

: What role does a data steward have in providing decision support?

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All varieties of data-driven decision support, whether an integrated application, a business intelligence system, or an analytical application, use one or more data sources "owned" by one or more business units. Many decision support special studies also involve analysis of data. A data steward controls access to and use of specific data, and insures the accuracy and integrity of that data. The role of the data steward in decision support is that of a guarantor and an access controller. If each data steward is performing his/her job satisfactorily, then managers can rely on the data used for data-driven decision support. This role is important.

In large organizations, a data steward is responsible for the accuracy and integrity of specified data elements and tables. Complex, multi-unit organizations have multiple data stewards. Each data steward assists with data governance and with reviewing definitions of data for a specific data domain. In general, a steward takes responsibility for another's property. We have begun to recognize that data is valuable property of an organization. So a data steward is a surrogate owner of specific data.

Because often multiple data stewards are involved in controlling data that can and may be used for decision support, the control of data can become a political issue. Access to data can be restricted or limited for political as well as for legitimate reasons of confidentiality and privacy. In general, data should be available for any legitimate decision support use, dissemination of results can be limited.

The following are major tasks of a data steward:

1. maintaining data confidentiality
2. monitoring processes for granting system access and privileges
3. providing and tracking any training related to data usage

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4. reviewing and approving individual requests for data and the use of requested data
5. participating in the management of shared data
6. checking and helping maintain user identity data

What does Data Steward mean? According to Techopedia, "A data steward is a job role that involves planning, implementing and managing the sourcing, use and maintenance of data assets in an organization. Data stewards enable an organization to take control and govern all the types and forms of data and their associated libraries or repositories."

Searchdatamanagement.techtarget.com further explains "Data stewardship is the management and oversight of corporate data by designated personnel who typically don't "own" the data but are responsible for tasks such as developing common data definitions and identifying data quality issues. Data stewards also function in an active role to carry out data usage and security policies as determined through enterprise data governance initiatives. Corporations use data stewardship programs as part of overall data lifecycle management efforts and to help accomplish data quality improvement projects."

Finally, Wolter and Haselden (2006) explain that data stewards "should be the people with the knowledge of the current source data and the ability to determine how to transform the source into the master-data format. In general, stewards should be appointed from the owners of each master-data source, the architects responsible for the MDM systems, and representatives from the business users of the master data."

References

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