Turn technical objectives into business value

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To truly sell the benefit of master data management technology to business leaders, business benefits must be highlighted

Profisee recently hosted its annual customer advisory board meeting, bringing together strategic customers across the globe to share ideas for delivering master data management (MDM) solutions on Profisee's platform.

One topic centred on the different approaches among our customers to selling the value of MDM to their business constituents. For some, their MDM budget originated with the business, and required the creation of a business case. For others, their MDM initiatives were funded out of IT budgets. But they still had to sell the business value of MDM to obtain a commitment from stakeholders for the time and resources needed to drive governance and stewardship activities.

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Regardless of when the business was engaged in the overall project lifecycle, there was one common theme. Efforts to sell the business value of MDM based on the technology itself struggled, but those that positioned the value of MDM through the prism of business objectives were far more successful.

Technology leadership often gets caught trying to sell the value of technology solutions on the technical merits of the solution itself. They assume their business audience can make the leap from what the solution will do to how that solution will provide business value.

In the context of MDM, an example would be selling MDM because it will improve data quality, de-duplicate records, or create a single view of data. While the link between these technical objectives and business value may seem clear to you, it's less obvious to a business audience.

So how do you go about positioning an MDM solution to the business? It starts with understanding your audience, and building a business case based on the things that make them successful.

When selling a MDM solution to a business, our customers were most successful when they avoided using technical terms such as master data management or MDM altogether. The term is just too detached from the business. Instead, our customers often created their own simple brands for their MDM project, such as 'customer data hub.'

The other successful trait among our customers was to craft a message for different businesses that spoke to what would make them successful. This means that the message can actually vary depending on the audience. Of course everyone cares about increasing revenue and reducing costs. But for sales for example, additional emphasis was placed on shortening the sales cycle.

When making a case for MDM, avoid promoting technical objectives, and instead focus on true discussions of business value. You will stand a much better chance of not just getting projects funded, but of getting true buy-in and support from the business. ■

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