Gartner Peer Insights ‘Lessons Learned’: Implementing Data Preparation Tools

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Initiatives: Data Management Solutions

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Data preparation is a crucial technology for enabling business teams to find, prepare and share heterogeneous data for their integration, analytics and data science use cases. Data and analytics leaders can learn from the implementation experience of their peers shared on Gartner Peer Insights.

Overview

Gartner Peer Insights is a free peer review and ratings platform designed for enterprise software and services decision makers. Reviews go through a strict validation and moderation process to ensure they are authentic.

We analyzed 182 Peer Insights reviews to identify lessons learned implementing data preparation tools. This report focuses on the responses to the questions: “If you could start over, what would your organization do differently?” and “What one piece of advice would you give other prospective customers?” To browse all reviews, see the full list of data preparation tools reviews on Peer Insights.

Peer Lessons Learned

This edition of “Lessons Learned” summarizes clients’ firsthand experiences with implementing data preparation tools. The peer advice results both from successful implementation projects and learnings based on what went wrong. This peer perspective, along with the individual detailed reviews, is complementary to expert research and provides a holistic view to the implementation process. Reviewers who submitted their lessons learned represent a cross-section of small- to midsize and large organizations (see Figure 1.)
Below are some key lessons learned and most cited recommendations by Peer Insights reviewers to help data and analytics leaders in implementing their data preparation tools.

**Lesson 1: Define Organizational Requirements and Allocate a Budget to Plan Your Data Preparation Tool Implementation**

Peer reviewers recommend data and analytics leaders to identify their organization’s data analytical needs and create a budget at the start of the project. It would enable the leaders to gain clarity on their business requirements and draft a detailed implementation plan upfront before moving to the vendor evaluation phase.

A peer suggests understanding the organization’s data requirements:
Successful data analytics requires an in-depth understanding of the business problem that a user is trying to solve. Without that understanding, it is tough to get anything useful and could potentially end up making the wrong decisions. Therefore, it is important to align the organization on ownership, actions, and specific problems to ensure that you do not create multiple versions of the same truth.

— CxO, Communications Sector

Another peer suggests:

We will plan the architecture from end to end before we start identifying which and what kind of tools suit our business requirements. It helps in creating an effective platform for an organization.

— Analyst, Retail Sector

Peer recommendations include:

■ Set up an enterprise architecture plan. Create a blueprint of what the organizational requirements are and what services are required to accomplish them.

■ Gather, qualify and gain agreement on the organization’s data requirements internally before initiating request for proposals (RFPs) and related procurement processes.

■ Ensure you know your gaps and what kind of reporting you require during the initial state before moving to the vendor selection phase.

■ Be realistic about budgeting. Spend more time on the front end to truly understand the capabilities and user requirements.

■ Gain IT support from the start of the project as it would prove to be very useful during the initial assessment phase.

Recommended reading:

*Market Guide for Data Preparation Tools*
Lesson 2: Analyze Licensing Costs and Design During Vendor Selection

Data and analytics leaders are advised to deliberate on the vendors’ licensing terms and design competence during data preparation tool selection. Peers further advise the leaders to review multiple vendors against the organizational requirements to choose the right tool and not rely completely on a brand name.

A peer says:

Engage with the vendors for the ideation/design. Gain a detailed understanding of vendors’ capability. The key is to identify how it could be utilized across multiple different data environments.

— Data and Analytics Professional, Finance Sector

Another peer states:

I would advise to do some research on the tools via online forums, blogs and channels. This gives a quick overall insight to the tools features allowing the prospective user to make a go forward decision.

— Data and Analytics Professional, Finance Sector

Focus on obtaining the right licensing, a peer proposes:

Please ensure to get proper licensing. Make sure to have a detailed discussion on licensing with the vendor. Also, confirm that all your database is accessible with the selected data preparation tool for reporting.

— Enterprise Architecture and Technology Innovation Professional, Healthcare Sector

Peer recommendations include:
Ensure that the data preparation tool is compatible with the existing operating systems.

Check whether the tool provides adequate customization and data visualization options per the business needs. It will enable users to gain more insights from the data.

Focus and gain clarity on features that you would be utilizing more instead of advanced features and terminology that you are unsure of.

Plan your version and related licensing to avoid client versions getting out of sync in large deployments. Purchase bulk licensing to ensure all users are on the same version for longer periods.

Understand all the data that the organization could leverage with the tool. If it’s only a couple of data types, choose a tool for a smaller price that could achieve it.

Recommended reading:

**Tool: Evaluate Data Preparation Tools Across Key Capabilities**

**Lesson 3: Focus on Data Management With an Emphasis on Datasets Before Implementation**

Peers suggest to determine early on the datasets you are looking for at all levels of your company. They stress to ensure that the data aligns well with the chosen tool and has multiple levels of access to cater to the enterprise data-sharing needs.

A peer opines:

> Validate dashboards against raw data. Beginners, sometimes, interpret a functionality differently and no validating may result in incorrect data being displayed. For e.g., when data blending, the secondary data source’s data may be missed if the blended key is not in the primary data source. Beginners may not be aware of this and their charts may miss some important data.

— *Data and Analytics Professional, Government or Public Sector*

Further, a peer recommends:
Always get to know your available data first and check if you need to use other tools to transform it so you can improve the deployment of your data preparation tool. Also, it is important to know the users for your tool because they will strongly drive the success of the deployment.

— Application Professional, Manufacturing Sector

Peer recommendations include:

- Define data sources properly so they can be used across multiple data visualizations.

- Conduct your data processing on the DB side; although, it could require you to reconsider your DB structure or setup to not impose load on production databases so that it doesn't affect the application.

- Adopt a technology capable of completely auto importing the data to the tool.

Recommended reading:

The 3 Pillars of Citizen-Driven Data Management

Lesson 4: Prioritize Training to Familiarize End Users With the Tool's Functionality and Syntax

Peer members suggest data and analytics leaders to pay close attention to end-user training before implementation. It provides the users a chance to ask questions as it is challenging to self-learn some of the functionalities and syntax. Peers opine that it would empower the users to solve issues on their own and avoid contacting vendor support as much as possible.

As one peer reviewer suggests:

It took us time to understand the product initially thereby wasting a lot of our time. For almost everything, we had to contact vendor support to clarify our doubts. So, if we could start all over again, we would specify all our use cases clearly and demand a complete end-user training based on our requirements.

— Application Professional, Manufacturing Sector
Another peer suggests:

If you want to gain the benefits of the data preparation tool, you have to be committed to making it work. While it is easy to make some progress, you should not consider the tool as a system for casual analytics and analysis. Invest in the people, training and resources required to gain significant benefits.

— CxO, Communications Sector

A peer further states:

Make sure you go through as many of the available free tutorials as possible. You will discover how powerful and capable the tool is and learn new ways to present data that you may not have previously thought of.

— Data and Analytics Professional, Transportation Sector

Peer recommendations include:

- Invest in training courses for your IT experts and data analyst team to better implement and organize the tool.
- Set up a power user concept that helps empower the users to train themselves to understand the tool’s strengths, and potential risks and weaknesses.

Recommended reading:

2021 Planning Guide for Data Management

Methodology

Of the Peer Insights survey data considered for this market, only those responses meeting the following criteria were included in this synthesis:

- Reviews less than 12 months old.
The results of this synthesis are representative of the respondent base and not necessarily the market as a whole.

“The data used in this report is drawn from reviews on Peer Insights, a crowdsourced enterprise review platform that relies on dynamic data. Key to maintaining the integrity of the site is our ongoing moderation and validation of those reviews. Reviews are examined before publishing to the site and periodically, post-publishing. Due to the dynamic nature of the data, the external Peer Insights site will always have the most updated view of the data in this report.”

Document Revision History

Peer Lessons Learned: Implementing Data Preparation Tools - 20 June 2019

Recommended by the Author

Market Guide for Data Preparation Tools
Tool: Evaluate Data Preparation Tools Across Key Capabilities
The 3 Pillars of Citizen-Driven Data Management
2021 Planning Guide for Data Management
Hype Cycle for Data Management, 2020
Magic Quadrant for Data Integration Tools