

The Unissant logo is contained within a light blue circular node. The word "Unissant" is written in a dark blue, sans-serif font, with a small yellow dot above the letter 'i'.

Unissant™

Unissant White Paper Series



Developing & Implementing a Meta-Data Strategy



Developing and Implementing a Meta-data Strategy

Developing and implementing a meta-data strategy has always been a tough proposition, as most of the senior management do not understand the importance of the subject. Let alone meta-data many IS community members don't even understand the importance of data.

Meta-data in most simple terms means "structured data about data" or "data that describes something (that may or may not itself be data)". Examples of meta data include: definition of the data element, business names of the element, systems abbreviations for that element, the data type and size of the element, source location, data steward, alternate alias, alternate spelling etc. In other terms, meta-data is any information used to aid identification, description, characteristics, location of, access to, data elements and information.

So the question is, why is meta-data important? Meta-data serves as a bonding agent that ties various tools and technologies together at an enterprise level. A sound meta-data strategy ensures seamless sharing, exchange and integration of tools and repositories. Developing a meta-data strategy for an enterprise requires co-operation from both technical and business area members in an enterprise. Technical meta-data provides the description of the data in an IT infrastructure where as business meta-data defines where the data came from, who owns it and how it gets transformed.

To have an effective meta-data strategy some essential building blocks include:

- Identify the technical members most knowledgeable about the data
- Identify the business area members most knowledgeable about the business data and business processes
- Have business users identify the data stewards and data advocates for data and processes
- Determine sources of record for data within an enterprise
- Determine the usage of meta-data
- Identify all sources of meta-data including data models, rose models, CASE tools, silo repositories, data dictionaries, glossaries, third party dictionaries, business rules, data mapping documents, business process mappings, data flow diagrams, corporate abbreviations, excel spreadsheets, catalogs etc.
- Determine the overall architecture for meta-data storage. A meta-data storage architecture defines an organizations overall strategy for meta-data storage and retrieval of meta-data. A centralized repository pulls in all the meta-data in one location, a distributed architecture creates many small focused repositories and a hybrid architecture combines the two for best results.
- Determine integration points and processes necessary to consolidate and integrate the meta-data
- Determine meta-data reporting and dissemination strategies
- Evaluate full-life cycle meta-data management tools
- Standardize and document meta-data sourcing processes
- Determine how to keep the meta-data up-to-date. This has always been a challenge in organizations. It is important to keep the meta-data refreshed as obsolete or stale meta-data can result in wrong decision making.
- Standardize and document the meta-data change management process and procedures
- Define meta-data security needs

- Define components of the meta model
- Identify issues and constraints
- Form a meta-data steering committee
- Discuss and confirm the meta-data management strategy with the management

Remember an enterprise meta-data solution cannot be done with a big bang approach. The meta-data solution project needs to be divided into smaller more manageable chunks. An advantage of delivering a meta-data solution in a phased approach is an early buy-in from the business areas and project champions.

In conclusion, development and implementation of a Meta data Strategy enables an organization to begin to measure the value of the information assets under their control.

About Unissant

Unissant is an advanced data analytics and business transformation services provider with expertise in healthcare and health IT, finance, national security, and energy. The company delivers innovative solutions to assist government agencies and private sector businesses in tackling their biggest challenges. Founded in 2006, Unissant is a prime contractor on various government vehicles such as CIO-SP3, GSA PSS, GSA HealthIT SIN, and GSA 8(a) STARS II and is a CMMI Level 3, ISO 9001 & 27001 certified company headquartered in Herndon, Virginia with a satellite office in San Antonio, Texas. In March 2017, Unissant received the Government Project of the Year award by Small and Emerging Contractors Advisory Forum (SECAF). Unissant has experience with implementing machine learning solutions and full stack implementation on cloud. Unissant is a Select Consulting Partner Public Sector and is leveraging this relationship with AWS to strengthen our ability to support our customers in their Digital Transformation journey. We are already supporting several of our customers in the public sector with their Machine Learning implementations, cloud adoption strategy and implementation.

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