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Data Quality: The Hidden Enabler of Security and Compliance

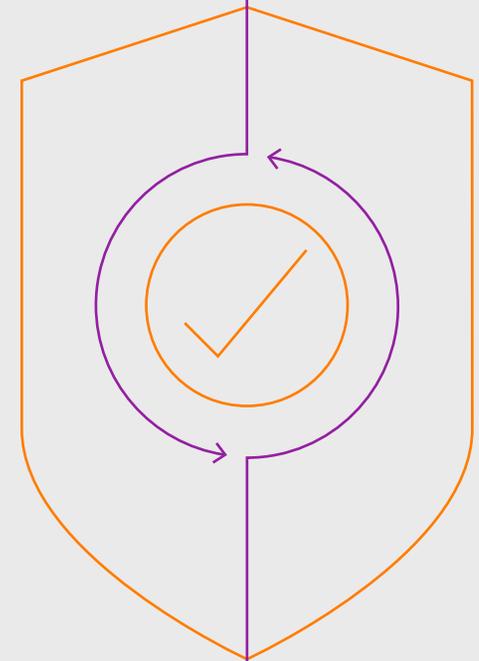
Why high-quality data is easier to secure and make compliant

Why You Need to Invest in Quality Data

Almost all data privacy, protection and compliance programs come down to one thing—data. And the quality of this data matters. If it's low, then you expose yourself to risk, but if it's high, then you can:

- Enhance security by improving the efficacy of your controls.
- Generate savings by refining processes.
- Reduce time to compliance by streamlining the reporting process.
- Improve strategic decision-making by improving the accuracy of analyses.

That's why data privacy and compliance leaders are starting to take data quality seriously. It's a discipline that pays for itself many times over and protects the company from breaches, fines, and reputational damage.



The Hidden Driver of Best-Practice Security and Compliance

As data moves to the center of business strategy, data privacy, protection and compliance have become bigger corporate priorities.

And while the move to intelligent security and the need for streamlined regulatory compliance are by no means identical challenges, they share a lot in common:

- **Both demand an enterprise-wide view**—A piece-meal, tactical approach won't deliver the results your business needs.
- **Both are non-negotiable**—You don't opt out of laws and you don't tolerate security holes.
- **Both are data-driven**—Consuming and creating data as well as benefiting from process-related insights derived from operational data and metadata.

Clearly, the stakes are high. Regulations like HIPAA, GDPR, BCBS239, and CCAR carry substantial fines for non-compliance. And security breaches can put your company in the headlines for all the wrong reasons—to say nothing of the potential loss of strategic data assets, or the squandered loyalty of privacy-conscious customers.

As we'll see, the quality of the data that guides compliance and security strategies—and that informs their governance—can determine how good your controls and reporting are and how efficient your processes are. This much is clear—having high-quality data throughout your organization is a fundamental part of effective security and compliance strategies.

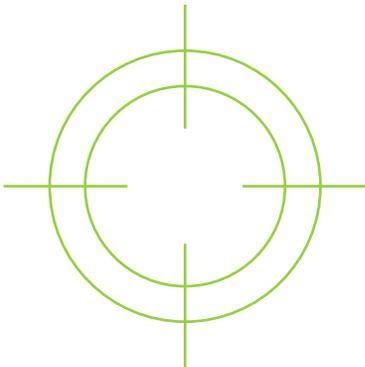
If security and compliance matter, data matters. And, if data matters, data quality matters too.



Quality Data Makes Security More Accurate and Manageable

The role data quality plays in security isn't always obvious. In practice, though, data quality has an incredible—and direct—impact on the way security issues are identified and resolved.

It's not just that inconsistent, mislabeled, or unintentionally ambiguous data isn't serving its purpose; it's also that these apparently small errors can lead to security breaches. Two common examples:



False positives: Poor-quality data and metadata can raise false positives in security systems—issues and exceptions that aren't really threats but trigger alerts.

The resulting “alert fatigue” means security professionals either ignore their security operations platforms due to mistrust in the alerts (a factor in some major breaches over the last two years), or waste a lot of time chasing down false alarms.

False negatives: Incomplete, inconsistent, or mislabeled data and metadata mean security professionals can easily miss the sensitive data that needs protective controls.

A database with a file marked “C_ID” instead of “Customer_ID” may not get encrypted because it seems harmless. In these cases, data quality is the difference between exposure and safety.

Case in point

[Hot Telecommunications](#) needed to protect personal and sensitive information from internal and external breaches. But the company's goals for data privacy compliance involved minimal time and cost—and no changes to applications or databases.

A dynamic data masking solution enabled Hot Telecommunications to shield sensitive data from unauthorized access, securing their data and reducing the time it takes to create test data environments from up to a week, down to minutes.

Quality Data Streamlines Compliance

Data quality also plays a clear and central role in compliance practices, even if it's not always obvious that the quality of data is an issue.

For instance, matching and deduplication to obtain a single and complete view of your customers are data quality and master data management practices that lead directly to improved compliance. They can help you spot and secure personally identifiable information (PII) or validate client addresses for anti-money laundering reporting.

In fact, data quality is so important that regulators are now building it into their regulations, demanding accurate reporting on things like data accuracy, completeness, and timeliness.

High-quality data enables better compliance in a number of ways:

- **Identifying compliance risk becomes easier:** Standardized metadata and data quality/governance solutions make it easier to actively mitigate regulatory red flags. Meanwhile, AI and machine learning processes can discover and remediate compliance risks automatically.
- **Reporting becomes far more efficient:** Automatic discovery and profiling of data stores to identify sensitivity and lineage make it easier to find and analyze regulation-relevant data—and to report on its status.
- **Reporting is more accurate:** Regulators expect accuracy in your reporting. Strong data-quality infrastructure and processes mean your reports are based on trusted data.

A bonus benefit

Compliance with regulations like the GDPR goes well beyond successful submissions. By following the guidelines strictly, enterprises become much better at managing customer data—the foundation for better customer experiences.

Case in point

To comply with Dodd-Frank legislation, mortgage lender [Fannie Mae](#) reports every quarter to the U.S. Federal Reserve and Wall Street. The report includes information like business risk as a function of data quality and accuracy, credit-worthiness of loans, and investment risk levels.

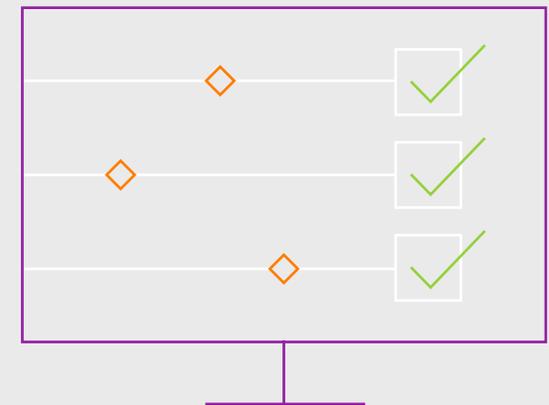
To report accurately and efficiently, Fannie Mae undertook a major data integration and data quality initiative to bring together cleansed and standardized data from 100-plus data sources. The company can now track how data enters, flows through, and is changed by multiple applications, ensuring traceability to the individual user level by loan, security, property, and so on.

Case in point

[Bank of Ireland](#) operates in a highly regulated environment where having the right data at the right time is essential to avoid punishing fines.

That's why it adopted a strategic data governance program. It needed to know where its data lived, who was using it, and how it was being used. With a newfound understanding of the data lifecycle, the bank could optimize processes and solve data-related problems.

This new approach is helping the bank reduce time to compliance, but it's also delivering a host of additional benefits. Previously disconnected departments are now aligned thanks to a framework that enables collaboration. More importantly, valuable customer data is accessible to business users who can use it to create new products and deliver better customer experiences.



Improving Data Quality for Security and Compliance

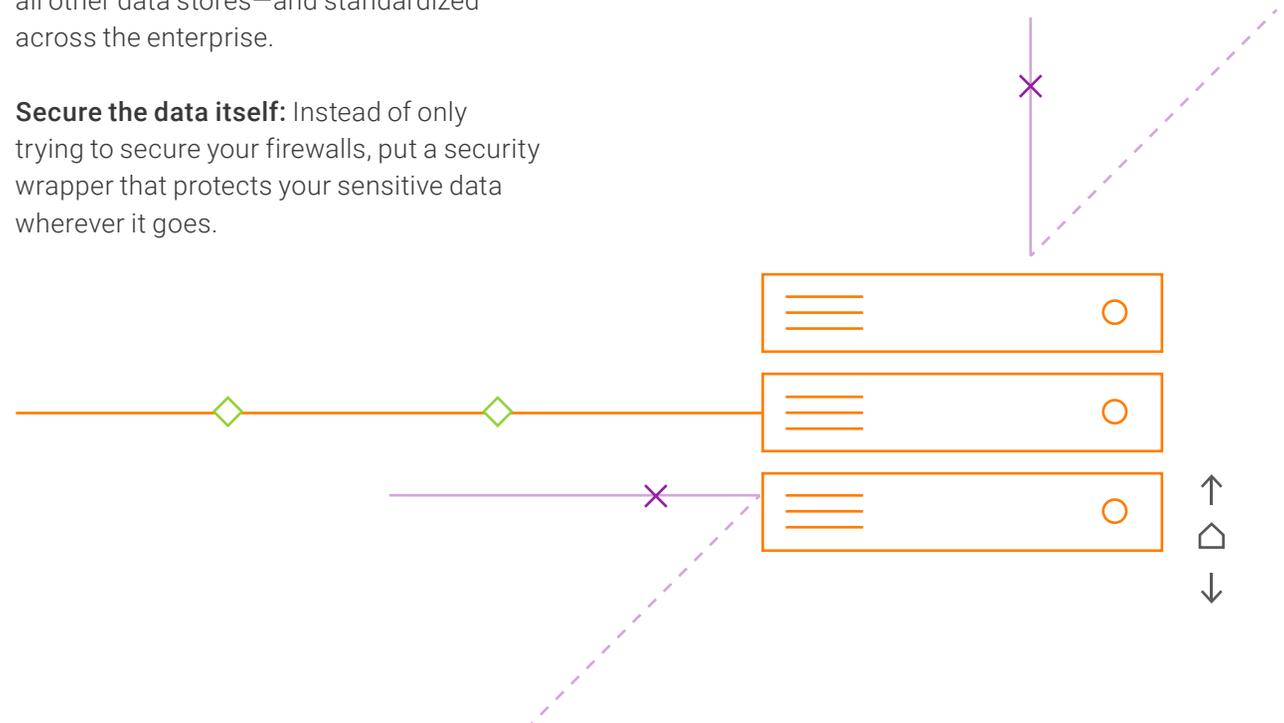
Data security and compliance often boils down to knowing where all of your sensitive data lives, proving that you're only using it legally, and proving that you're securing it and tracking its status.

To do that, you need to:

- **Automatically identify high-risk data:** Discovery and profiling are an essential aspect of data quality, compliance, and security. Automated and AI-driven solutions can show you where data lives, who uses it, what business process it touches, and what risk it carries.
- **Track data lineage:** Data lineage capabilities must provide a built-in audit trail that shows where data originated from, where it was used, how it flows through processes, who touched it, who changed it, and who can access it. This is invaluable for both security and compliance.

- **Remediate issues rapidly:** Compliance and security professionals need to set rules for automatic remediation and for raising exceptions to the right data stewards.
- **Build in reusability:** When someone sets a policy or fixes metadata in one system, that update should be reusable across all other data stores—and standardized across the enterprise.
- **Secure the data itself:** Instead of only trying to secure your firewalls, put a security wrapper that protects your sensitive data wherever it goes.

The most effective way to tackle data quality across the enterprise is with strategic data governance. There's an eBook for that: [Reimagine Data Governance eBook](#).



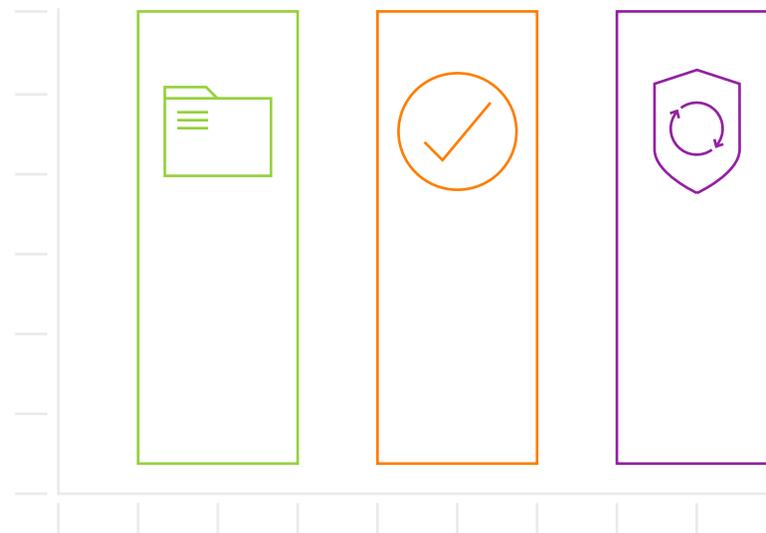
Better Data Means Better Compliance and Security

Because data is essential to modern security operations and central to compliance, improving the *quality* of data delivers huge, measurable benefits to both.

As security threats continue to evolve and regulations continue to proliferate, any investment in data quality will show returns many times over.

Far from a tactical, IT concern, improving data quality is one of the smartest ways to streamline processes and improve the accuracy of all your security and compliance initiatives. Ultimately, data quality increases trust in your systems, data, and reports.

In short, data quality can no longer be “nice-to-have” for enterprises committed to security and compliance. It’s a must have.

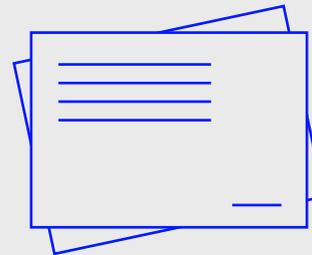


Further Reading

Ten Data Quality Dividends eBook

Data quality impacts every corner of every enterprise. And it's especially important in enterprises getting serious about innovation and transformation.

Read [Ten Data Quality Dividends](#) to learn about some of the big, small, and surprising ways data quality impacts your business.



[GET THE EBOOK](#)

About Informatica®

Digital transformation changes expectations: better service, faster delivery, with less cost. Businesses must transform to stay relevant and data holds the answers.

As the world's leader in Enterprise Cloud Data Management, we're prepared to help you intelligently lead—in any sector, category or niche. Informatica provides you with the foresight to become more agile, realize new growth opportunities or create new inventions. With 100% focus on everything data, we offer the versatility needed to succeed.

We invite you to explore all that Informatica has to offer—and unleash the power of data to drive your next intelligent disruption.

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IN18-0818-3394

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