

THE INSIDER

FEBRUARY 2024

FROM THE IDMA DESK



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MEMBER OF THE IDMA BOARD
OF DIRECTORS AND EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE**

IDMA recently partnered with DAMA International New England Chapter to host “New Directions in Data Management”, a one-day conference in Hartford, Connecticut. Our opening keynote speaker was the ‘Data Doc’, Tom Redman. Tom spoke about the concepts in his new book titled “People and Data” and the ideas he presented resonated deeply with me.

I’ve held various Data Management and Data Governance roles at different insurance companies over the last many years and, while these programs have had similarities and differences, the one most important characteristic of each has been the need to partner “regular” people (as Tom puts it) – both business and IT – along with the data team to achieve success with data programs.

Business people typically understand what data they need to do their jobs. They likely know which data is more important than other data and they know about issues with the data they’re trying to use for decision-making and business outcomes. IT people know where the data lives and how it moves and is transformed from system to system.

All of these ‘regular’ people can play a role in improving the quality of data, but companies must first raise expectations and then hold them accountable for this – much like they do for HR, finance, or safety policies. The data team just cannot be successful without the partnership of others across the organization.

If we can engage these people in aspects of data management (and especially data quality), in a way that simply becomes a part of their normal course of work, companies will start to see improvements in the quality of data and thus business outcomes. But that’s no easy task.

How do companies do this? Communication and Change Management play a key role. I like the ADKAR method because it’s relatively simple and reinforces the fact that for change to be successful, individuals must change. We must help them understand their role and how to achieve the desired results – addressing any barriers or roadblocks along the way. ADKAR is an acronym that stands for Awareness, Desire, Knowledge, Ability, and Reinforcement.

Regular people must first be AWARE that they are both data creators and customers and that they play a role in the quality of data. Leaders can develop data policies to set expectations, offer mandatory training to educate, and communicate the importance of high-quality data in town halls, in staff meetings, in articles, via email, and in other various ways that important messages are communicated throughout the company.



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Most regular people who are aware of data quality issues want (i.e. DESIRE) to improve the quality of data but often, they don't know how, and they have other 'more important' work to do (their 'day jobs'). Communication about the value of improved data quality to business strategies and outcomes is needed. Our leaders must provide a sense of urgency, a clear vision, and financial resources. They must make data quality a top priority for the company, gain buy-in, and enable its success.

Once regular people are aware of and have the desire and support to improve the quality of data, they need the KNOWLEDGE to be able to do this. Improving quality requires common language, the elimination of siloes, forums for communication, and tools and processes to begin the change. Data is truly a team sport where regular people are the players, senior leaders are the owners and general managers, and data teams are the coaches who guide regular people in what they can do to improve data quality. Data teams engage and empower business and IT teams with 'small' data quality improvement projects that are relevant to them.

Regular people will need the skills (i.e. ABILITY) to play their roles effectively. They must change their behaviors regarding their roles as data creators and consumers for the quality of the data to improve (and for the change to be successful). Data teams can offer hands-on instruction, 1:1 coaching, training sessions, and access to subject matter experts. Data teams must also listen to regular people to understand what is working and what may not be working and adjust accordingly.

Additionally, for change to be sustainable, leaders and data teams must continuously communicate and REINFORCE the need for improved data quality, how each employee can play a role, and the successes along the way. They must monitor progress, align incentives with improved data quality, and celebrate accomplishments. There are bound to be setbacks but persistence, teamwork, continuous improvement, seeing failure as an opportunity to learn, and a sense of optimism will help.

As you work on your 2024 data goals, I hope you'll consider and plan for the very important role that people play in our data management efforts. I highly recommend Tom's book "People and Data" and the participating in the various webinars, training, certifications, conferences, and other networking opportunities that IDMA offers to support our insurance industry's data management professionals and keep them current on data management trends and industry practices. Visit idma.org for more information and plan on joining us and sharing your ideas, successes, and challenges.

Sandi Perillo-Simmons



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A MORE INCLUSIVE WAY TO CREATE NEW DATA LEADERS

BY JACOB MARTINEZ
FOUNDER AND CEO, DIGITAL NEST

Although I spent a lot of my college education looking for the right direction, it was after I decided to apply for a PhD program in Biology that a chance encounter changed my career path permanently. This new direction is helping to create new, and more diverse data leaders in Silicon Valley's backyard.

I was working as an administrative assistant for a program at UC Santa Cruz that was trying to drive up diversity in STEM.

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SIX THINGS SLOWING DATA INTEGRATION – AND FIVE QUESTIONS YOU SHOULD BE ASKING

BY ATIF A. KHAN
PRINCIPAL DIRECTOR, ACCENTURE

Today's data environment is one defined by compressed transformation and innovation cycles. This intensity only picked up during the recent pandemic, when we all had to pivot and quickly change the way we were operating. Adoption times for new technologies are shrinking, and when you add GenAI to the picture the pressure to move faster only increases further.

Yet robust data integration and interoperability – when enterprise applications can interact with each other and exchange data – lies at the center of any initiative to become more innovative.

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ETHICAL AI: NO LONGER OPTIONAL

BY NICOLE OSINAKE
FOUNDER, AUDIT DATA HUB

Business users increasingly rely on AI systems to help their organizations perform with higher productivity. Yet if business leaders don't understand how these systems work – especially the role data plays in how AI makes decisions – how can they possibly know whether the systems they rely on are ethical AI?

I don't think this is a controversial statement, yet as I train corporate auditors and business users to understand, communicate, and apply data analytics to make better assurance decisions, it's clear that we've got a major gap to close when it comes to ethics in artificial intelligence and basic data skills in general.

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MAINTAINING CONTROL IN AN AUTOMATED WORLD

BY MAJEED RAHEL
VICE PRESIDENT-INSURANCE OPERATIONS, SMARTTECH INSURANCE

In today's digital world, rapid change has become a normal part of life. New hardware and software are continually being introduced. One of the claimed benefits of these changes is improved data quality and therefore better information upon which the company can base its decisions. The addition of new hardware and software will not automatically improve the quality of your data, and unless the changes are properly incorporated into your processes, they may have a negative effect on your data and the resulting information.

First it is important to remember that if a process containing problems is automated, it will still contain those problems. Automation, by itself, will not fix or improve a "bad process".

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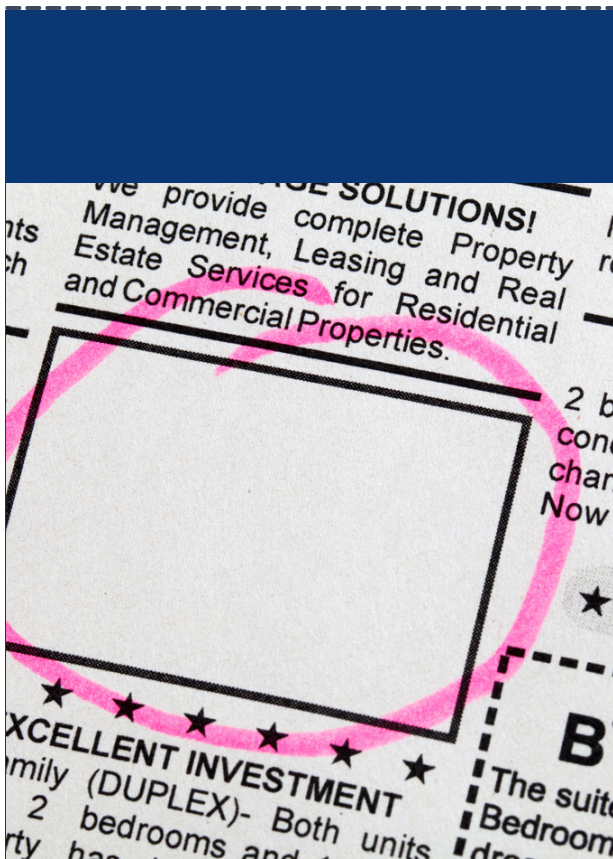
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Got an engaging idea on a data-related topic? We'd love to hear! Express your interest in contributing by reaching out to us at [Contact Information]. Let's shape the future of data management and inspire our readers together.

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