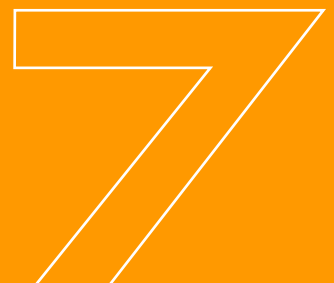


How to deliver data platforms
that empower your business
to understand, deliver and
innovate with data



Introduction

Competing with fast-moving, disruptive businesses requires a revolution in your teams' relationship with data. There needs to be a dramatic shift in culture and mindset to help make data-driven decisions, monitor their impact and realise their business and customer value.

Data platforms empower your organisation to become data-driven. They provide individuals, teams and departments with the tools, techniques and understanding to work with high volumes of high-velocity real-time data. Moving quickly and reducing time-to-value is crucial. Your business needs data literacy to understand how to engage with data and data professionals, accelerate change, and deliver return on investment.

A clear vision must inform your data platform of business and customer value. If not, it risks becoming a 'white elephant', and your competitors will continue to outpace you. Conventional tools like spreadsheets aren't fit for purpose in a data-driven organisation. A two-dimensional view of data won't allow your people to extract its value.

For the last fifty years, the approach to data in many organisations has been to collect it, structure it and store it. Whilst this makes it helpful in creating reports for a specific user group or use case, it limits opportunities to use it for other views and purposes, especially in real-time.





Your journey to being a data-driven organisation requires awareness and understanding of the tools, techniques and common language to allow it to propagate.

The majority of disruptive players have data right at their very core. They recognise that it is their most valuable asset and are adept at working with it. They have mastery of the skills, tools and mindsets required to derive maximum value from their data. They employ data scientists, analysts and engineers, of course, but their data literacy isn't limited to specialists. Likewise, your business teams need to be able to work with data like your most disruptive competitors.

Merely hiring more data specialists isn't the answer. No matter how many you hire, they will always be a bottleneck to using data to inform analysis, decisions and action. Data needs to influence every area of operation and innovation. Your journey to being a data-driven organisation requires awareness and understanding of the tools, techniques and common language to allow it to propagate. Data literacy needs to be embedded in your organisation.

Don't focus on the technology



The typical approach to data transformation is to initiate a data strategy programme, build a data warehouse, and define how data supplied to it should be structured. These are typically multi-year projects that define data models, data standards, data profiles and so on. Their objective is to make data perfect for the organisation's needs, focusing on data quality and data transformation's technical aspects.

More often than not, organisations embark on a data strategy because they have a desperate need to make a step-change in how they leverage data. The problem with focusing on technology and data quality is that it usually takes years to define and deliver. When it launches, you've made significant investments but delivered no value to the business. What's more, you're even further behind your most threatening competitors.

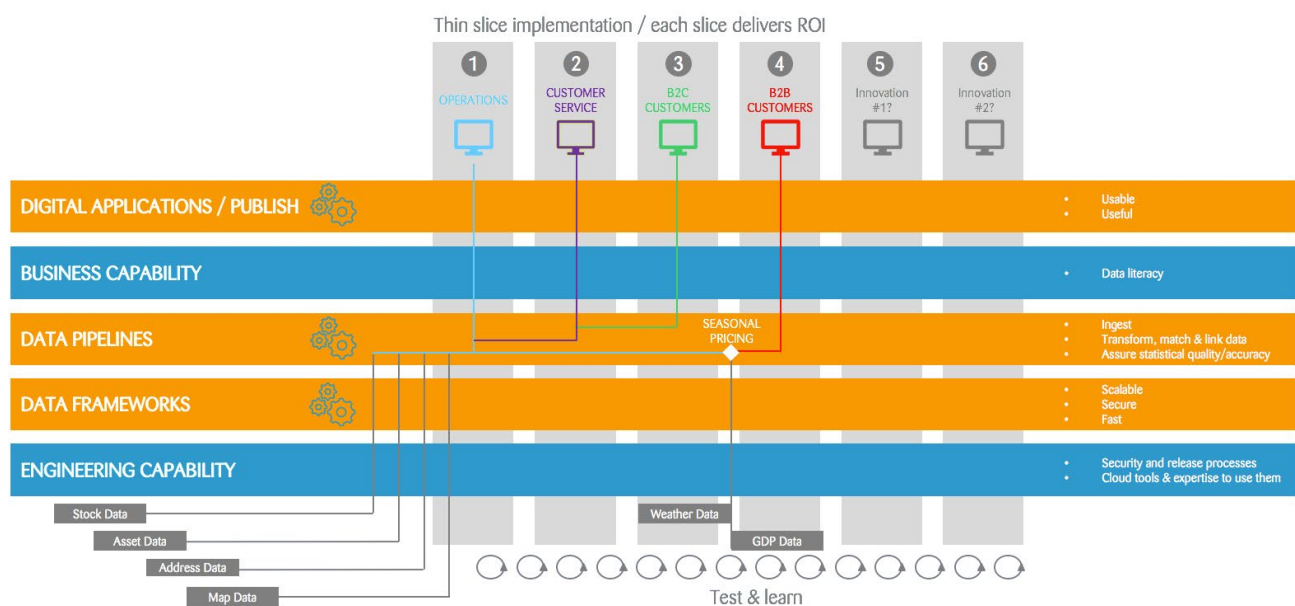


Fig 1: Incrementally build a data platform over time one 'thin slice' at a time. Each slice delivers ROI quickly and demonstrates the value of the approach.

If you want to become data-driven, you need to be clear about the value you want to create, support and scale. We help organisations take a 'thin slice' approach that cuts across the teams, departments and systems. Each slice is an area of customer value that you quickly build the data-driven capabilities around. This approach allows you to join-up data and create actionable customer events based on end-to-end value across your entire organisation. You see value in months rather than years.

Creating data literacy in your organisation

For the wider business community, data literacy matters more than specific skills. Data specialists understand data, but they don't typically have an intimate understanding of the business or customer. Working with high volumes of high-velocity data requires multi-dimensional analytics and tools that are relatively esoteric to the business user. Training the broader business audience to work at this level isn't the right approach.

What we do at Zühlke is democratise data in our client's organisations. We provide the appropriate tools and create a shared understanding of data and data concepts relevant to your business and vision. This doesn't mean trying to turn marketing or finance staff into data scientists.

It involves some up-skilling but is mainly focused on creating a dialogue between business and technical teams. We help your teams have productive conversations about data and its use so they can collaborate effectively.

When you create a common language and understanding between data specialists and business users, your organisation makes better use of data analytics. They also have more confidence in what they – and others – are doing with data. Ultimately, having a data culture helps to remove the silos from the organisation so that engineering, data and business-focused teams are looking at the entire customer value chain.

Data literate organisations allow people to stop using limiting tools like spreadsheets so they can benefit from access to and understanding of richer data.

Working with a data platform

A data platform helps make the data that flows around your organisation (or your ecosystem) accessible to those who can make decisions and create value with it. Data from your APIs and pipelines are ingested in raw, real-time, unstructured form. Data specialists can use the raw data, but increasing framing and modelling make it more accessible to business users. This takes some time, of course. However, staff who can work with SQL (for example) can quickly access the 'canonical' data.

When preparation, sorting and matching are applied, rich data can be made accessible to business teams. The level of specific, technical data expertise required to work with the modelled data is considerably reduced. Data literate organisations allow people to stop using limiting tools like spreadsheets so they can benefit from access to and understanding of richer data.

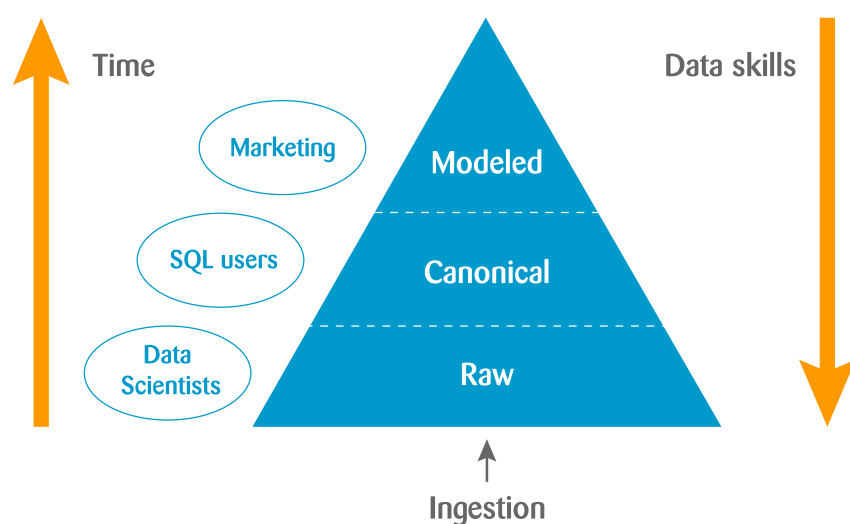


Fig 2: Spreadsheets are limiting. Give people a way to understand richer data that better represents the business and customer reality.

Leadership has a vital role
to play in the successful
delivery and adoption of
data platforms.

The process demands a culture change to encourage business users to embrace data literacy and focus everyone on customer and business value at every level.

1

Explicitly link the data platform with how the company delivers customer value and revenue.

This must be the primary focus, not technology, so that outcomes are the driving force behind the transformation.

2

Take a 'thin slice' approach.

Start supporting data-driven analysis, decision-making and action in months, not years. Identify specific value points with the potential to deliver returns.

3

Build the bare minimum required to deliver value and return on investment.

Think and act like a disruptor, especially when it comes to architecture.

Zühlke: helping to create data-literate organisations

Zühlke is a global innovation service provider, delivering new business models, through engineering change at scale. We develop services and products, from initial vision through to deployment, production and operation.

We deliver benefit by driving increased profit through innovation, saving you money through automation or moving you to the cloud. We offer a range of services and approaches that address your challenges, including delivery, data engineering and data science, changing your data culture from Excel to using controlled, multi-dimensional data environments. We help with data orchestration, pipelines and techniques to help your organisation create the feedback loops and data flow to support AI, machine learning and deep learning initiatives.

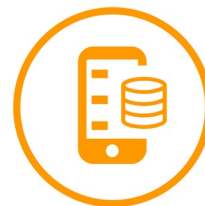
Our teams are focused on outcomes before technology, prioritising action and delivery over strategising. Successful data transformation is founded on moving quickly,



Data
pipeline



Data
platform



Data-driven
mobile apps



Data-driven
companies

If you would like to learn more about deploying data platforms to power decision-making, action and innovation, let's talk.

Further information

To learn more about data ecosystems, please contact Dan Klein at Zühlke.

Dan is a highly skilled and respected senior director with board-level experience, an energetic, pragmatic people manager – focused on results. An experienced project manager with a demonstrated focus and ability to deliver major products to market on schedule and on budget. Skilled at restructuring organisations to meet market demands and stakeholder expectations.



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