METRIC INSIGHTS

A Practical Guide to BI Governance

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What is BI Governance?

BI GOVERNANCE

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DATA GOVERNANCE

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ANALYTICS GOVERNANCE

More often than not, when people speak of governance relating to business intelligence, they are referring to data governance. While clearly the proper governance of data is critical to the success of any business intelligence organization, focusing on data governance alone is a huge mistake. After all, business users do not consume data directly, but through reports, dashboards, and other analytics products. Any effective BI Governance initiative must therefore include both analytics and data or else it is doomed to fail.

3 Gears of Effective Governance

For BI governance to function like a well-oiled machine, there are three gears that must mesh perfectly together and turn in unison:

People - BI Governance is a complex undertaking and it cannot be achieved through the work of a single individual or a single persona within an organization. A cross-functional team of individuals must commit to working together to achieve effective governance.

Process - To enact effective governance, a process must be devised and agreed upon by all key stakeholders. The process must provide clear measurable results that are evident to all stakeholders to justify the effort required from the team.

Technology - Deploying an enabling technology infrastructure is the critical final cog in the governance machine. This technology must support the agreed-upon process in a manner that makes it possible for the team to achieve the governance objectives with a minimal level of effort.

Effective BI Governance can only be achieved if the three gears of people, process, and technology fit together perfectly and turn in unison.

3 Roles participating in effective BI Governance

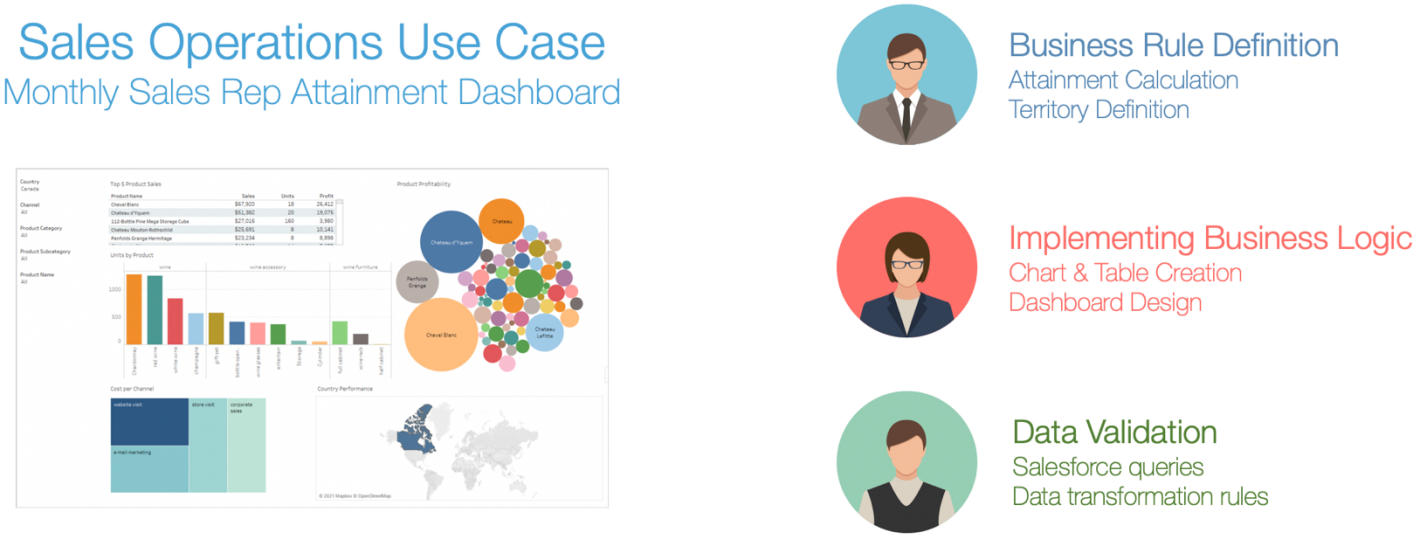
Effective BI governance involves three distinct roles:

The **Business Owner** is responsible for the business rule definitions that are used in a specific report or dashboard. Establishing clear business rule definitions and applying these rules consistently across visualization is critical. Unless the correct business rules are being applied in computing the numbers presented to users, it is not possible to get out of the starting gate when it comes to governance.

The **BI Analyst** is responsible for implementing the agreed-upon business rules in logic within a dashboard. This individual is accountable for translating the general business rules into logic that is encoded into the visualization that is consumed by users.

The **Data Steward** is responsible for ensuring the quality of the data. This involves both making sure that the data for a given analysis is sourced from the correct source and certifying that the necessary quality checks have been applied to the data.

To understand how these roles work together to govern BI content, consider the example of a sales operations dashboard. This dashboard measures the quota attainment of each sales rep and shows the rep the expected commission-based current attainment.



In this example, the **Business Owner** is responsible for determining the rules to compute quota attainment. This would include details relating to territory alignment as well as how commissions are calculated. In this example, a Sales Ops Director for the organization might map out these details working with the VP of Sales.

The **BI Analyst** would then implement the dashboard that conforms to these rules. The analyst would be responsible for ensuring that all charts and measures within the dashboard faithfully represent the logic that was mapped out by the Sales Ops Director.

The **Data Steward role** could be fulfilled by the data engineer who is responsible for loading sales data from Salesforce into the internal data warehouse that is used by the BI Analyst for reporting purposes. This data engineer would be responsible for validating that the complete Salesforce dataset has been loaded into the warehouse and that all necessary data quality checks have been implemented for business users to have high confidence in the data.

Right-sizing the BI Governance Process

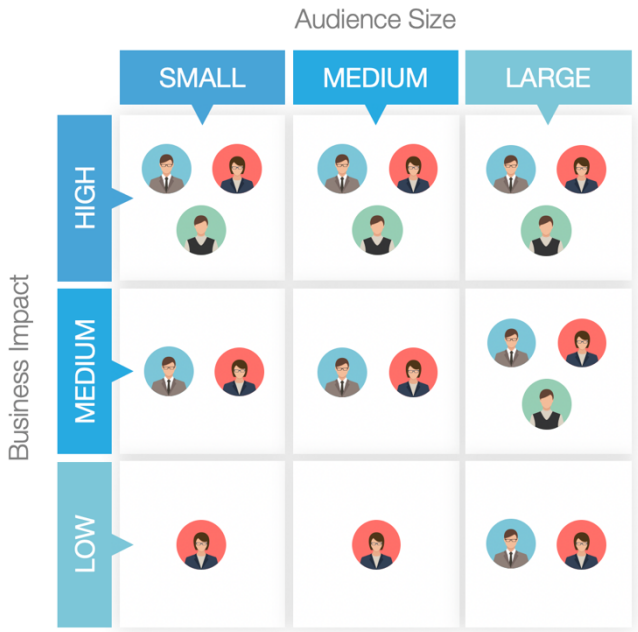
The most common pitfall in BI Governance is the failure to tailor the BI process to the asset that is being governed. The process that is perfectly suitable for a highly sensitive financial dashboard that is consumed by the executive team can prove onerous for an expense reimbursement dashboard. The key to achieving effective BI governance is to ensure that the appropriate process is applied to each BI Asset.

A simple process can aid in setting the right governance workflow for any BI asset:

- Classify the business impact of an issue arising in the reporting performed through the asset as either Low, Medium, or High. For example, a report that is consumed by the executive team and is used for strategic decisions would have a High business impact since an error in this reporting could have a massive negative impact on the business. A dashboard used by a network engineer to assess overall network performance would be classified as having Low business impact since there are other mechanisms present that would inform a network engineer that the network is not performing.

- Identify the audience size for the asset and categorize this audience as Small, Medium, or Large. A report that is only consumed by a small number of individuals would fall into the Small classification while one that has a broad-based audience would have Large classification.

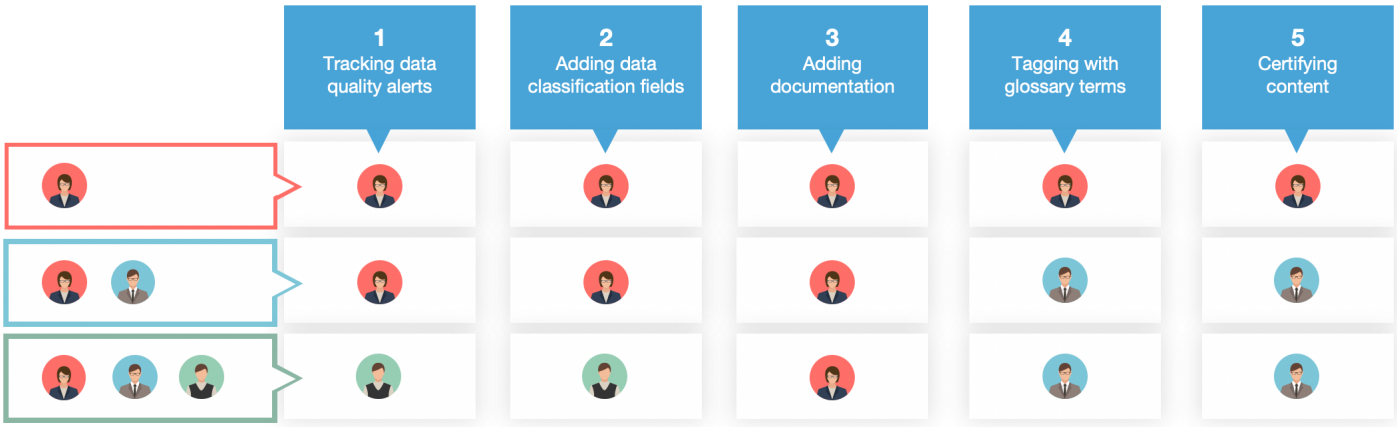
- Once the asset has been classified, use the grid to determine which roles should be involved in the governance workflow.



With the above approach, those assets with high business impact as well as those that are consumed broadly are subjected to a rigorous review process that involves the Business Owner as well as the Data Steward. Assets with low impact and/or reach can be certified directly by the BI Analyst who deploys the report. This approach ensures that the BI governance process is "right-sized" to that asset that is being governed.

Certification Process by Role

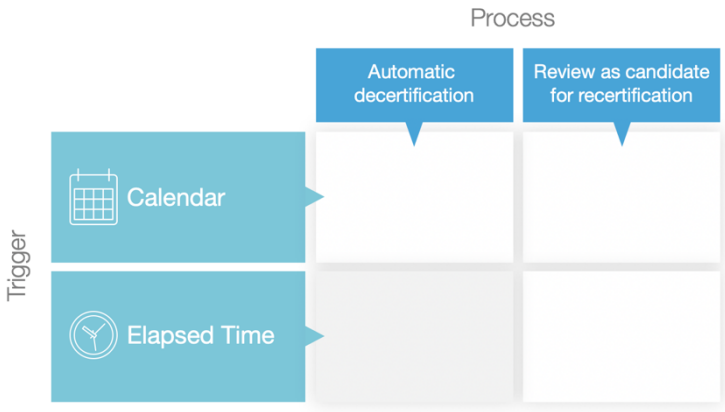
Once the appropriate roles have been identified and defined, the next step in establishing a governance framework is to map out the steps in the certification process and assign responsibilities for each step.



In the example shown above, there are 5 distinct steps in the certification process and each step is mapped differently depending on whether single-party (BI Analyst), two-party (BI Analyst + Business Owner), or three-party (Business Analyst + Business Owner + Data Steward) certification is required for the asset.

Establishing a recertification process

Managing the initial certification process is only the first step for effective BI governance. It is important to also ensure that the certification status continues to be valid in the months and years following certification. For different types of content, very different steps may be required for effective certification review. In some cases, the content may need to be automatically decertified based on a calendar. In other instances, a review performed after a certain amount of elapsed time is required.

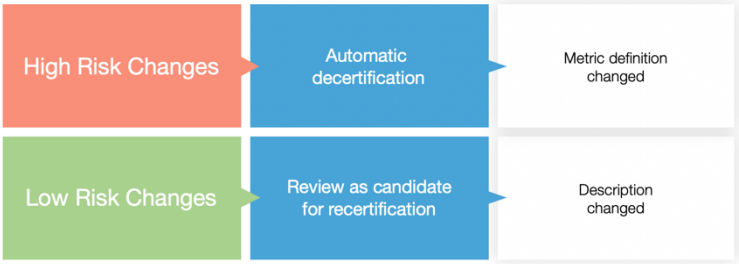


Monthly financial reporting that is subject to a rigorous closing process and sales attainment reporting that is subject to regular territory realignments are examples of reporting assets that would be subject to automated decertification and re-certification based on key calendar dates. For example, a sales attainment report may become automatically decertified at the start of each new year while the sales

operation team establishes territory alignments and quota attainment rules. Once these rules are established and approved by management, sales reports are re-certified to indicate full compliance with the new policies.

Event-Based Recertification

To ensure that the certification status of an asset continues to be relevant, it is critical to implement a process for managing changes in an asset. Depending upon the nature of a change in an asset, a very different governance action may be required. It is therefore essential to accurately classify the level of risk associated with the change in the asset.



High-Risk Changes

Changes in the rules used to pull data into a report have a high risk of impacting the certification of the asset as these types of changes can fundamentally alter the definition of metrics included in a report. For these types of changes, it may be necessary to automatically decertify the content so that it can be thoroughly reviewed and recertified.

Low-Risk Changes

Other changes that affect the metadata surrounding a report, such as the description and tagging of content, represent a lower level of risk and therefore can be handled differently. For these types of changes, simply notifying the key stakeholders involved in the certification process through governance audit reporting may be sufficient. The stakeholder can review the change, and decertify the content only if the change is deemed material to the certification criteria for the asset.

Enabling BI Governance with Technology

Technology is the final lynchpin for achieving effective BI Governance. In order to be successful, the individuals involved in governance must have tools at their disposal that allows them to adhere to the governance process with a minimal level of effort. The technology required to support this goal must span three broad areas of functionality:

Portal

A Portal is required to create a governed environment into which content can be published in a consistent fashion. The portal must allow for certification and metadata management around all enterprise analytics irrespective of which BI Tool or technology is used to generate the asset. A Portal is an essential component to BI governance as without a central publishing platform for assets, governance processes must be devised so that they can be supported in every enterprise BI environment which is an impossible undertaking given the varying capabilities of analytics tools in any large enterprise.

Workflows

Once an appropriate set of workflows have been devised and agreed upon by all stakeholders, they must be enabled via technology. Since most individuals supporting the governance effort will have many other responsibilities, effective governance necessitates that the deployed technology support workflows with minimal effort. In practice, this means that much of the automation process for publishing and certification of assets must be automated with effective management around process hand-offs between team members and publishing and review SLAs.

Compliance

Any effective governance process must be supported by technology that ensures compliance with the process. This includes reporting around metadata assignment, certification, and automated alerting that supports review and potential re-certification of assets based on elapsed time, calendar events, or changes in certified assets.

Conclusion

BI Governance initiatives must be carefully designed so that people, process, and technology work in concert to support the organization's governance goals. Focusing exclusively on data governance and ignoring the BI Assets themselves is an approach that provides an incomplete solution and is doomed to failure. Similarly, taking a "one size fits all" approach to governance cannot be successful. It is only by carefully designing governance workflows that are tailored to each asset classification and by proactively applying technology to enable and streamline the governance process, that enduring results can be achieved with BI Governance.

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