

# The Many Hats of a Chief Data Officer

All senior executives must wear many different hats to fulfill their duties, but the Chief Data Officer needs to be one of the most flexible executives, to deal with the significantly different roles that they must, from time to time, undertake. The need for different roles derives from the fact that there is a different vision for data within each organisation, and sometimes within separate divisions within a single organisation.

At Fujitsu Data & AI, we view the data management and data governance processes through the lens of a seven-step process, shown below. This seven-step process has been outlined in an earlier post by my colleague Shaun Wadsworth. Understanding, agreeing and setting a clear data vision is the first step in this process.



Figure 1. Fujitsu Data & AI's Data Governance Framework

When Fujitsu Data & AI consultants work with our customers to help them understand, agree and document their unique data vision, we start the discussion by understanding where the organisation, or the sub-units for diversified organisations, sit on the following two dimensions:

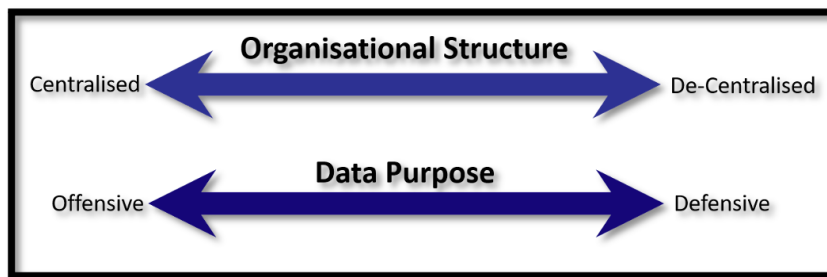


Figure 2. Dimensions of a Data Vision

The first dimension, Organisational Structure, is standard and clear. The second dimension, however, is not as well known. It was first promulgated in a paper called “What’s your data strategy?” in the Harvard Business Review in 2017, written by Leandor DalleMule and Thomas Davenport. In this paper, the authors proposed that all data strategies fall somewhere on the spectrum between offensive and defensive. These terms have the following meanings:

- **Offensive data strategies** are aimed at supporting business objectives such as increasing revenue, reducing cost, or improving customer satisfaction. In these strategies, the focus is on using data for competitive advantage such as analytical insights, or even monetising data to develop additional products or services.
- **Defensive data strategies** focus on compliance and minimising down-side risk. This includes activities such as data privacy management, regulatory compliance for data lineage management, data classification and security controls, and effort in ensuring the safety, security and effective management of data.

Clearly, this is not an “either-or” approach. All organisations need to ensure that they are compliant with the regulatory environment that they work within, including regulations such as GDPR and relevant national privacy laws. This means that no honest organisation can be entirely offensive and ignore defensive requirements, and no sane organisation would completely ignore the value of their data out of fear of loss or non-compliance.

Instead, the question is one of focus. Where is the organisation's focus when it comes to data? Would profitable, productive and legal ideas for gaining value from data be pursued, or would concerns over data privacy, security or potential risk cause these projects to fail? Would customer outrage be risked by using data to deliver better customer insights through event-based Machine Learning algorithms to suggest next best offer?

Each organisation will fall on a different balance, that is appropriate for their regulatory, competitive and reputational environment. Understanding where this balance sits for your organisation is critical to be successful as a Chief Data Officer.

Using these two dimensions, a two-by-two grid of alternative roles for a Chief Data Officer can be developed.

**Compliance Co-ordinator**

The Compliance Co-Ordinator's role is to organize and oversight divisional efforts at data compliance activities

**Data Controller**

The Data Controller's role is to manage the organisation's data in a manner compliant with all regulation and community expectations



**Data Evangelist**

The Data Evangelist's role is to generate and spread new ideas of how to get value from data, and to co-ordinate with the divisions to share data to the benefit of all parties

**Data Product Owner**

The Data Product Owner's role is to manage the data assets of the organisation to assist in achieving business objectives and to generate new business benefits from data use

Figure 3. The Primary Roles for a Chief Data Officer

These four primary roles that a CDO may be asked to undertake will shift and change over time, and in different contexts, resulting in the need for the CDO to change hats on a regular basis.

However, the basic concept of thinking about how your organisation views data, and where it falls on the offensive-defensive strategy continuum is useful to help guide you when making decisions about data. It also informs the remainder of the Data Governance framework, including policies, operating models and architecture.

For this reason, Fujitsu Data & AI's Data Governance framework starts with the Data Vision, as the foundation upon which the rest of the Data Governance activities rest.

To find out how we can help you realise your Data Vision, please contact a Fujitsu Data & AI specialist now.

**Contact**

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