

# Gartner Peer Insights ‘Lessons Learned’: Implementing Master Data Management Solutions

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By Peer Contributors

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MDM solutions ensure the uniformity, accuracy, stewardship, governance, consistency and accountability of the organization’s official shared master data assets. Data and analytics leaders can learn from the implementation experience of their peers shared on Gartner Peer Insights.

## Overview

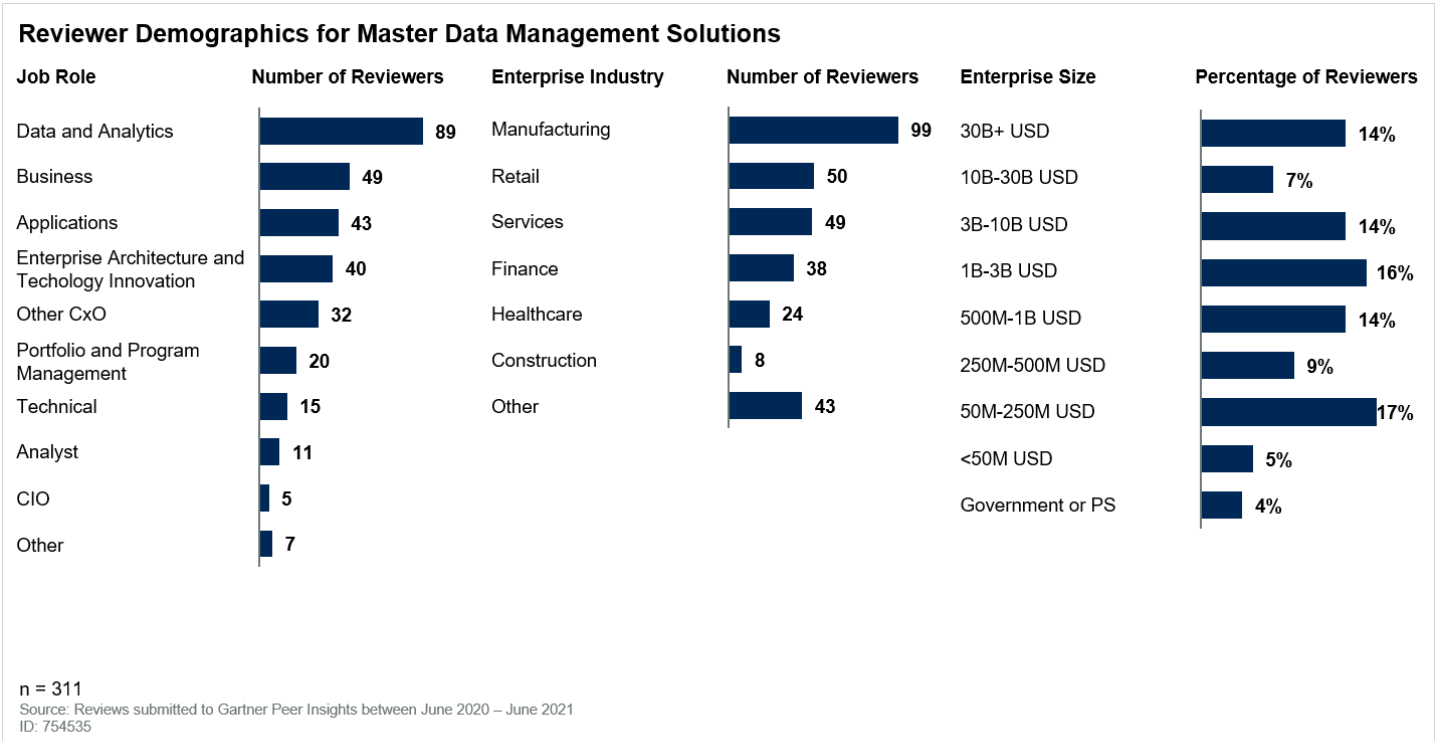
Gartner Peer Insights is a free peer review and ratings platform designed for enterprise software and services decision makers. Reviews go through a strict validation and moderation process to ensure they are authentic.

We analyzed 311 Peer Insights reviews to identify lessons learned while implementing master data management (MDM) solutions. 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 Master Data Management Solutions reviews on Peer Insights](#).

## Peer Lessons Learned

This edition of “Lessons Learned” summarizes clients’ firsthand experiences with implementing MDM solutions. 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.)

### Figure 1. Reviewer Demographics



Below are some key lessons learned and most cited recommendations by Peer Insights reviewers to help data and analytics (D&A) leaders in the implementation process of their MDM solution.

## Lesson 1: Ensure Detailed and Approved Business Requirements by Engaging Key Stakeholders

The peers recommend D&A leaders to create a robust business plan by thoroughly assessing the requirements of sustainable governance of mastered data in the organization. This involves clearly defining the value that MDM will provide, by aligning it with the business initiatives it supports. It is crucial to ensure the approval of all key business stakeholders to avoid common pitfalls during the solution’s deployment.

A peer articulates:

**Ensure well-thought-out and more detailed business requirements and have validation with multiple groups of business users. If business requirements are not captured better, there is bound to be a gap in expectation and in delivering the milestones.**

– *Application Professional, Manufacturing Sector*

A peer emphasizes:

**I recommend the businesses reckoned to transform into the digital error to make sure that the entire organization understands the necessity for such a transformation. Stakeholders from all areas must be dedicated to looking at current methods of doing processes and how data governance can create new efficiencies beyond their current status quo. Be patient, do not rush the process and invest; this journey will pay off in full once completed.**

*– Enterprise Architecture and Technology Innovation Professional, Retail Sector*

Another peer adds:

**Make sure you have the organization aligned with the priorities to support the solution's integration in a timely fashion. Too many distractions may cause painful delays with a technology that evolves very quickly.**

*– Infrastructure and Operations Professional, Service Sector*

Peer recommendations include:

- Identify key master data assets by focusing on master data domains and recognizing the source data for all these assets. Analyze the usage of this data at an enterprise level to ensure semantic consistency across the business later.
- Gather the requirements of the end users and take into account their processes to ensure the right capability. Address their concerns/queries with due consideration to smoothen the transition later.
- Categorize business initiatives that would not succeed without an effective MDM solution. These initiatives may include digital business holistic customer data, optimized product management,

compliance and operational efficiency.

- Network with the upper management to convince them regarding the benefits of master data management. Communicate the need for discipline in the data management process, and articulate the benefits in terms of more accurate business analytics and fewer operational mistakes due to poor data quality.
- Adopt a programmatic approach that describes the long-term benefits and metrics of success to demonstrate a clear vision by leveraging proven frameworks to map out the transformation journey.

Recommended readings:

[Articulating MDM Value to the Business](#)

[7 Steps to Build a Successful Business Case for MDM Programs](#)

## Lesson 2: Conduct POCs of Organization-Specific Use Cases to Choose a Suitable MDM Solution

The peers advise D&A leaders to establish a set of use cases based on the agreed-upon requirements of the organization and run proofs of concept (POCs) to gain familiarity with the vendors' functionalities and gauge user experience. According to the peers, the MDM solution must offer a range of functional capabilities – workflow and business process management, data modeling, information quality and semantics, data stewardship and governance support, performance, scalability, availability, security, and multiple domain support.

A peer states:

**Come up with the list of use cases you want the MDM solution to solve for your organization. Come up with a way to implement during the POC and provide your test data and make sure it meets the needs.**

*– Data and Analytics Professional, Retail Sector*

Another peer adds:

**Always do a POC based on your own data for a specific master data domain.**

Define the quality rules that a vendor needs to meet. It will give insight into the pace of implementation and product capabilities. When exploring MDM products, do ask for roadmap development and the cost when you want to use the MDM product for multidomain.

– *Data and Analytics Professional, Retail Sector*

Peer recommendations include:

- Prepare organization-specific use cases to shortlist appropriate vendors. These use cases may vary for organizations – B2C customer data, B2B customer data, buy-side product data, sell-side product data and multidomain.
- Identify vendors with expertise in the organization's vertical and domain. Vendors that present and offer accelerators in the industry domain should be prioritized as it would fast-track time to value and minimize risk simultaneously.
- Assess the vendors' deployment model applicability for the use cases by evaluating it for total cost of ownership, ease of use and flexibility. Analyze the complete product range, support forums and roadmap of the suitable vendors to check their scalability for the long term.
- Perform POCs of the shortlisted vendors to comprehend not only the business value that they would drive but also the ease of integration and mitigate any potential infrastructure issues ahead of time.
- Evaluate the vendors' market presence, availability of skills, pricing model, support and deployment options to choose a suitable MDM solution. Consult with industry leaders and other customers to comprehend their views – success stories and pain points.

Recommended reading:

[Critical Capabilities for Master Data Management Solutions](#)

### Lesson 3: Create a Robust Governance Framework to Ensure Robust MDM Implementation and Data Model

The peers recommend D&A leaders to execute the crucial task of modeling data to ensure consistency in naming conventions, semantics, default values and security, along with quality of master data that needs to be transferred into the MDM solution. They further suggest establishing a

business-driven governance framework for master data that would also pave the way for expansion of the governance discipline to other types of data, such as unstructured content and transactional data.

A peer contemplates:

**I am pretty sure we would plan and construct the data model from scratch and not just migrate the existing product data 'as given' from our legacies and existing inbound interfaces. In my opinion, it is one of the most important tasks of this project.**

*– Data and Analytics Professional, Retail Sector*

A peer emphasizes the importance of a governance framework:

**A good approach is to spend time assessing key master data assets and how these should be managed and distributed throughout the organization. Limiting the effort to key areas will enable organizations to develop a clearer governance framework with dedicated stewardship and quality controls tied to specific business processes.**

*– Data and Analytics Professional, Manufacturing Sector*

Another peer adds:

**Data governance should be established prior to beginning the implementation process, in addition to a deeper analysis of the old manual workflow/approval process. We would dedicate additional resources of expert users so the process would not be slowed in the longer run.**

Peer recommendations include:

- Catalog key areas and items of data of the target domains to ensure data objects required by the database are accurately represented. This would provide a clear picture of the base data and allow database developers to smoothly transform legacy data. Be mindful of data latency and integrity issues while modeling the data.
- Evaluate existing processes and ensure a consistent point of view while redefining them to match the transformed data, in adherence to industry standards and best practices.
- Ensure a thorough governance framework that lays out the guidelines for appropriate behavior and acceptable practices in the valuation, creation, storage, archival and deletion of information.
- Adopt a collaborative approach to data modeling and governance by involving resources, and fostering relationships across the business and IT. Team them along with the governance board to establish data steward policies and operational data management responsibilities to drive lasting value and continuing success of the MDM initiative.

Recommended readings:

[Which Data Is Master Data?](#)

[Three Essentials for Starting and Supporting Master Data Management](#)

#### Lesson 4: Hone Skills Required to Optimally Utilize the MDM Solution

The peers direct organizations to focus on training the technical subject-matter experts (SMEs) and business and IT end users to ensure effective and efficient utilization of the solution. Comprehensive knowledge of the solution's capabilities and functioning would maximize benefits after its deployment.

A peer shares the importance of training sessions prior to the implementation by sharing their organization's experience:

**If I would start over, I would definitely introduce a training plan prior to the implementation to avoid the errors and delays that have occurred. Many of these happened due to the lack of knowledge of how to use the solution.**

– *Application Professional, Service Sector*

Another peer remarks:

**We would have invested heavily on training the existing staff on cutting-edge technologies like AI, data integration, big data and so forth than what we are doing now. This would help us to be self-reliant rather than looking for talent elsewhere.**

– *Enterprise Architecture and Technology Innovation Professional, Manufacturing Sector*

A peer further recommends:

**Spend enough time on data modelling workshops and make necessary preparation work to better prepare the teams at all levels and ensure best practices are followed when building your data.**

– *CxO, Service Sector*

Peer recommendations include:

- Demonstrate the capabilities of the solution via an introductory event for the end users. Prepare them for the upcoming engagement in data governance.
- Read the learning material provided by the vendor about the capabilities of the solution. Encourage the developers and end users to go through their web forums to gain useful insight.
- Appoint a team of superusers that is highly efficient in utilizing the solution. Administer them while they train the end users on the capabilities of the solution.



- Enable proficiency among the end users by providing on-site training to ensure they are not only able to effectively utilize the solution upon implementation but also optimize future enhancements to build self-reliance.

Recommended reading:

[Market Guide for MDM External Service Providers](#)

## Lesson 5: Leverage an Experienced MDM Solution Integrator; Build Internal Resiliency With SME Collaboration

The peers suggest D&A leaders employ a veteran third-party system integrator to ensure optimum deployment of the MDM solution throughout the organization. They also highlight the importance of assigning an internal team of SMEs to collaborate with the outsourced team of professionals to ensure internal proficiency in the management of future upgrades and enhancements.

A peer articulates:

**Ensure to find a reliable system integrator with solid MDM experience to assist you in your MDM implementation. The overall MDM field requires a certain mastery of what should be achieved (the ultimate targets) and your partner should be able to help you to draw the roadmap which goes with it.**

– *Enterprise Architecture and Technology Innovation Professional, Service Sector*

Another peer encapsulates:

**Utilize experienced consultants for aiding initial scope and build. There are experienced consultants who can bring years of experience and best practices and are able to develop a project scope that will best integrate to all of your systems, according to your requirements.**

– *Business Professional, Manufacturing Sector*

A peer further stresses on the importance of ensuring SME collaboration:

**We have a dedicated team of in-house MDM experts to deliver changes for the business (for example, change of data provider, new entities, new domain, new markets and so forth) in the solution. This model seems to work really well as it allows us to continuously improve the solution to meet changing business requirements at pace even after the initial project has gone live.**

*– Enterprise Architecture and Technology Innovation Professional,  
Manufacturing Sector*

Peer recommendations include:

- Engage with an experienced team of third-party professionals to draw out a deployment plan, aligned with industry standards and best practices.
- Allocate an internal team of SMEs to collaborate with the team of professionals to not only integrate the solution according to the specific requirements of the organization but also learn the specifics of the deployment to efficiently handle future upgrades.
- Set up a customized process with configurable workflows to support end users in the authorship, management and governance of master data, along with approvals to any changes in data flows.
- Ensure a periodic review of the current state of technology to discern ways to implement latest updates to keep up with the dynamic needs of the evolving market situation.

Recommended reading:

[Magic Quadrant for Master Data Management Solutions](#)

## 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.

Responses that pertain to the project experience and are not tied to the capabilities of a vendor.

Reviews were clustered into the top-five most-referenced categories (lessons learned) and then listed in order of relevant phases in the project life cycle.

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.”

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