



Data Governance Maturity Checklist: Protect Your Strategic Asset and Prevent Financial Losses

"Governance for People, Value from Data"

Data governance is not a milestone with a finish date, nor is it a departmental project; it is an ongoing, vital corporate function that ensures the availability, integrity, and security of your organization's most strategic asset. Under the **DAMA** framework, maturity in this discipline is the only path to preventing financial losses caused by inefficiency and legal risks, enabling the orchestration of people and technology to generate real return.

Without a maturity compass, your organization is operating blindly, accumulating technical debt and compliance risks that compromise its strategic future.

1. The Challenge: Why Measure Maturity?

In today's environment, ignoring the state of your data means accepting constant **operational friction**. Organizations that fail to evaluate their maturity often remain trapped in a cycle of informational "fires" caused by:

- **Information Silos:** Departments operating as isolated islands, generating conflicting versions of reality and duplicating efforts.
- **Compliance Risks:** Critical vulnerability to regulations (such as GDPR, LGPD, or local privacy laws) due to lack of traceability and control over sensitive data.
- **Lack of Ownership and Stewardship:** Responsibility gaps where no one is accountable for the quality, security, or updating of data assets.
- **Poor Data Quality:** A decision-making foundation eroded by inaccurate information, destroying executive trust in operational reporting.
- **Asset Ignorance:** Inability to locate critical data required for analytics, Artificial Intelligence initiatives, or rapid executive decision-making.

This **25-point strategic checklist** has been designed to help you lead the transition from data chaos to data flow, transforming governance from a bureaucratic burden into a value driver.



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2. Maturity Self-Assessment: The Five Strategic Pillars

Answer each question with professional objectivity (1 point for each "Yes") to determine your organization's real risk exposure.

Pillar I: Foundations (Strategy, Governance, and Roles)

Evaluates whether a clear leadership structure exists to treat data as a business asset with clear accountability.

<i>Assessment Question</i>	<i>Response (Yes/No)</i>
<i>Is there a central Data Governance Council or Committee with authority to mandate cross-functional standards?</i>	
<i>Have Data Owners been formally designated from business functions with authority over data domains?</i>	
<i>Are Data Stewards (functional subject matter experts) identified and responsible for operational data management?</i>	
<i>Is the data strategy explicitly aligned with corporate strategic goals and OKRs?</i>	
<i>Do you have documented policies defining the data lifecycle and a clear chain of accountability (accountability)?</i>	



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Pillar II: Metadata & Catalog (Documentation and Traceability)

Evaluates the organization's ability to discover, understand, inventory, and trace the origin and usage of information.

Assessment Question	Response (Yes/No)
Is there a unified, approved Business Glossary defining key enterprise terms and metrics?	
Do you have a centralized Data Catalog inventorying data assets and physical repositories?	
Do you have end-to-end Data Lineage capabilities to trace data origin, transformations, and destinations for critical processes?	
Are technical metadata structures and data dictionaries documented for core systems?	
Are metadata tools accessible so that business users can easily discover and understand available data?	



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Pillar III: Data Security (Protection, Privacy, and Compliance)

Evaluates organizational and technical measures to guarantee confidentiality, privacy, and legal risk mitigation.

Assessment Question	Response (Yes/No)
Have you identified and classified personal and sensitive data across your entire data ecosystem?	
Is a formal classification taxonomy (hierarchy) defined for data sensitivity and confidentiality levels?	
Do you enforce verifiable technical controls such as encryption (at rest/in transit), pseudonymization, and Role-Based Access Control (RBAC)?	
Do you have the technical and operational capability to fulfill data subject privacy rights (ARCO+ / GDPR / LGPD) efficiently?	
Are formal protocols and workflows established to manage and report data security breaches ?	



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Pillar IV: Data Quality (Measurement, Rules, and Monitoring)

Measures the degree of accuracy, reliability, and automated control over strategic data health.

Assessment Question	Response (Yes/No)
<i>Have automated quality rules been implemented based on DAMA dimensions (Accuracy, Completeness, Consistency, Timeliness, and Validity)?</i>	
<i>Is periodic Data Profiling performed to diagnose the health of critical data sources?</i>	
<i>Are data quality dashboards or KPIs accessible and monitored by Data Owners and Stewards?</i>	
<i>Are formal remediation workflows established for logging, prioritizing, and resolving data quality incidents?</i>	
<i>Is data quality evaluated at source systems to prevent error propagation into reporting and AI models?</i>	



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Pillar V: Data Culture (Change Management and Data Literacy)

Measures the cultural shift from a reactive mindset to shared responsibility, ethical data use, and continuous learning.

<i>Assessment Question</i>	<i>Response (Yes/No)</i>
<i>Are ongoing Data Literacy programs available so staff understand the value and risk of the data they manage?</i>	
<i>Is data quality and governance recognized as a business unit responsibility rather than purely an IT function?</i>	
<i>Is governed Self-Service analytics promoted to mitigate the financial and legal risks of "Shadow IT"?</i>	
<i>Does the organization prioritize Privacy and Quality by Design & Default when building new reports or digital products?</i>	
<i>Are periodic internal audits conducted to verify the adoption rate and effectiveness of governance controls?</i>	



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3. Interpretation of Results and DAMA Maturity Levels

Sum your positive responses (1 point per "Yes") to identify your organization's position out of **25 total points** according to the DAMA DMBOK2 framework:

- **Level 1: Initial / Ad Hoc (0 - 5 points):** Fragmented, reactive management operating in silos. Your organization is a prime target for regulatory audits and penalty enforcement due to a lack of basic controls.
- **Level 2: Repeatable (6 - 10 points):** Consistent practices within isolated projects, but missing an enterprise vision. Risks of data inconsistency, poor decision-making, and regulatory non-compliance remain high.
- **Level 3: Defined (11 - 15 points):** Organizational policies, standards, and data catalog established. Data Owners and Stewards are formal roles. A solid foundation exists for a risk prevention model.
- **Level 4: Managed (16 - 20 points):** Active use of quality metrics, metadata lineage, and monitoring dashboards. Regulatory compliance is fully integrated into operational, analytical, and AI processes.
- **Level 5: Optimized (21 - 25 points):** Continuous improvement culture and consolidated data literacy. Full automation, enterprise resilience, and strategic alignment that minimizes risk and maximizes data ROI.

Strategic Note: This checklist measures the **existence** of foundational elements. Reaching Levels 4 and 5 requires not only having these components in place, but demonstrating **consistent performance, automation, and full integration** into everyday operational workflows.



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4. Roadmap Towards Compliance and Efficiency

To transition toward a proactive model that safeguards business continuity, ensures trusted reporting, and embeds a data-driven culture, we recommend the following immediate actions:

1. **Structure the Data Governance Operating Model:** Centralize policies, processes, and formal assignment of roles (Data Owners and Stewards) to functional business leaders.
2. **Implement a Unified Glossary and Catalog:** Break down information silos by documenting business definitions and mapping critical enterprise data assets.
3. **Automate Data Quality Monitoring:** Shift from manual corrections to real-time profiling and monitoring based on DAMA's 5 critical quality dimensions.
4. **Data Protection & Multi-Regulatory Alignment:** Integrate Privacy by Design mechanisms, data lineage tracking, and Role-Based Access Control (RBAC).
5. **Change Management & Data Literacy Program:** Empower teams so governance is perceived not as bureaucracy, but as an enabler of daily operational efficiency.

5. About the Author

Sandy Bradbury is a Senior Strategic Data Governance Consultant and prominent specialist in **DAMA DMBOK2** frameworks. His approach goes beyond technology to focus on the human side of data: change management, data literacy, and organizational culture.

As an expert in structuring the dynamics of people who interact daily with information, Sandy helps organizations orchestrate technology, process, and strategy end-to-end. His mission is clear: convert chaotic data liabilities into high-value strategic assets, ensuring technical architecture directly serves business goals and operational efficiency.



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6. Next Steps: Strategic Diagnostic Session

Is your organization ready to stop just managing data and start governing it?

If your maturity level is below expectations or you wish to accelerate your journey toward an optimized model, I invite you to take the next step. A resilient strategy does not begin with software; it stems from a clear vision that aligns your people with the value of your assets.

"Let's talk about how to orchestrate your people and technology to maximize the value of your data."

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