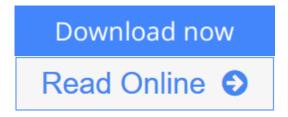# Data Strategy

By Sid Adelman, Larissa Moss, Majid Abai

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Data strategy is one of the most ubiquitous and misunderstood topics in the information technology (IT) industry. Most corporations' data strategy and IT infrastructure were not planned, but grew out of "stovepipe" applications over time with little to no regard for the goals and objectives of the enterprise. This stovepipe approach has produced the highly convoluted and inflexible IT architectures so prevalent in corporations today. This architecture—or rather the lack thereof—creates a significant stumbling block because it is exceedingly time consuming and costly to modify existing systems. In fact, I have seen situations in which a chief marketing officer could not initiate a desired marketing campaign because the opportunity to do so would have grown stale by the time the systems were modified to implement the new campaign.

Besides inflexibility, the lack of enterprise IT planning has lead to epidemic levels of data redundancy. In my experience, most major corporations and large government organizations have three- to four-fold "needless data redundancy"—data that exists for no other reason than failure to properly plan and implement. This issue has become so pressing that it has entered into the chief executive officer (CEO)'s key corporate objectives. I have personally witnessed several CEOs declare that their organization must simplify its IT portfolio, so that redundant data and applications can be removed.

Many organizations target enterprise data strategy as one of the key initiatives to reduce data redundancy, simplify IT portfolios, and ease the strain on the architectures of applications. Through metadata management, an enterprise data strategy identifies how data should be constructed, what data exists, and what the meaning of that data is. This helps organizations address data redundancy by showing when a proposed new system will replicate existing applications. This is a critical aspect of data strategy because many companies want to consolidate existing redundant applications, but processes are not in place to prevent new redundancy from entering the IT environment. Thus, an effective enterprise data strategy can save organizations that currently operate as the proverbial sinking ships whose crews are bailing water, but cannot plug the leaks. A sound enterprise data strategy not only "bails water" by affording IT staff the means and methods for reducing existing redundant data, but it can "plug the leaks" by ensuring that new redundancies stop flowing into the organization.

Sid Adelman, Larissa Moss, and Majid Abai's book represents an outstanding achievement in defining the key activities for implementing a successful enterprise data strategy. Their real-world experience assisting companies shines throughout the book and makes it a must read for any IT professional.

—David Marco, President of EWSolutions

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