

A PEOPLE-FIRST PLAYBOOK

DATA GOVERNANCE

How to bring structure to data work without breaking what already works — by starting with the people who do it.



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Data Governance & Data Quality Leader | 30 years in Data

OPEN TO WORK

Governance clarifies. It rarely invents.

1

Map people, not roles on paper

Real teams never match the org chart — someone is 60% steward, 30% owner, and writes the pipeline too. That's not dysfunction, it's reality.

2

Non-Invasive Governance (R. Seiner)

People already do governance work informally. The job is to recognise and structure it — not impose a new system on top.

3

Bottom-up, or it doesn't stick

Top-down governance dies on contact with a busy team. It only takes root when it solves friction the team already feels.

4

The savings are real — just not the Q1 pitch

Good governance simplifies systems and generates savings, but rarely ones visible in the first quarter. The value shows up in trust and speed.

The Agile way — small steps, visible progress



Train, then trust

Equip people, then hand over real responsibility — not a checklist.

Monthly reachable goals

Not a two-year roadmap — a target the team believes in by month's end.

Sprints, concrete deliverables

One or two finished things: a definition, a process, a PIA/DPIA.

One-page sprint summary

Ten minutes to build. Makes the team's work visible to everyone.

In good company

This lines up with the wider Agile Data Governance movement: minimum viable policies instead of upfront documentation, decentralised stewardship, and a shift from policing to enabling.

Two conversations before anything else

1

The Sponsor Conversation

CIO / CDO — whoever owns the mandate

- Why do you want more governance, really?
- What does success look like — concretely?
- Buy-in on the approach: people and process first, not a framework imposed on day one.

2

The Data Manager Conversation

The person running the team day to day

- How does the data organisation actually work?
- What data domains are in play?
- Test the scope: do they agree, or see gaps the sponsor missed?

Why this order matters

Everything that follows — mapping the people, naming the roles, running it as sprints — only works if this alignment happens first, not halfway through.

Meet the people. Meet the customers.

3

Team by Team

Day-to-day reality, not theory

- Understand daily work and how they already see governance.
- Explain the key concepts in plain terms.
- Workshop: position themselves — steward, owner, custodian, tech, DBA — and their real scope of action.

5

Identify The Data Customers

Internal departments, external parties

- Understand what they expect from the data.
- Explain what governance means for them, concretely.
- The value: easier-to-find definitions, reliable quality control, real support.

What this confirms

This is usually where the informal map of people and roles gets confirmed — or corrected — before anything is written down as policy.

STEP 4 — BUILD THE FRAMEWORK

Policy cascades. It doesn't dictate.



Get buy-in: the Governance Council

Owns the policy layer. Policies define what standards and guidelines must contain.

Decide the procedures

- Data support
- Incident management
- Data breach reporting
- Deployment — QA to production, realistic testing
- Document / data-entry flow — draft → feedback → final → publication

Decide the training

Security awareness, compliance awareness — whatever the roles you just named actually need to do their part.

STEPS 6-13 — NAME THE OWNERS

One role per concern. One loop for all three.



Data Owner

Per priority domain — start where the sponsor pointed



Data Quality Owner

Supervises quality rules, measurement, and reporting



Data Security Owner

Often in IT — supervises security implementation



Data Compliance Owner

Often aligned with Legal / DPO — supervises compliance

The same loop, every time

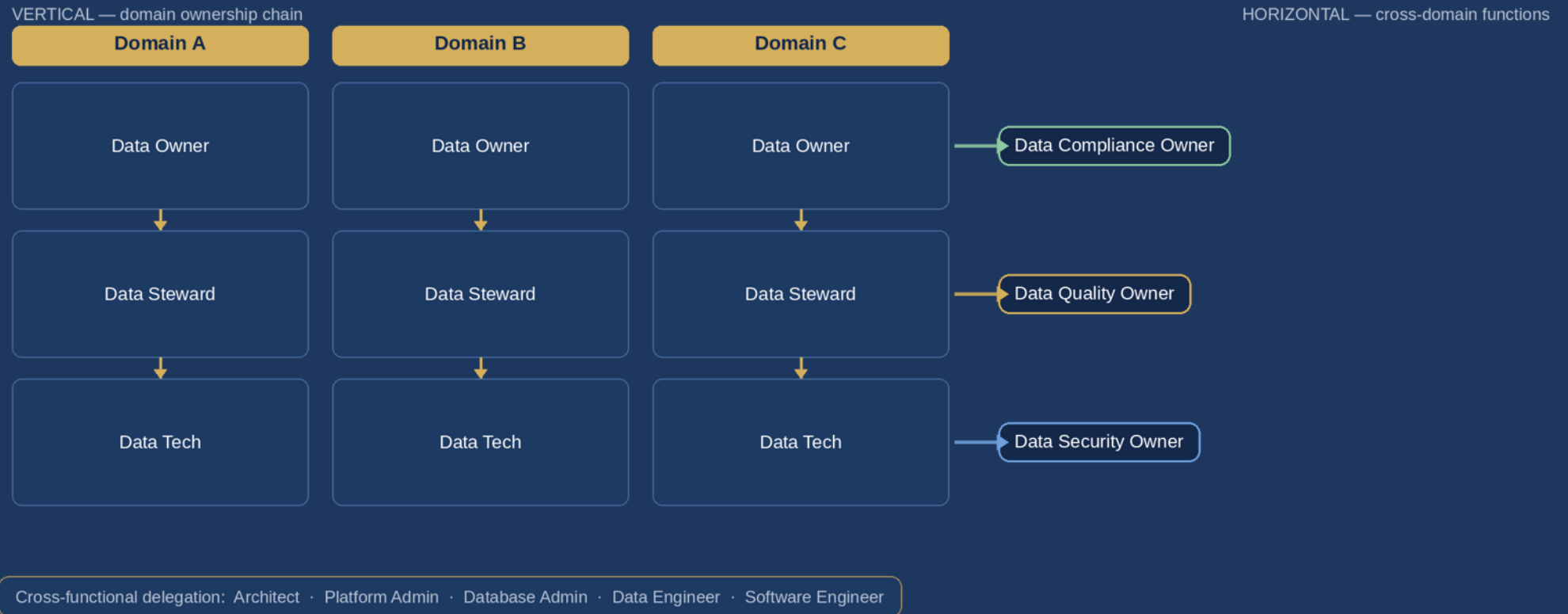
The Owner sits down with the Data Owner and the Data Steward, agrees the standard or guideline, surfaces friction, and iterates until it's something the team can actually measure and live with. The Steward then delegates implementation to the technical team.

For Compliance specifically: a PIA or DPIA gets added wherever the processing requires one.

Step 13 — Treat it as a lifecycle, not a launch

Review the whole framework annually. Improve what didn't work. Feed the lessons into the next round.

It's a matrix, not a reporting line



Three things people usually forget

1

The catalog is the backbone

Definitions, standards, and lineage need to live somewhere people can actually find them — not in a slide deck. A data catalog is where the map from step 3 becomes searchable and usable day to day.

2

Close the loop with the sponsor

The success criteria from the first conversation need an answer. A maturity dashboard — the kind I build in Power BI — reports progress back in the sponsor's own terms, not just data quality scores.

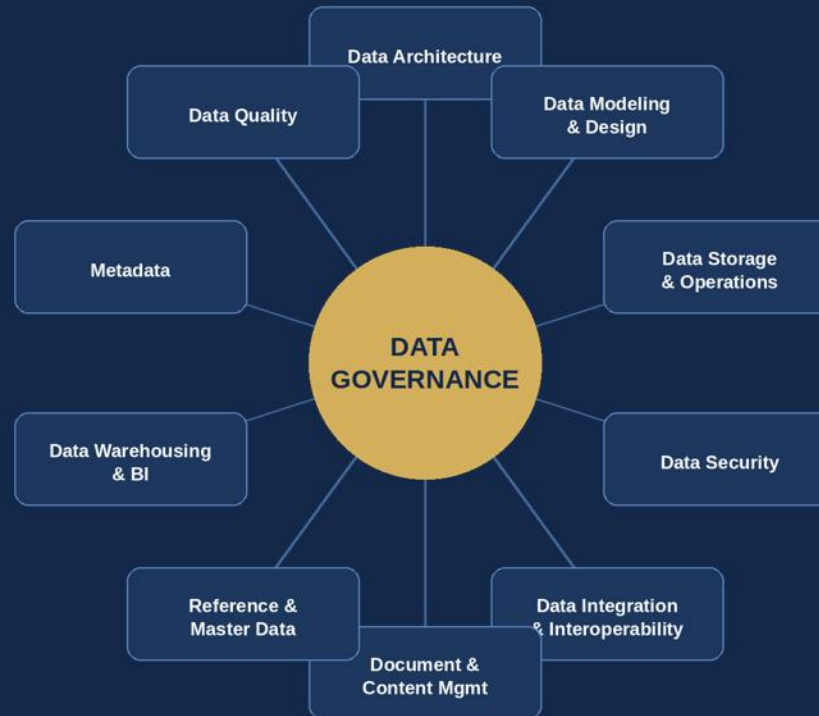
3

Scale domain by domain

Prove the model on one domain before replicating it. A second domain adopts faster because the roles, the cadence, and the templates already exist — it stops looking like a new program each time.

The classic model: DAMA-DMBOK2

Everything above is my own approach. It sits on top of an industry-standard reference: the DAMA-DMBOK2 framework, where Data Governance is the discipline that ties together — and sets direction for — every other data management knowledge area.



The traditional vocabulary, defined simply

● Data Governance

The exercise of authority and control over how data is managed — setting policy, assigning accountability, overseeing quality, security and compliance.

● Data Governance Council

The senior body that approves policy, arbitrates conflicts between domains, and sponsors governance initiatives.

● Data Owner

A business role accountable for a data domain — approves definitions, standards, and access decisions within it.

● Data Steward

Carries out the day-to-day governance work on the owner's behalf: definitions, standards application, issue resolution.

● Policy

A high-level rule stating what must be true about data. The 'what' — brief, and rarely detailed.

● Standard

A measurable requirement derived from policy — what a good outcome looks like, used to judge compliance.

The traditional vocabulary, continued

● Guideline

Recommended practice for meeting a standard — the 'how,' offered as guidance rather than mandated.

● Procedure

The step-by-step instructions people actually follow, day to day, to comply with the standard.

● Data Dictionary

A technical inventory of data elements — names, types, formats. Structure, not business meaning.

● Data Domain

A logical grouping of related data — Customer, Product, Finance — used to assign ownership and scope.

● Taxonomy

A hierarchical classification of concepts: parent and child categories, one relationship — broader or narrower.

● Ontology

A richer model of concepts and their relationships — multiple relationship types and rules, supporting reasoning, not just classification.

IN CLOSING

Governance that people actually use

It starts with a conversation, not a framework. It succeeds when people feel recognised, not policed. Everything in this playbook exists to serve that one idea.

About Olivier Bouchez

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OPEN TO WORK

Data Governance & Data Quality Leadership roles

Open to conversations across Belgium and Europe.