages of a data governance project, EN Data Solutions can facilitate the collaboration of all relevant stakeholders. Our teams have extensive experience drafting policies to ensure that the requirements and concerns of all stakeholders are considered in setting a data governance policy. We can also coordinate workshops to ensure that critical stakeholders are not overlooked and that each group has the opportunity to contribute to evolving standards.

At its core, ENTRUST Solutions Group is an engineering company that not only brings experience in data governance to our clients' projects but we also bring operational expertise relevant to utility companies. We utilize industry best practices developed from our experience with utilities across the country, and we also understand utility operations and where exceptions need to be allowed for reasons of expediency. Our specialists make sure that processes are put in place that allow exceptions without sacrificing quality.

Some data governance standards require that the utility adopt changes to long-standing practices. We can help create, review, and test new workflows within the utility as part of this process. EN Data Solutions can ease you through this process to help smooth the transition to new procedures and standards for all stakeholders.

SERVICES EN DATA SOLUTIONS OFFERS FOR DATA GOVERNANCE

Data governance needs analysis:

EN Data Solutions can assess our clients' current data state and identify ongoing and potential problems that data governance can address. This service involves quantifying the value of data governance to their organization and includes a cost/benefit analysis. Our team works with clients to identify both immediate and long-term benefits of data governance that will deliver measurable value to their organization.

Facilitating workshops:

EN Data Solutions will work with clients to identify all stakeholders in a data governance initiative and facilitate workshops to ensure that the needs and concerns of all affected parties are considered when developing an effective data governance program, including policies and procedures. Stakeholders include groups who create, manage, and use the data under consideration.

Develop data governance recommendations:

EN Data Solutions will recommend data governance policies and processes that incorporate industry best practices and are specific to each client. A data governance program should not just be an implementation of a textbook recipe for data governance. The particular circumstances of each client will direct what policies and procedures will be successful. Our experience with a wide variety of clients in the same industry and working with various circumstances helps us understand what will be effective for individual clients.

Drafting policies supporting corporate data governance practices:

Our specialists at EN Data Solutions have extensive experience drafting standards, procedures, and documentation for our clients. We can also assist in drafting the policies you need to support the implementation of a data governance program.

Reviewing and testing new or changed workflows:

A new data governance program will necessitate implementing some new processes and changing some existing processes. These workflows will need to be tested for bottlenecks and unforeseen consequences. EN Data Solutions helps our clients set up a testing program to evaluate the proposed process changes and resolve any identified problems.

Implementing data governance programs:

After a new data governance program has been developed, documented, and tested, the program needs to be implemented to achieve the desired results. EN Data Solutions can assist in this process, drawing on our experience with other clients to help you avoid costly mistakes during the implementation. We help ensure that the implementation is expedient and effective, so benefits are received as quickly and completely as possible.

Managing change:

For any new program to be successful, change has to be managed effectively. Changes need to be communicated to all relevant stakeholders as it is critical that everyone involved understands and values the new processes and standards. EN Data Solutions can help you achieve this. We understand who needs to be included in change management and what messages will successfully gain their buy-in.

Assessing results:

Once a new data governance program has been successfully implemented, it is essential to assess the program's results to ensure that the desired benefits have been achieved. If the program isn't delivering the planned value, the program must be reassessed to determine what changes need to be made to bring the desired results. EN Data Solutions' extensive experience in this area is crucial in order to improve underperforming programs quickly and efficiently.