

Case Study: Implementing Data Governance at Vanquis Banking Group

Prepared by Bright Lights Nov 23.

Background

Vanquis Banking Group, previously known as Provident Financial Group, is a financial institution that specialises in helping individuals with limited credit access build their credit records. Garry Manser, the Head of Data Governance at Vanquis Banking Group, has a rich background in Data Governance, spanning financial services and consultancy.

Garry joined Vanquis with a clear mission – to address specific Data Governance challenges such as records retention and the need for enhanced data controls in their outdated systems.

Garry recognized the importance of broadening the Data Governance approach and implemented a comprehensive framework. In DAMA's webinar, '[All Things Data Governance](#)', Garry shared insights and experiences from his career, shedding light on the strategies and principles employed by the company to transform its data management approach.

This case study delves into the journey of Vanquis Banking Group in its pursuit of implementing a Data Governance framework as well as some of the points that should be considered to ensure that the data in an organisation is fit for purpose.

The Data Governance Framework

Effective Data Governance principles, policies and operating models form the critical foundations for an organisation's capability to manage, leverage and improve its data assets. These are necessary to enable the organisation to optimise data as an asset and create a strong data foundation, by implementing a shared set of roles, processes, responsibilities and vocabulary around the purpose and value of data.

A Data Governance framework establishes roles and responsibilities for the participants in the organisation. These participants include senior stakeholders, Data Governance bodies (Data Owners Council, Data Stewards Forum and working groups where required) as well as Data Owners, Data Stewards and Data Consumers at the organisation.

Vanquis introduced a straightforward yet effective Data Governance framework, symbolised as a wheel. This framework was developed to cover the scope of the Data Governance programme, whilst also supporting Data Protection and Privacy as well as Information Security.



Image 1: Vanquis Banking Group's Data Governance Framework

The framework also introduced the concept of 'Data Governance by Design' at Vanquis; the consideration of Data Governance right from the beginning of projects, similar to GDPR's privacy by design principle. Projects are required to identify data owners and stewards in their initial stages before they get too far down the line to ensure Data Governance remains a priority throughout the lifecycle.

Policies and Standards - Implementing the Framework

Getting the framework in place didn't begin with data policies, but rather with the more important first step: gaining buy-in from the organisation. The framework served as a guiding document that outlined what the company aimed to achieve in terms of Data Governance to get the necessary people invested in the potential outcomes. The framework was then gradually transformed into data policies, allowing for more detailed requirements to be introduced.

"Data Governance is all about people. It's not about tools. It's not about rules. It's about people"

- Garry Manser

In the beginning, it was important to start simple and avoid overcommitting. Building Data Governance documents is time-consuming and can be subject to constant revisions and approvals. Prioritising what is important and most relevant to an organisation will help with gaining buy-in and avoid overwhelming the people you need on your side.

For Vanquis, they prioritised data quality, master and reference data and records retention for where they identified key data - the data used most often in the organisation and that which has the biggest impact on its operations.

Data Quality and Cleansing

Data quality dimensions describe a measurable characteristic of data. The standards, expectations, and requirements that are important to your business processes are expressed as characteristics or dimensions of the data. They can help you assess where your data is compared to where you want it to be. For example, Vanquis utilises the following dimensions:

1. Accuracy: Ensuring data matches real-world objects.
2. Completeness: Having necessary data when needed.
3. Validity: Checking data against specific business rules.
4. Consistency: Maintaining data quality across systems.
5. Uniqueness: Eliminating duplicate records.
6. Timeliness: Ensuring data is up-to-date and relevant.
7. Volumetricity: Confirming that the data received aligns with expectations.

Garry encouraged considering reporting data quality as defects rather than focusing on positive metrics, for example, recording how incomplete data is rather than how complete it is. Reporting defects can motivate teams to improve data quality rather than leading to them becoming complacent.

Consequently, Vanquis' data quality standard focuses on data remediation; root causes of data quality issues are investigated and addressed instead of skipping straight to data cleansing.

Master and Reference Data Management

Master data is the data an organisation needs to run its business, in Vanquis' case, it's their customer data, transactional data and supplier data. Master data of this nature should come from a single "golden source" to avoid inconsistencies and discrepancies, so it is important to have reference data management processes in place.

Cataloguing and standardising reference data, such as country codes, is vital for maintaining data integrity.

“Data is like water. It is valuable, it needs to be clean and available to everyone.”

- Felix Van de Maele, CEO, Collibra

Strategy

Identify and align the Data Governance team's strategy with the organisation's data strategy and put a roadmap in place for how you are going to implement the actions and responsibilities needed to get you from where you are now to where you want to be. It is essential to understand where Data Governance fits into the company's overall goals and vision since high-quality data can help an organisation reach its goals faster.

Data Roles

To ensure Data Governance success, there are four key roles:

1. **Data Stewards:** The most critical individuals responsible for overseeing Data Governance across the business. They manage various aspects, including the Business Glossary, Data Dictionary, data access, and records retention.
2. **Data Owners:** These individuals are accountable for data, with the authority to make financial decisions related to data issues.
3. **Data Consumers:** These individuals use data within their roles and are responsible for maintaining its quality and accuracy.
4. **Technical Custodians:** Responsible for managing the technical infrastructure supporting data.

Data Access

Data access management, a crucial aspect of Data Governance, focuses on controlling who has access to what data, when, and for what purpose - that access should be authorised by a Data Steward.

Vanquis highlights the importance of identifying and preventing "toxic combinations" - combinations of datasets that could lead to the discovery of information that an individual shouldn't have and therefore potential data misuse. This should be considered in multiple areas, such as how you share data with analysts, or how you create profiles for new team members which could utilise Vanquis' method of role-based access.

Metadata Management - Building Data Governance Tools

Metadata is data about data and its management consists of your organisation's best-practice processes and technologies that allow you to manage the data about your data. By helping you to understand the relationships between different pieces of data, it

allows users - business and technical - to search for, understand and access the data they need to do their jobs.

There are three fundamental Data Governance tools for metadata management:

1. Data Dictionary: This document describes data, including its location, properties, and data types.
2. Business Glossary: A business-centric document that translates technical terms into plain language, helping non-technical users understand the data vital to an organisation.
3. Data Catalogue: A comprehensive inventory of data assets, showing what data is available, its meaning, and any restrictions as well as who holds the relevant data roles. This tool is key for empowering data users and becoming a data-driven organisation.

Building these tools takes time, but they are fundamental to harmonious collaboration across the business and supporting your data efforts beyond the framework.

Data Retention

Data retention defines the policies of data and records management for meeting legal and business data requirements regarding what data should be stored or archived, where that should happen, and for exactly how long. Organisations should manage documents and versions effectively to avoid data clutter; ensure data quality and compliance and maintain standardisation of version control between team members.

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Vanquis Banking Group's journey in implementing Data Governance showcases the importance of a well-defined framework, strategic alignment, and a people-centric approach to achieve data management excellence. By focusing on people, tools, and strategies, organisations can ensure that their data is fit for purpose, compliant with regulations, and effectively used to achieve their goals.

This case study provides valuable insights for organisations looking to enhance their data governance practices and ensure that their data is fit for its intended purpose.