MAKE YOUR BUSINESS DATA FIT WITH QLIK
Your Data Integration Fitness Plan by Qlik

30-60-90-Day Action Plan Included
What is Data Integration?

For years we’ve heard that data is the new oil, but – if you think about it – data is more like water to fuel a big workout: its hydration gives businesses and individuals what they need to hit their personal best.

A strong data process turns data into insights that lead to better business decision making. Many CXOs globally recognize the value of insights-ready data and according to IDC, 87% of them said becoming a more intelligent enterprise is their priority over the next five years. This starts with data integration. To help you get going, we created a 30-60-90-day data integration fitness plan with expertise from leading Chief Data Officers (CDOs).
COVID-19 forced a leap in digitization, increasing the amount of data businesses have on hand. Yet, much of this available data remains unused or underused for decision-making. One CDO told us that his organization is using less than 1% of the data it creates and stores.

According to IDC, over 60% of organizations experience significant challenges when investing in technology to create data, assessing the value of data, and identifying valuable data sources. The result? Business decision makers default to experience or gut feeling and not data-driven insights, which leads to less objective decision-making.

This puts CDOs and those tasked with extracting value from data in the driver’s seat for change, responsible for championing and implementing the delivery of greater enterprise intelligence. By completing our 30-60-90-day data integration fitness plan, CDOs can enable the business to gain new insights from data, which can lead to customer innovation and change the image of the CDO organization from running analytics to driving the business.

Why is data integration important?

By collecting and interpreting multiple data sets, data integration eliminates information silos. This helps create unified data environments that enable you to respond faster to change, and better leverage new technologies to innovate.
Data integration can't deliver immediate gains to improve decision-making

Data integration can be a large transformation project that shows its true ROI only after a few years – but it doesn’t have to be this way. It is possible to realize small incremental gains along the way, right from the beginning.

One approach is to break down bigger data integration projects into smaller development cycles, delivering multiple data products that demonstrate their direct impact on the business early and often. However, as with fitness, each person, or business in this case, must find what works for them. The CDO of a large multinational company told us it took his team three months alone just to set the vision for their new data strategy, while the CDO of a medium-sized company completed the entire data integration project in three months at a single site.

Myth busting:

“Businesses often face similar challenges that ignite a data integration project. They make decisions based on gut feel where employees say ‘I believe’ without rigorous data behind their statement. Or suffer from analysis paralysis, trying to over-optimize everything based on data. Data integration helps the business to focus on the insights it needs to make scientific decisions that provide real value and don’t waste everyone’s time.”

Sebastian Klapdor, CDO at Vistaprint
Think of data integration as a way of bringing all your fitness goals together. People track a myriad of metrics from weight to heart rate and even blood oxygen levels to determine their fitness, stay motivated, and improve their health.

Organizations should do the same, just with different metrics such as profit, employee engagement, or customer satisfaction. However, these data points are often locked up in siloes across the organization, making it hard to understand which organizational muscle needs extra work and why certain parts of the organizational body can’t seem to shred. This is where data integration comes in – allowing organizations to synchronize data from a variety of sources and provide users with the information they need to optimize their company’s “buffness”.

With this in mind, we have developed a data integration plan to get your organization data-fit based on what several CDOs have told us about their data integration projects. The 30-60-90-day timeline depends on company size and project scope, and can be extended accordingly.
The first 30 days

Find an executive to be your partner

“Business stakeholders often think that data analytics happens in a black box. They don’t understand how it works, so you need to shine some light on the process. What worked for me was to identify a particular business function our data product supported, then give them a new piece of data insight they never had before, maybe even through a live demonstration. This gave our business stakeholders the ability to understand where their investment went and how they would benefit from it.”

Duncan Phin, Qlik Sense Data Architect at Sage

Fitness is always more fun with a partner. Engaging senior stakeholders as project champions is key to widespread buy in. Reframe the data integration project as a business project, present your big vision, and get the business to be the sponsor. Don’t constrain your project to a tech vision, as some people may not be receptive to that. Understand what business challenge is driving the project and what outcomes your project can deliver to address it.
User adoption will make or break the success of your data integration project. Ask yourself: Who are the consumers of your data? Why do they use it? Speak to users and listen to their data pain points. Set the project requirements with them in mind and develop a user engagement plan to get them excited about your new data product. This exercise will thread through your entire plan and require you to consistently communicate your project strategy and vision to users and other stakeholders.

“There are four steps to bring the users of your data product on board. First, leadership needs to support the project and should only accept data from the new solution. Second, consistently communicate your project’s strategy and how it will benefit them. Third, build capability by upskilling employees’ general data literacy and expertise in using the new data product. Expand the talent pool by hiring people with the right skills and mindset, if required. And fourth, embed the use of data into employee reviews, development, processes, and systems to highlight which behaviors you want to see in your teams going forward.”

Sebastian Klapdor, CDO at Vistaprint
Based on your user diagnostics, clearly define your project scope. What will your project deliver? Be clear on what you want to achieve with your workout. This will also help you avoid scope creep which can lead to excess “fat” causing delays, additional costs, and dissatisfied stakeholders.

After setting the scope, attach a timeline to it. Your project needs a clear endpoint and several intermediate checkpoints - otherwise it turns into an endless process. These checkpoints should be seen as value drops, where you deliver smaller data products or project results to the business. The checkpoints will help you see if you’re moving in the right direction and are a great way to keep your stakeholders engaged. Just remember to be realistic with timescales and build in contingency for unforeseen challenges.

“All like every exercise targets a specific muscle group, every analytic use case should have a specific, measurable outcome and an executive who will become a company hero when it works. Without this, all you really have is a science experiment.”

Joe DosSantos, Chief Data Officer, Qlik
According to IDC, over 60% of organizations experience significant challenges in identifying valuable data sources. This is because they are dealing not only with more data, but also with different types across different and disparate sources, including multiple cloud platforms, on-premises, and at the edge, or even across different business functions such as finance, manufacturing, or supply chain.

Identify initial data points (your initial rep range) to start the testing and reconciliation process, and add more data points as your project becomes stronger. But remember, not all data is equal. Ensure high levels of data availability, data timeliness, and data quality; otherwise your model won’t work. Once you have the data ready, you can extract and transform it for the development phase of your project.

“At Deloitte, we realized we had a challenge to convince our people, who already had a large volume of work, to clean a significant amount of CRM data. We decided to appeal to their competitive nature and introduced a game with a real-time leaderboard showing who had cleaned the most data. We rewarded employees on top of the board with weekly prizes and recognition mentions from the senior leadership teams. Before long, we had our data cleaned. Our CRM project was a success, and everyone now had confidence in the quality of the information it provided.”

Sean Bishop, formerly at Deloitte, now CDO at Chapman Tripp
When developing your data product, don’t code yourself into a corner. Version two and beyond, which could integrate more data points, must be possible. Your data product must scale and grow with the business. Consider creating coding templates, for example for common data fields such as geographies, dates, or dimensions. Using these templates means you won’t have to rewrite code from scratch every time you add new data points, which makes integrating historical data easier.

“DataOps is the future of data delivery. It focuses on quick development iterations, embraces quick failures, and results in better business buy-in and reduced time to value. DataOps is built on the technical principles of DevOps, but requires a new kind of teamwork between the business and the tech savvy to focus on the right things and deliver insights nimbly where they are needed most within the business.”

Joe DosSantos, Chief Data Officer, Qlik
Show the first result of your data integration project, even if you’re not “fully shredded” just yet. It’s crucial to demonstrate how you are progressing towards solving business questions and generating value for the business. Don’t just present data alone, take a storytelling approach to explain the meaning behind the data. Creating a data visualization and embedding it into a business process can help with this.

The first value drop also functions as an important touch point with stakeholders to demonstrate how you are addressing their needs. This gives your stakeholders the chance to ask questions and provide feedback to potentially re-evaluate the project scope and generate ideas for the second or third development cycle. After all, the business keeps changing, so your product needs to adapt as well.

“The data integration project made data and insights available to employees in real time and across multiple platforms, such as mobile apps. This is especially important as our employees increasingly work on-the-go and from home. As a result, employees are more efficient when working remotely.”

Sean Bishop,
formerly at Deloitte,
now CDO at Chapman Tripp
After delivering the first value drop, you need to measure ROI to validate your work and seek support for future development cycles. Some common ROI metrics include adoption (e.g. how many employees use your new data product), efficiency (e.g. how much does your data product accelerate existing processes?), and performance (e.g. does the business make better decisions and do they lead to specific outcomes, such as financial or production output?).

The CDOs we spoke to confirm the ROI of their data integration projects. One of them said that the company achieved an eight-fold improvement in production efficiency.

“Our data integration project enabled live dashboards displayed on big screens across the production floor. These dashboards communicate in real-time the impact of any changes and processes on the production process, and help the team see where inefficiencies or challenges may lie. As a result, we were able to show immediate productivity gains and cost reductions in our production process, which further convinced upper management that they had made the right decision to sponsor our data integration project.”

Harjan Boes,
Operational Excellence Manager at Printmasters Europe
Fitness is a journey

Never settle or get complacent. Data integration, like fitness, is a living concept. One CDO told us you can expect to change around 20% of your data integration products and workflows each year to meet new business requirements. Constant change requires constant support from the business, but why should the business grow your team or (re)invest into more data and analytics? Make an investment case for the next data integration project by demonstrating the team’s ROI.

One CDO we spoke to told us that his team pays itself off multiple times throughout the year through the value it delivers to the business, while another is confident that his team will achieve a ten times ROI just two years after launching the data integration project.

What 30-60-90-day data fitness can do for you

A successful data integration project also shifts the mindset of the management and the board. They will become more open to adopting and investing in cloud services for future data projects. What’s more, the image of your CDO organization will change with every successful 30-60-90-day project. People across the company notice and your team becomes better-known for proactively driving business, customer, and shareholder value, and for improving innovation and customer experience with data and analytics. This positions you as the change driver you are meant to be.

“In a world in which everyone is using similar math and charts to analyze the same problems, the difference maker is data. Making it easy for employees to access data and enabling the business to iterate quickly upon it will separate the wheat from the chafe – it’s what will make the difference in business strategy in the 21st century.”

Joe DosSantos,
Chief Data Officer, Qlik
Qlik Data Integration

The Qlik Data Integration Platform provides everything you need to solve even the most challenging enterprise-scale integration initiatives, including data warehouse automation, data lake creation, and Change Data Capture (CDC) streaming. Find out more here.

Qlik partners with many industry-leading technology companies to design complementary data products, extensions, integrations, and connectors that extend the value of Qlik Data Analytics and Data Integration Platforms and complement any company’s cloud transformation journey. Qlik’s partners include Microsoft, Amazon Web Services (AWS), Google, Snowflake, and Databricks. Find out more here.

Now it’s your turn

Put your workout gear on and kick off your data integration project. Check out our Data Integration for Data Analytics hub for more resources, including some exciting customer testimonials that will guide you along your data integration journey with Qlik.

Qlik’s 30-60-90-day data integration fitness plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>30 days</th>
<th>60 days</th>
<th>90 days</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Find an executive sponsor</td>
<td>- Set the project scope</td>
<td>- Integrate your data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Identify user requirements</td>
<td>- Get your data ready</td>
<td>- Deliver the first value drop to your stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Measure ROI and iterate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Qlik’s vision is a data-literate world, where everyone can use data and analytics to improve decision-making and solve their most challenging problems. Qlik provides an end-to-end, real-time data integration and analytics cloud platform to close the gaps between data, insights and action. By transforming data into active intelligence, businesses can drive better decisions, improve revenue and profitability, and optimize customer relationships. Qlik does business in more than 100 countries and serves over 50,000 customers around the world.