Metadata is as important as the data itself

Data analytics, by design, is a field that thrives on collecting and organizing data. In this reading, you'll learn about metadata and the type of information it can provide. In addition, you'll explore examples of metadata.

Explore a data file by opening any file on your computer or a document in your home or workplace. What is it? Where did it come from? Is it useful? How do you know? This is where metadata comes in to provide a deeper understanding of the data. To put it simply, **metadata** is data about data. In database management, metadata provides information about other data and helps data analysts interpret the contents of the data within a database.

Regardless of whether you're working with a large or small quantity of data, metadata is the mark of a knowledgeable analytics team. Metadata helps people communicate about data across the business and makes it easier to reuse data. In essence, metadata tells the who, what, when, where, which, why, and how of data.

Elements of metadata

Before examining metadata examples, it's important to understand what type of information metadata typically provides:

- **File or document type:** What type of file or document are you examining?

- **Date, time, and creator:** When was it created? Who created it? When was it last modified?