

# Building a Modern BI Strategy with Improved Data Integration and Exploration

**NEW IDG SURVEY REVEALS KEY FINDINGS ABOUT DATA PRIORITIES, THE STATE OF DATA INTEGRATION AND DATA EXPLORATION, AND THE NEED FOR A MODERN APPROACH TO BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE.**

The future of business intelligence (BI) is becoming clear. IT leaders are pursuing better ways to integrate all data sources and democratize access to information across their organization, according to a new IDG survey.

The majority (53%) said they plan to upgrade or replace their existing BI tools in the next year. They're doing so to increase business value by targeting outcomes such as improved customer experiences, productivity, and decision-making capabilities. But first they must overcome some hurdles.

This paper examines the results of a global survey of 200 IT leaders at organizations of all sizes. The research explored how

their users access data, their approaches to data exploration, the benefits and challenges of data integration, and the types of functionality being sought for a modern approach to BI. This paper delves into:

-  **Data strategy priorities**
-  **The state of data integration**
-  **The state of data exploration**
-  **What a modern BI approach looks like**



## Data Strategy Priorities

It seems like a cliché, yet there's data everywhere—and lots of it—in all organizations. Companies don't lack for data. The challenge is bringing it all together and making sense of it. In other words, gaining the ability to distill actionable insights to drive business outcomes.

That's a common refrain. Respondents to the IDG survey reported trying to achieve a wide variety of business objectives from their data strategy (see Figure 1).

On the other hand, they're less likely to prioritize the need to reduce the time to insights, breaking down data silos, or uncovering new revenue opportunities. That's surprising, given that:



"It could be that the correlation between making better use of data and achieving business value hasn't yet been fully recognized," says John Mellor, chief strategy officer at Domo. "IT leaders clearly see the alignment of data with objectives. Now they need to think about ways to make data work faster for them, such as through improved integration of sources."

## The State of Data Integration

So, let's look at organizational capabilities for integrating data. Nearly all the respondents stressed the need for it: 90% rated it as critically or very important, and 10% said that it is somewhat important to integrate multiple data sources as a means of improving business outcomes.

## Figure 1: Top Business Objectives Behind Enterprise Data Strategies



Source: IDG

Yet, they are struggling to do it. Traditional BI and analytics tools aren't working for them. A surprising 78% of the respondents said BI/analytics is "chaotic" at their organization.

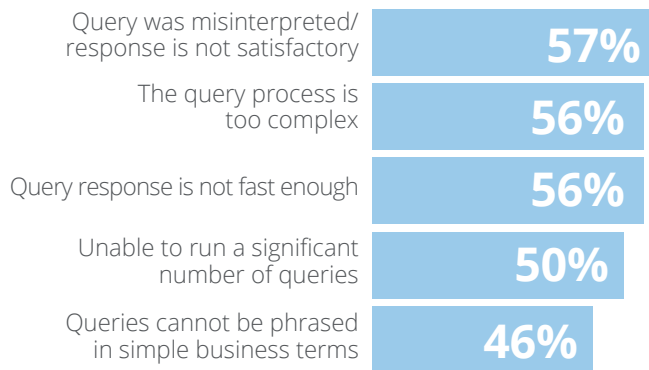
Part of this relates to not having made a commitment to making BI accessible for all. Only 29% have adopted this strategy. The rest are taking a scattered approach. For example, 42% said that although BI projects are enterprise-wide, that's on a limited, irregular basis. Another 14% have a few regular, ongoing BI projects but only in some departments or groups, and 12% have irregular BI projects. The remaining 3% either have limited pilot projects or are still in the planning stages for BI.





The fallout from this BI chaos is being felt by IT departments. They're hearing multiple concerns from business users when they must rely on others to run their data queries (see Figure 2).

## Figure 2: The Problems When Business Users Can't Run Data Queries



Source: IDG

In addition, IT leaders expressed concerns about “dark data”—potentially valuable information that is sitting in data silos or users’ desktops, for example, that doesn’t get picked up by traditional BI tools. The respondents cited concerns such as dark data’s impact on overall data quality, security and compliance risks, loss of control over data, lost business value, and the inhibition of true data integration.

“It’s evident there’s a lack of an integrated, modern BI approach,” says Mellor. “The pressures on the business today are enormous. Organizations must become more agile with their data for competitive advantage and better overall decision-making. That requires a holistic approach to data integration.”

## The State of Data Exploration

Users’ ability to not only access data but also explore it can have a substantial effect on being able to rapidly achieve business objectives.

Survey respondents said they need a “data for all” strategy. For the most part, they have confidence that their current approach to data exploration is enabling efficiency, curiosity, and design simplicity. Only about one-third said these areas need improvement.

They also believe that their existing data security and governance measures support data exploration: 91% said they’re confident that users can freely access data within guardrails for IT control.

However, digging a little deeper, IT leaders indicated that data governance is no easy task: It’s their No. 1 challenge in providing data exploration capabilities for users. Other obstacles include concerns about data security risks; data pipeline performance; building data catalogs; integrating data sources; and all the manual labor involved in importing, cleaning, and prepping data.

Governance and security can be addressed by adoption of BI solutions with built-in guardrails that make it easy for IT to address policies. For example, modern tools that offer row-level access permissions, data lineage, and certification processes ensure that IT remains in control.

## What a Modern BI Approach Looks Like

It’s possible to attain a “data for all” strategy that enables users to explore data in ways that are safe, yet IT leaders recognize that they won’t get there amid the limits of traditional BI tools. That’s why they’re looking at solutions that better integrate data and provide easy access to it.



For example, survey respondents cited multiple benefits of improving their data integration capabilities, such as getting better visibility into and even eliminating dark data. They also believe that by easing integration, they can improve data governance and achieve other benefits (see Figure 3).

In addition, respondents said they want tools that give business users the freedom and confidence to explore data. They want a modern BI solution that is easy to learn without a lot of IT hand-holding and that ingests data from multiple sources. IT leaders also said they're seeking an approach that reduces data storage needs for greater efficiencies and offers built-in guardrails to help them manage security and compliance risks.

A data-for-all approach has to combine all these features and capabilities of data integration plus enable data exploration. Making data more accessible and encouraging users to be curious about data means providing self-service functionality. Survey respondents recognize this: 88% said it's a top priority for their organization.

A modern BI approach with built-in self-service functionality offers significant benefits. For example, online sports-betting company Tipico was getting bogged down in processing numerous business report requests. Each report took as long as 12 hours to create, requiring integration of multiple data sources. Tipico adopted Domo's BI platform and was able to reduce report requests by 50%.

"Our business users now go in and create their own charts, their own data exploration, their own alerts," says Adrian Vella, head of data and BI at Tipico. "Basically, they can be their own BI developers."

Improving data exploration capabilities with a modern BI strategy offers more than efficiency. Survey respondents also expect to improve:

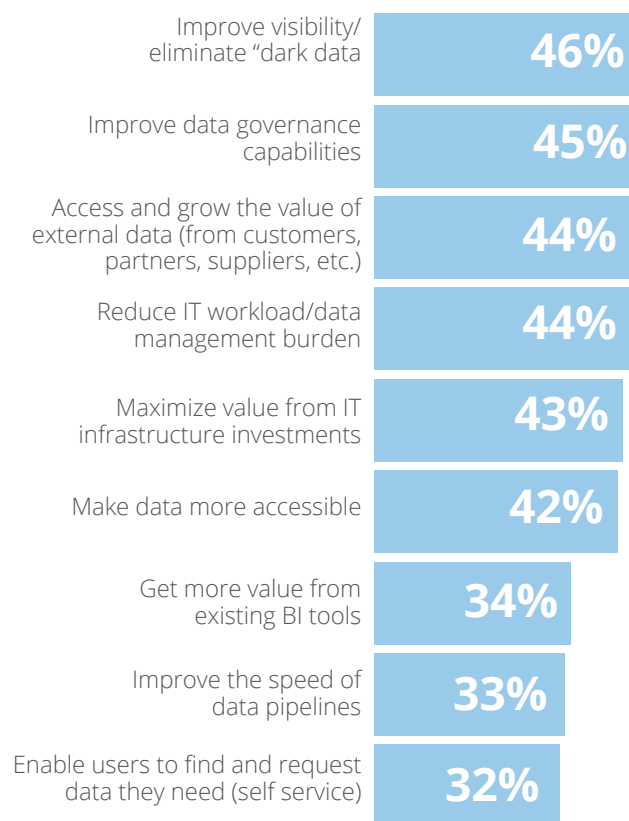
- **Data quality/accuracy for decision-making**
- **Confidence in data security/compliance**
- **Broader data access**
- **Ability to collaborate internally and/or externally**

With the right modern BI solution, these benefits can be realized quickly. Vella says that by giving users the freedom to explore and play with data, his team has been freed up to focus on adding business value.

"I've been able to take the time we've freed up to push my BI developers to do more innovative things," he says.

For example, they're focusing on improving the performance of their 1,100 retail stores, drilling into data to analyze foot traffic, franchise comparisons, and customer trends. "Domo allows us to use data to make smarter decisions on the fly, at scale," Vella says.

## Figure 3: The Benefits of Improving Data Integration



Source: IDG

## The Bottom Line

The future of BI includes a modern data-for-all approach that provides agility and business value. To get there, companies must move beyond thinking of BI as just a set of tools.

"Many companies have been working under the premise that people must change to work with the tools they're given," says Mellor. "We have seen that if you make the tools do the work and encourage a culture of curiosity, individuals and the whole organization can achieve significant value."

See data integration in action.  
Schedule a live demo by visiting  
[www.domo.com/form/live-demo](http://www.domo.com/form/live-demo).