

Only what will be enforced

Anyone who read a previous piece of mine about libraries might be left with the impression that data management conferences usually have little new to say. Of course if I felt that this was true I wouldn't waste my time attending them, such conferences are great opportunities to acquire knowledge. Take last month's PNEC conference in Houston as an example. It is true that some of the sessions reiterated lessons learnt (and extensively discussed) more than ten years ago, and one presentation was so misguided that I personally felt that it subtracted from the sum of human knowledge. However, as usual the majority of the presentations provided at least some food for thought, and a number were truly outstanding.

In particular there was a gem in one of the presentations from Noah Consulting (which, I believe, should be available from their web site). The presentation was called "Making Data Governance Work at all Levels of the Organization" and was jointly written with Devon. At the bottom of slide 13 it has a bullet point that essentially says "The E&P Data Governance Council will only implement what leadership is willing to enforce".

This simple sentence hints at a whole new way to approach data governance, forget telling the users how things "should" be and then trying to automate them into submission. Start with what the executives are willing to measure and reward. Ask the senior staff what they consider to be important enough to check on and automate the reporting of **that**. We all know that if the quality of data is not being measured, it will be ignored, so focus on making metrics easily available. Of course this might also require spending some time persuading the senior staff that data, and data quality have enough impact on the overall company results to be worth paying attention to, but that is never a wasted effort.



Every E&P data manager is familiar with the exercise of trying to get users to invest the necessary time to review, validate and document their results. Some aspects of that Sisyphean task can be automated, but mostly it just requires extra time and effort from the geoscientists. That is work that is often perceived to be divorced from the "real job" of obtaining results. If managers are more focused on starting the next project rather than documenting the last one why should users behave differently? But if we start from what senior executives are willing to track, suddenly all the dynamics line up. If the published data fails to achieve the specified standard then executives ask the managers awkward questions, the managers are goaded into caring and they will set the priorities to address the shortcoming. This is surely a much better way to approach the issue.

So there are always new things to learn at these conferences, I don't know if the phrase "only implement what leadership is willing to enforce" originated with the presenters (Joseph Seila and Jim Soos) or whether they inherited it from somewhere else, but I do know that I'm going to be using it in front of a client sometime real soon.