

MAKING A BUSINESS CASE FOR ENTERPRISE DATA MANAGEMENT



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INTRODUCTION

This whitepaper attempts to identify the main areas within an asset management firm (such as investment managers, private wealth managers, asset owners and investment arms of insurance companies) that will benefit from investment in an Enterprise Data Management or EDM platform. Most of the areas under consideration broadly fit in to the areas of cost savings and operational efficiency, future revenue opportunities or have more cultural or structural benefits to the organisation including the support of other key operational disciplines.

The premise here is that any business case supporting investment into an EDM platform should not be limited to a few narrow areas around the data processing itself but should consider the far-reaching impact that effective data management solutions can bring to the organisation.

This whitepaper offers up a check list of areas across the organisation's operations which will directly or indirectly benefit from the investment of an EDM solution to manage data processes and achieve higher levels of data governance.

COST SAVINGS

An effective EDM platform can greatly assist an organisation to achieve cost savings. The potential cost saving, when fully analysed, is most likely more than you would expect. One approach is to survey the operational and data management staff within the firm and record their time allocation to certain core data management tasks and how much time could be saved by improving each of the processes in which they are involved.

Even taking a conservative approach, it should reveal that the potential savings are substantial. To put in to perspective, each 40 hours saved across the organisation on any of the standard EDM tasks (i.e. ingest, validate, master and distribute data) is equivalent to the cost of an FTE and that is likely to be in the region of \$120,000 to \$150,000 p.a. In no time the investment spend in EDM technology looks very cost effective, even trivial, compared to the costs saved.

An EDM platform will help centralise and automate most data management tasks. Can you imagine adding 20% efficiency to anyone who handles data within the organisation?

Real life Example: A mid-tier, asset owner firm that implemented exception management based data quality processing (a component of a modern EDM solution) over daily security prices saved up to six hours a day in capture, investigation and resolution of price issues thereby paying for their data management system on the time savings across just one data set. Subsequently they applied their new data quality processing capabilities across all their market, reference and transactional datasets.

OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY SAVINGS

This is a topic with a large potential for cost savings. Many data management tasks in the data lifecycle, from initial ingestion to downstream consumption, can be automated and monitored for exceptions, freeing up operational and data management staff to focus on more valuable and rewarding tasks. Key examples include:

DATA QUALITY CHECKING

Data quality checking is often carried out in silos and with a large contingent of people across the various processing areas within the organisation. In many cases it is done manually and often duplicated across different areas. This includes reconciliations, whether they be day on day, or across systems. Data quality checking should be systemised and automated, ensuring that only appropriate exceptions are raised and allocated to relevant staff for action.

REDUCTION IN MANUAL DATA HANDLING/MANIPULATION

This can include any time spent manually moving, manipulating, aggregating data, or manually processing data.

LOWER COST OF REWORK

Any time a business user, or even worse a client, is the first person to find a data problem is expensive. Potentially requiring rework from first principles of data sourcing (external data vendor or perhaps key stroking) all the way back through the data chain. A small error can take many man hours or even days to resolve.

Taking the example of a published Unit Pricing error. This can cost many thousands of dollars in rework costs, not only within the Investment Management domain, but also across the Unit Registry/ Administration domains if the price was used in unit allocation calculations. Not to mention potential loss of reputation.

Finding it and fixing it as early as possible in the data lifecycle saves time and money.

SPEED AND CAPABILITY OF ERROR REPORTING

Keeping with the theme of automation and operational efficiency, a review of how error reporting impacts the Business as Usual (BAU) process is a key element of any data process review. Imagine a scenario where the organisation receives its daily custodian files at 2 a.m. in the morning. An EDM platform should be capable of automatically identifying most of the standard data errors (for example, perhaps a position does not have a matching security). Ideally, the EDM platform recognises the error and automatically emails the Custodian/Service Provider with the breach. The Custodian/Service Provider fixes the issue, resends and the data is ready before the operations team starts their normal business day. Naturally, this automation of error reporting can span internally, ensuring that the team only spends time on validated data. Instead of having a group of staff "twiddling thumbs" during the day waiting on data, or working on incorrect data, they can concentrate on valid data only.

MORE AUTOMATED BUSINESS REPORTING

This follows on from the last point, but time efficiencies can be gained by understanding the status of the key data processes and when they are complete. A good EDM platform will either automate the production and distribution of reports once data is ready or, through using data management status dashboards, inform the business that their data is ready for manual reporting or enquiry.

AUTOMATION/ROBOTICS

Whilst the term “robotics” brings about connotations of androids and mechanical creatures, having a “bots” capability refers to the ability to create automated and linked processes or “bots”. An EDM platform should support an automation or event driven architecture which helps maximise process efficiency. For example, the likely start of a data process would be triggered by a data event (file arrival, data change), a schedule or in fact another bot. Being able to orchestrate each of these processes, including error conditions, stage gating of events and fork logic can greatly reduce user time and cost and therefore help to ensure that correct data is available to users at the earliest possible time.

DATA TAKE ONS/DATA MIGRATIONS

A large portion of many organisations’ costs are taken up with “data migration” type tasks. They are typically done in an ad-hoc manner by whatever tools are available at the time. Service organisations such as Custodians do have more “tried and tested” methods of doing this, but that is not to say that they do it as efficiently as possible. This could include any of these scenarios:

- Custodian taking on a new client
- A client changing custodian
- Mergers
- Fund reconstructions

Some of these exercises can cost thousands, if not hundreds of thousands of dollars. An EDM platform will reduce data migration costs significantly.

CLOUD ENABLEMENT

CLOUD ADOPTION

Whilst the infrastructure and software costs described later in this paper can apply in-house, they are also applicable when that Data Management capability is Cloud enabled. In fact, taking advantage of the cost saving inherent in Cloud computing is simplified significantly if the organisation has a core EDM solution that is Cloud enabled.

CLOUD MIGRATION

In addition to Cloud Adoption, the less “moving parts” in the data management platform, the easier and more cost effective a cloud migration exercise becomes. In simple terms, improving the operational efficiency of the data architecture through use of an EDM solution will ensure that any future migration to the Cloud can be achieved easily and will yield the level of savings that were envisaged through such a migration.

Real life Example: A large investment management organisation currently has CDSL’s EDM platform “on premise”. Under a new target state, they wish to migrate to the Cloud. As the EDM platform supports Cloud adoption, the migration is a relatively straight forward “lift and drop” exercise.

FINANCIAL PENALTY SAVINGS

This can take two distinct forms, depending on which side of the client/service relationship the organisation sits and is related to the provision of penalties applied on service level agreements (SLAs). These are common between Custodians/Service Providers and Fund Managers but may exist elsewhere and relate to vendor accountability.

SLA PENALTIES

If the Custodian/Service Provider has optimised its efficiency, then hopefully the chance of an SLA breach is reduced. From the Custodian/Service Provider perspective, an EDM system should not only help ensure timely data delivery, it should also be automating the recording of all data deliveries against contractual SLAs.

Many Custodians will employ individuals or teams to specifically work on initiatives to reduce or eradicate SLA breaches. Examples from within the industry have shown that some organisations have saved hundreds of thousands of dollars annually, as well as yielding many other benefits.

SLA REBATES

Taking the client standpoint in the Client/Service Provider relationship, an EDM solution will help the Fund Manager understand if their Service Provider is meeting their SLAs and if they are entitled to penalty-based rebates on their late and/or inaccurate deliveries.

Even if specified penalties are not in place, there is still the opportunity to have full understanding, backed up by facts, of delivery history. This can be important come negotiation time and will help provide a much more compelling argument than small sample/anecdotal evidence. It can save (or make) money at the bargaining table.

MARKET DATA COSTS SAVINGS

An EDM platform can significantly reduce market data costs. A core function of an EDM solution is its ability to perform Master Data Management functions over key, multi sourced data sets. The best EDM solutions will provide a higher level of analysis over the MDM models with the potential to model more efficient, accurate and cheaper options for consideration.

MASTER DATA MANAGEMENT AND DATA PROVIDER ANALYSIS

Particularly in a multi supplier environment, the EDM platform can help review and compare the value of each data provider.

A Master Data Management function within the EDM can determine, via provenance information, how much the provider is contributing to the organisation's mastered data sets and thereby ensure that the organisation pays only for the data that it needs and uses.

The option of building competing MDM models can also help to fine tune the mastering logic and determine the impact of removing or changing a data supplier. Traditionally, this exercise has taken a long time and is difficult to set up without a good level of modelling capability, so many organisations simply do not bother and continue to live with redundant data feeds (and costs).

Dependant on the market data licensing arrangements, it is possible to request (and be charged for) the same data multiple times. This is subject to the licence structure, technical infrastructure, and efficiency of requests. By systemising the market data licence into a cost sheet, it is possible to analyse where market data costs are occurring and use that information to fine tune data requests to minimise costs.

DEVELOPMENT EFFICIENCY

Some organisations hesitate to implement changes to their data processes as the impact of even small changes, such as adding/changing data attributes, can cause significant impact to downstream integration points which are not always obvious from the outset. All/any changes should also be considered from a Governance perspective highlighting the close links between EDM and Data Governance.

QUICK IMPACT ANALYSIS

Analysing and understanding what needs to be changed (and tested) is often time consuming, expensive and beset with risk if the full impact cannot be seen. The best EDM platforms can provide much of this information quickly and completely. Hence, the cost of analysis as well as the risk of getting it wrong are both reduced substantially.

REDUCTION OF ONGOING DEVELOPMENT COSTS

A good EDM platform will pay for itself when it comes to implementing key structural changes to the data processes and architecture. For example, a custodian transition project will normally be a large development undertaking and will involve changes in data and format across the whole architecture. This can be significantly de-risked if the integration points are all contained within a centralized EDM.

If you have a distribution hub/operational data store that is already Custodian agnostic outbound, then everything downstream of that hub does not need to be changed when the organisation changes custodian. This development efficiency has proven to be extremely cost effective as well as saving time and reducing risk.

Real life example: A mid-tier investment manager had invested in data hub technology for the distribution of mastered data to consuming systems but subsequently identified a need to enhance its data mastering logic around security data. At the same time, it selected a new Custodian/Service Provider. By selecting a component based EDM solution it could re develop the MDM logic and change Service Provider with no impact on the data distribution process. This significantly reduced development risk, cost and timescales and yielded significant cost savings to the business overall.

COMPONENT AND SKILLS REUSE

Many organisations implement an EDM solution to bring structure and processing rigour to some of their key data sets. The best organisations will apply the same rigour and standards to create accurate, consistent and transparent content across all their data sets.

Almost all data sets can be analysed by their lifecycle processing requirement including:

- Automation
- Data Ingestion
- Quality Control
- Enrichment
- Integration through the environment
- Business Intelligence / Enquiry / Visualisation
- Governance Oversight
- Security

For each of the above requirements an organisation can use its EDM to design and implement a consistent approach and standards to their data sets. This option to reuse EDM components and skills repeatedly will keep costs lower and often reduce implementation times for all future developments.

SINGLE SOURCE OF TRUTH VERSUS POINT TO POINT

A single source of truth, utilised for data usage and data distribution, a key deliverable for an EDM solution, is a more cost-effective method of integrating and providing capabilities across the organisation than point-to-point methodologies. Many organisations still rely on point-to-point solutions which are more expensive to maintain and adapt.

AD-HOC/ONE OFF DATA TASKS MADE EASIER

It is not unusual that the development group within an organisation needs to perform "one-off" data tasks. Typical examples might be:

- A data analysis task pursuant to an internal or external requirement
- Data migration, including data enrichment across entire data histories
- Regulatory reporting requirements

These tasks do not typically have a "home" where they can be developed, tested, and signed off. A good, data agnostic, EDM platform will allow ad hoc or one-off data tasks to be incorporated at speed, such as the data migration example above, which again fosters consistency in data handling and a level of cost saving and time efficiency.

REGRESSION TESTING

An EDM platform which contains a strong DQM and reconciliation capability, combined with automation and ease of use can provide regression testing capabilities. This reduces costs by enabling higher levels of automated and adequate data testing, as well as reducing the need for additional products and skill sets.

MEETING REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

With increasingly stringent regulatory surveillance and reporting requirements and a greater reliance on data to meet these requirements there is a strong argument that organisations need to overhaul their data management practices to provide the assurances to regulators and other stakeholders of their ability to meet and adapt going forward. Some of the most recent data regulation points to the need for organisations to implement single versions of truth, data governance and data quality practices. An all-encompassing EDM solution not only provides the backbone for meeting current and future regulation standards it will also highlight sources of low data quality or likely pain points in meeting regulatory standards.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND SOFTWARE COSTS

REDUCING SOFTWARE COSTS

Often, an organisation will have accumulated several products in the ETL, EDM and BI areas. Normally, these will need licence and/or maintenance renewal contracts, each a cost to the organisation. A centralised EDM platform can assist with consolidating and reducing these software costs. Unnecessary licences should be reviewed and discontinued if no longer required.

LOWERING INFRASTRUCTURE COSTS

Like Software Costs, if the number of “moving parts” can be reduced then this provides opportunity to reduce infrastructure costs. (See also Cloud Enablement above)

SUMMARY – COSTS AND OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY

Asset managers estimate that data management accounts for between 10% and 20% of their underlying costs. Quite simply, EDM solutions improve the bottom line of financial services firms either through direct cost savings such as reducing penalties or costly data errors etc., and/or by making the management and processing of data more efficient.

EDM solutions will lower the cost of maintaining data quality, the cost of compliance and improve productivity through availability of timely and correct data.

REVENUE OPPORTUNITIES

Having established that an EDM solution can drive cost savings and operational efficiency, is there also an argument that organisations can identify revenue opportunities through the implementation of an EDM solution? When driving out the business case for investment in an EDM solution the following areas should also be evaluated as potential areas of improved return.

ABILITY TO SCALE

Any organisation can scale its operations with an EDM platform in place. Automating much of the processing that occurs, as increases in volumes occur, can more easily be absorbed without a corresponding increase in staff and costs, thus increasing the organisation's margins.

STRONGER INVESTMENT RETURNS

If it is an accepted tenet that more and better data will lead to better investment decisions, then the EDM platform can be classified as a revenue driver. This may come from several factors including:

- Consistent, trusted, and accurate numbers
- Availability of data, earlier. A simple example; knowing cash flows as early as possible helps the Fund Manager invest and gain returns on money quicker
- Better understanding of exposure and returns, with the appropriate amount of granularity to help reduce risk and increase returns.

PRODUCT OFFERINGS/MARKET DIFFERENTIATION

For any organisation that is selling a service (i.e. pretty much everyone), its sales capabilities are increased through better data management. The following are examples of data dependent product offerings that could be offered, in this case typically by a Custodian/TPA firm, but there are many more:

- Data as a Service
- Client Reporting
- Client Data analysis and additional services
 - Look through and exposure reporting
 - Unit Pricing oversight
 - Contingent / Proxy Pricing
- Data Quality packs
- Cross Custodian Analytics – (Investment Consultants and Market Research organisations)
- Fund Manager analysis
- Member analytics

And the list goes on. Often the single biggest barrier to some of these services is collating and trusting the data, prior to providing the data service.

OTHER BENEFITS

Apart from financial benefits, there are many other ancillary benefits to a capable EDM Platform. Whilst not explicitly related to a cost benefit or revenue opportunity an EDM solution will yield significant benefits across the organization in areas such as:

DATA GOVERNANCE AND DEMOCRATISATION OF DATA

DATA GOVERNANCE

A good EDM platform can provide many benefits related to Data Governance

- Data Ownership and Stewardship structures and responsibilities
- Data Lineage – How does data flow through the organisation
- Data Provenance – What is the source (or sources) of a data value
- Auditability – the who, how and when of data
- Data quality, currency and usage metrics

ENTERPRISE INFORMATION CATALOGUE CAPABILITY

An EDM platform that incorporates a Data Catalogue capability can make an organisation significantly more efficient in its usage of data. The catalogue is the metadata surrounding the data components. By having a catalogue available to users, describing available data reduces the cost of staff having to search for the correct data sets. They can be more productive. It can also ensure that the data used is published, trusted and reusable.

The value of the Catalogue multiplies as more users have access to it, but it must be authored, owned and approved by Data Stewards.

A capability that allows a user to find the correct data, understand it, trust it, and then use it easily can provide significant capability and cost savings.

DATA GLOSSARY

A fully, and ideally automatically, maintained Data Glossary is an invaluable tool to ensure a consistent language and meaning across the organisation. If the Data Glossary is not just a “standalone” artefact, but tied dynamically into the EDM platform as part of its construction, then it can also be utilised to provide dynamic Data Lineage instead of a “point-in-time” or “documentation only” view of Data Lineage which is typical of many Governance toolsets.

BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLANNING

As this paper is being written we are in the middle of the global COVID-19 pandemic. Issues with distributed, multi technology, poor data management regimes are exacerbated by such scenarios. Having a democratised environment, where staff know where to go to get their gold copy data, and access to the Data Catalogues, means that the organisation is far better able to cope with changing circumstances and remote working staff, both current and new. Whilst this current scenario is an all too vivid an example, there are many others where disruptions and costs to ensure BAU can be minimised.

COLLABORATION – INTERNALLY AND EXTERNALLY

An EDM platform helps users to collaborate more effectively about the usage of data. When combined with Business Glossaries and centralised access, it ensures that users across the business are talking the same language. A “valuation” may exist in several different guises across the organisation. They may be ABOR, CBOR, PBOR, IBOR etc., but ensuring that there is an understanding of which Book of Record you have available to you can ensure consistency in understanding.

This is not limited to internal dealings. If any data is being shared with outside parties, then this same advantage applies. Glossaries and technical data definitions can be provided as an adjunct to the data.

SELF SERVICE

Data Catalogue capability, collaboration, and democratisation of data, all further enable an organisation’s ability to “self-service” new business requirements. This in turns reduces costs and helps ensure agility in meeting requirements and speed to market.

BEST PRACTICE CAPABILITIES

DATA TRUST

This is a simple one. If the organisation can trust its data, the benefits are far reaching:

- Stronger and quicker decision making
- Greater staff satisfaction from working with trusted data
- Enhanced reputation, not only within the Data teams, but also by the wider organisation

FLEXIBILITY OF ARCHITECTURE

A good EDM platform should enable an organisation to have higher levels of flexibility in its architecture.

It should be able to support the organisation’s technology stack rather than limit or dictate certain architectural directions. This includes, but is not limited to, database technology, messaging/ integration framework and more.

IMPROVING STAFF SATISFACTION AND REDUCING OPERATIONAL FRICTION

A good EDM platform can provide several direct, positive impacts on staff satisfaction.

- Automation of manual checking and data manipulation frees up staff for more 'rewarding' activities.
- Better understanding of the "workday". The EDM platform should be able to provide clear guidance as to when data is likely to be ready as it processes through the cycle. This means that staff are not "waiting around" to be told when it is ready for them to apply their input.
- During high volume and potentially high stress processing periods, automation, and particularly the ability to scale for volumes, all help in reducing the stress on operations staff.

RISK MITIGATION

At an organisational level it should be easy to argue that reducing data risk has a fundamental impact on reducing operational risk. Typically, and unfortunately, it is often not until an organisation has a severe incident that the "scary skeletons" within their data environment are acknowledged and that action to improve their capability gets more traction.

ONE STOP SHOP

An EDM platform that can provide for many facets of the Data Management capability has a significant advantage over a disparate set of solutions, providing they can do each of the required facets to the necessary level (or at least be quickly adaptable to any weaknesses). It means fewer skills sets are required, easing the problem of finding staff skilled in multiple tools.

INVESTMENT MANAGEMENT/LINE OF BUSINESS CAPABILITY

A modern EDM platform will provide capabilities above and beyond pure EDM tasks and has capabilities that can be applied to more specific Investment Management tasks. Where there are tasks that are predominantly "conditional number crunching" an EDM Platform should be adaptable to the task in hand. Examples from various organisations include:

- Look through data generation for securities that are unitised or have an underlying constituency associated with them
- Unit Pricing, Oversight and Contingent Pricing
- Asset Classification Structures, Asset Allocation, Modelling and Rebalancing
- Compliance Monitoring
- Rebalancing and Cash Allocation
- Superannuation – Unclaimed Super Money

And many more.

DATA INTELLIGENCE

Data Intelligence as defined by the collection of information and ability to acquire and apply knowledge and skills in relation to Investment Data can be expected to improve as part of the implementation of an EDM platform. A combination of good data stewardship and access to data catalogues can assist with data intelligence across the organisation.

METRIFICATION

Part of an EDM platform capability will include the ability to measure and understand not only data volumes, but also other metrics around this data. It is important that this capability can be provided both on an 'as now' basis, as well as historically so as to understand trends in the data.

Examples can include:

- Data Quality as a quantifiable measure. This should be more sophisticated than simply numbers of errors. Errors can be classified and scored as to severity and impact thereby providing an instant judgement on how acceptable data is for the task in hand
- Data volumes and run times
- Error rates – For example, logging how many transactions are being book and reversed by the Custodian

In short, the EDM platform can be the “go to” repository for any questions about the organisation's data and its data providers.

DATA ANALYTICS

The EDM platform should assist in the creation and availability of data analytics. This relates to several capabilities including:

- The EDM's own ability to present analytics, such as metrics and statistics, data discovery, time series and flexibility of other data including external business data stores and APIs as well as the EDM's own metadata and metrics.
- Ensuring that all data, including metadata is publishable and available to other 3rd party BI tools that might be standard within the organisation. Data may be published either via persisted data stores or industry standard APIs.

MACHINE LEARNING

A fundamental component of the standard EDM platform is its ability to deal with data exceptions. The platform can be configured with data exception rules which, depending on the platform chosen, will be coded or ideally assembled through a metadata configuration exercise. The results of these exceptions may lead users to modify the configuration further to resolve scenarios that had not previously been addressed.

However, where possible, it should be possible to use the treatment of an exception as 'learned behaviour' for how to cater for similar types of exception without explicitly requiring the user to change the EDM configuration or code – the data exception equivalent of machine learning.

SUMMARY

This paper provides a check list of the many areas that an EDM platform can provide value to the asset management firm. Many are related to financial outlay, operational efficiency, or simply best practice.

The paper has been compiled as a result of observations from many projects performed by Curium Data Systems and through the implementation of CuriumEDM and CuriumDQM, advanced data management solutions designed specifically for asset management firms. While the main business and financial rationale for investing in EDM technology is part of any business case, experience shows that the benefit of implementing a comprehensive EDM platform often reaches beyond the initial remit of the project and as such the EDM becomes more embedded in a whole range of subsequent deliverables and advances to the operational architecture of the organisation. In many cases, the organisation will take a journey; perhaps starting with obtaining oversight of data quality within the existing data architecture before embarking on a more progressive development of their data management functions including data mastering and data governance.

The business case for an investment in EDM technology will likely be a subset of any number of the areas discussed in this paper but experience shows that the value of the EDM should extend far beyond the initial business case.

Alternatively, if the business case for investment in an EDM platform is not entirely clear from the outset a small glance around the functions of the organisation should readily provide further input upon which to build out a compelling and far reaching business case.

To find out more about Curium data management solutions contact us at info@curiumdata.com or visit the website at www.curiumdata.com.

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