A playbook for
[Chief Data Officers]

Aligning data strategy with business goals

Huwise

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Chief Data Officers (CDOs) are at the forefront of maximizing how businesses use and benefit from their growing volumes of data. They are essential to creating the infrastructure and environment to build a data-centric business, with information shared across the organization and beyond to support company objectives.

Yet, despite the growth in the number of CDOs, they face a complex set of challenges to deliver on corporate goals. Often, they have to transform internal data stacks, put in place robust governance processes and create a data culture, all while involving the entire organization and breaking down silos, within a limited timeframe. It is not surprising that just 51% of organizations believe that the CDO role is well-established and successful in their business, according to the [2024 Wavestone Data and AI Leadership Executive Survey.](#)

Given these challenges, how can CDOs deliver results and align company data strategy with business goals? To help, this playbook outlines five areas to focus on in order to drive results, based on the experiences of real-life CDOs.

> *"I think we need to ask ourselves questions as early as possible: what do we want to do with our data and how do we use it to deliver value?"*
>
> **CDO, insurance**

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Demonstrate how your [data strategy] delivers business value

As the custodian of an organization's data, the CDO role covers both reactive, often technical activities (managing data, keeping it secure, ensuring compliance), and proactive initiatives that harness data to drive business ROI. Balancing these two sides of the job is not easy, particularly given that often people across the organization are unclear on what the role of the CDO is, or how they deliver value.

All of this can undermine CDOs and contribute to short tenures. While putting in place processes and technology to collect, organize and share data can take time, it is vital that CDOs understand what the organization's business objectives are, and work with senior management to support them. They need to move from reacting to events to scaling data use.

This requires close collaboration with different departments, listening to their needs and pain-points, and co-creating solutions that will deliver ROI for them and the wider business, supported by clear, relevant metrics. Given the range of opportunities, and the sheer volume of available data, CDOs have to prioritize, focusing on use cases with the strongest ROI or closest alignment with other business priorities, such as being able to deploy AI models or creating new revenue streams.

Data marketplaces significantly contribute to linking data and business strategies.

Data marketplaces provide easy, self-service access to relevant data to solve specific challenges, while involving the wider organization. They enable CDOs to highlight successful use cases, encouraging everyone to become involved in data projects, and putting data at the heart of delivering business strategy.

"We need to identify projects where data serves the business and increases market share or competitive advantage. As long as this ROI driver is not found, driving data-centricity remains complicated."

CDO, financial services

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Optimize your [data stack] to enable data sharing

Despite significant investment in data management technology, data is still often not easily available to the wider organization, meaning it is solely used by experts. This lack of usability and business value leads many companies to see data programs (and the work of the CDO) as a cost center, rather than a business driver.

A particular technology issue is that while many companies have created an inventory of their data assets, this is stored in a traditional, static data catalog solution. These tools provide lists of data, but don't make it accessible and are difficult to use by non-technical experts.

Essentially, this means that while data may be collected, cleansed, and processed, the overall data stack doesn't address the "last mile" issue of making it seamlessly available to everyone in the organization, without requiring technical skills or support.

CDOs therefore need to optimize the value generated from their data by introducing effective, intuitive data marketplaces.

Data marketplaces centralize all available data, making it easily discoverable and shareable and encouraging secure, self-service reuse at scale. Built to give the same user experience as an e-commerce website, they go beyond static data catalogs by putting data in the hands of those that need it. With data assets available in multiple formats, from raw data to visualizations such as dashboards and maps, everyone is able to benefit from relevant data, helping create a data-centric organization. From the CDO perspective this industrializes data sharing, increases efficiency, maximizes value and demonstrates ROI on their programs.

"There are silos because very often we find the equation 'one job = one tool = one database'. To overcome silos, you need to set up exchanges and organize a value chain, encourage inter-departmental synergies and ensure that projects deliver results."

CDO, energy sector

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Maximize [the efficiency] of your teams

Data teams face growing workloads, with increasing volumes of data to manage, a greater range of tools to integrate and use, and rising demands from the business to deliver benefits, especially as organizations look to embrace AI.

CDOs typically have small teams and can find recruiting the right skills difficult due to demand outstripping supply.

[53%]
of CDOs surveyed by AWS said that they had insufficient resources to achieve their goals.

All of this means that CDOs need to maximize the efficiency of their teams and involve the wider business in data programs. This means moving away from the traditional, time-consuming model of data analysts creating bespoke reports for business users to a more self-service approach, with users able to confidently find, access and use data themselves, without requiring support. Data marketplaces with built-in visualization tools empower users to interact with data themselves, freeing up data experts' time to spend on more proactive, strategic work.

It is also essential for efficiency that the tools that data teams work with are intuitive and easy to use, with automation and integration to speed up the creation of data pipelines and the publication of new data assets. CDOs should therefore focus on data marketplaces that include no-code/low code options to create visualizations, reducing the need for training or specialist design skills, as well as featuring straightforward usage and lineage monitoring and administration, either directly or by connecting to the tools they use in their working lives.

"We need tools that are easy to use for people who are just starting out and much more complex tools for those who are experts. It's important to make things grow gradually. We need to have a vision and a roadmap, supported by top management with sufficient budgets."

CDO, financial services

4 Deliver improved, more [effective governance]

Data governance is a key CDO responsibility, and often the need to ensure processes are secure and compliant and that data is protected is the initial trigger to creating the role. Over half (51%) of CDOs surveyed by MIT Sloan listed establishing clear and effective data governance as a priority.

[45%]

of CDOs consider data governance as their top concern.

However, while important, this reactive, policing side of data governance is just part of the job. Data governance should be seen as a proactive business enabler, ensuring that data is consistent, accurate and trustworthy as well as compliant. This will break down silos and barriers to data sharing and ensure that information is used widely across the organization, maximizing its value.

To achieve success, CDOs should start by involving senior management and departmental heads, outlining the business benefits of data governance and its foundational role in increasing data use. Then involve all data owners, educate and train employees and create a governance framework, build rules and processes (including a common data vocabulary), and manage on an ongoing basis.

Successful, proactive data governance requires a focus on enablement – making it easy for people to do the right thing with data. A data marketplace effectively supports this by providing secure, controlled access to consistent, clearly described and well-governed data. By creating a single source of truth, it removes duplicate or out of date information, and limits access to specific data assets to authorized employees, enforcing governance frameworks while maximizing data sharing and reuse.

"On the executive side, they have not always fully understood what the role of the CDO is and the importance of data governance, which is still something abstract to them."

CDO, energy sector

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Put data in the hands of all [business teams]

CDOs are charged with increasing the ROI from the organization's data. That means they need to go beyond collecting and cataloging it to making information easily available to everyone in the organization, not just data experts. Data needs to be easily discoverable, and users must be sure that the data they are accessing is reliable, high-quality and clearly explained, and is available in the right format for their needs. Employees also have to be confident consumers of data – willing to use data in their working lives to support better decision-making, greater efficiency and increased productivity.

CDOs need to go beyond collecting and cataloging data to making it easily available to everyone in the organization, not just data experts.

Achieving this requires CDOs to focus on two areas. First, they have to build a data culture throughout the organization, based on tailored training, ongoing communication, effective change management and showcasing successes. This should create data literacy by changing mindsets, forming and communicating a common language for data and developing relevant skills.

Secondly, this new data culture has to go hand in hand with wider data availability through a centralized, secure, self-service data marketplace. This seamlessly links every employee with relevant data assets, enabling them to discover and reuse information, spreading a data-centric culture across the organization. The data marketplace has to be intuitive and easy to use, providing data in a variety of ways to meet different needs and skill levels, such as through engaging visualizations, as well as via APIs so users can import it directly into their familiar, day-to-day business tools.

"It is important for employees to be able to find the right data on their own in order to meet their needs. The aim should be to provide employees with data that is referenced, that we are sure is the right data and that can be used confidently."

CDO, energy sector

Delivering business success through data marketplaces

Organizations across all sectors now operate in a fast-moving, volatile, digital-first world where data is the key resource for success. Everyone in the business needs to be able to harness data to become more efficient, agile and innovative, while managing risk, security and compliance.

This imperative to maximize the use of data is driving the rise of the Chief Data Officer role. However, achieving success is not straightforward given the complexity of the job, the need to balance technical and business skills, and the lack of data maturity within many companies.

As this playbook explains, to drive long-term benefits CDOs need to take a proactive approach built on business objectives, focusing on where data can deliver on specific goals, solving business pain points on an individual, departmental and corporate level, creating a data culture, and demonstrating ROI on data investment.

Data marketplaces are at the heart of this approach, making information part of everyone's working lives, building effective, data-centric businesses that are equipped to meet current and future organizational challenges.

Built on over fourteen years experience working with data leaders across the globe, Huwise's intuitive data product marketplace solution enables CDOs to transform their operations and deliver on corporate objectives by industrializing access to data assets at scale across the business and beyond, through an e-commerce marketplace-style experience, maximizing reuse, empowering users, and increasing efficiency, innovation and value.

Huwise

Huwise helps data leaders transform their data into a source of knowledge, innovation, and performance.

We design a SaaS data product marketplace solution tailored to business teams and non-expert users, making data accessible, actionable, and value-generating. With Huwise, organizations provide employees and partners with secure, self-service access to their data products through a single platform.

In just a few weeks, we can deploy any type of data product marketplace, whether internal or external.

Today, more than 350 clients across 25 countries rely on Huwise to accelerate their data initiatives, with over 3,000 platforms already deployed worldwide. Backed by 14 years of expertise in data management, we deliver tailored support to address the concrete use cases of our clients.

Data made yours.

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