

Helping a Canadian financial institution set up a data-first culture

Over a 12-month period, CGI's strategic culture and change experts helped a large Canadian financial institution develop an organizational change management strategy that guided them towards becoming a more data-driven organization. The resulting cultural shift and leadership development led to the creation of a Chief Data Officer position and a data-centric approach to practices across the organization.

Disruptions brought by the pandemic have fundamentally changed today's business world. Our rapidly changing reality has led to organizations recognizing the increased importance of strategic culture and change solutions.

The most successful organizations recognize that realizing the full potential of their change solutions is dependent on the commitment and support of their people and those they serve.

Challenge - Making the shift towards a data-centric culture

Our client's goal was to be recognized as being data-driven and seen on the global stage as a data innovator. To achieve this, they needed to improve their performance as a data-driven organization and seek a transformative change on an operational as well as a cultural level. They were seeking support to define a clear vision and build a coordinated approach to data governance and data policy as a data-heavy organization. This required building a foundation.

It was a major challenge to direct a very large, siloed organization with a rigid hierarchy towards a progressive common purpose. There were many factors impeding their success.

We worked with the organization to find a solution that included an understanding of the type of mindset that was needed as well as the requirements for sharing data and creating new norms regarding data use across the organization. These collaborative behaviors were put in place to act as bridges between the siloed business units.

By leveraging CGI's enterprise expertise in strategic culture and change, the client was able to understand the importance of shifting the organizational mindset to promote curiosity and value data as an asset, establish a Chief Data Officer, and implement the supporting organizational structure.



The organization had varying levels of change competencies and data maturity, diverse interpretations of strategic intention, and was challenged by business unit alignment.

How we helped - Rebranding data

Our experts took a bridge-building approach to linking the different silos together. Previously, each business unit had operated in relative isolation to their neighbours within fractional cultures that shared the same walls, but not their valuable data assets. The leadership wanted to preserve areas of expertise while encouraging a novel approach to sharing the valuable data that was being compiled by different expert units, without flattening the organization.

It was a company-wide engagement that required sponsorship on all levels. It not only involved increasing data literacy, knowledge, and skills within the institution, but also finding a common language that everyone could use to share their issues in regard to data and data governance, regardless of their sphere of expertise. These were the foundational elements for shifting the company's traditional perception of themselves to something new and progressive.

Based on extensive consultations, we pinpointed serious gaps in the ability to shift the organization to become data centric. We conducted a thorough analysis of the client's different business lines and the interdependencies between them.

We then worked on developing an organizational readiness assessment which we brought to the senior leadership. Next, we created a 'star chamber' of internal experts from all levels of the organization.

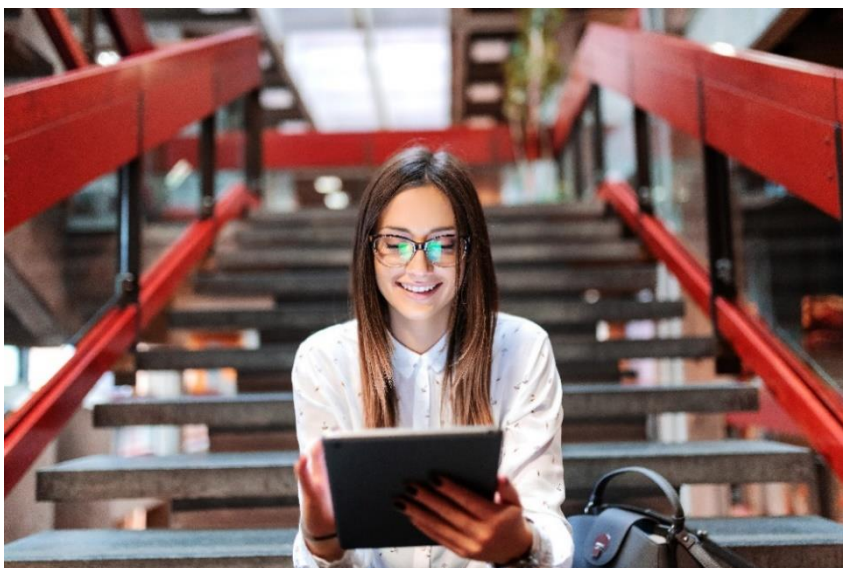
These experts implemented a matrix of advocates across the organization to proactively support the shift of the organizational mindset and normalize the vision of being data-driven.

In addition, feedback was gathered pertaining to what the individual business units needed to reduce the data maturity dispersion across the organization, as well as individual needs at all levels: leaders, beginners, and data experts. This information led to the development of the basis for a data literacy initiative and curriculum.

The literacy deliverables supported a new, common language for referring to data, which helped establish a foundation to support lines of data maturity and business functionality.



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Value delivered - A dramatic cultural impact that drives business

As changes were implemented using the existing expertise within the organization, buy-in from both employees and senior staff was encouraged, internal resistance to change was limited, and costs were reduced. This cultural evolution also involved a shift in attitudes as well as a significant shift in business practices. Most importantly, it cultivated new efficiencies where colleagues working in different areas of expertise who had never met before could share data and new perspectives on the work they were doing. These new partnerships fostered collaborations and innovations for the benefit of the client.

An impressive 98% participation in workshops across 95% of the departments within the client's organization was achieved. Enormous traffic volumes on the informational webpages and podcasts showed that we were able to create a sense of urgency in regard to the opportunities that a data-driven approach represented. This generated feedback from across the organization that the leadership team, working alongside CGI, used to focus their efforts to improve data governance practice and policies across the business. Our collaborative efforts to update data governance and data policy are not only a source of great pride for the organization's teams and senior management, they have also translated to faster, more successful and accurate outcomes across the organization.

In addition to guiding the client in the creation of a new Chief Data Officer role, we offered a path to dramatically change perspectives regarding data use across all business lines. We supported our client in the implementation of a modern data governance and data policy strategy that places them on an equal footing with their peers.

Today, we are supporting the client in their next stage, which aims to build on the awareness and engagement phase and act as a scaffold for the foundation. It will further strengthen ongoing data literacy, and recognize and capitalize on collaborations that have already occurred.



“Not only was our work the catalyst for bringing people together, but we were also able to generate a new level of understanding about data in a business culture where—ironically—many didn't realize that what they were doing was data-driven.”

Karen Hodge-Cunningham,
Director, Consulting Services &
Strategic culture and change
solutions expert,
CGI

About CGI

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