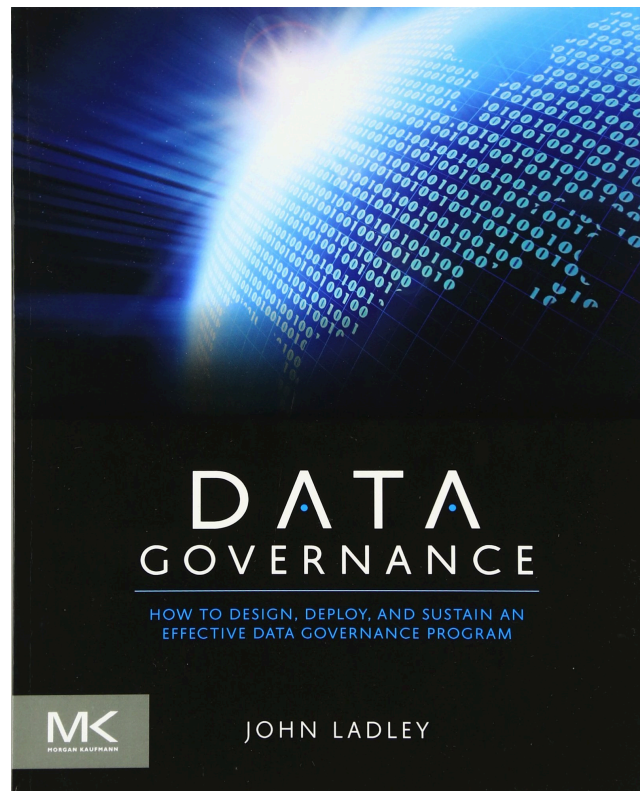


Book Review: Data Governance - John Ladley



Before we get started with the review I'd like to talk about the *lore* behind where and why I got this book.

LORE

On a random Sunday afternoon in December 2025 I decided to window shop at my local Half-Price Books store just to see if there was anything interesting. While I normally end up not reading anything I get (whether it's online, in-person, for free, or paid), I was determined to get back into reading *something*. With that mindset I combed through the Computer Science section and found two books that caught my eye - one of which is this **Data Governance** book by **John Ladley**.

My interest in the book was because of the Data Governance folks at my company who I worked with to register, manage, and delete datasets. If none of those words made much sense then just know that I read this book because I wanted to learn more about *what* the Data Governance folks do outside of rejecting my dataset schema for not

being verbose enough. (Just kidding I know it's probably not their fault but at the same time I should not have to wait another 3 business days due to it 🙄)

Now with the book in one hand and an A7 Midori journal in the other, I started 2026 off with a strong “erm, actually...” as I got cracking.

The Actual Review

As I plodded through the chapters, I realized a few things about the book (some of which were already stated):

1. This book is geared towards people at the **VP+ level** with some advice for folks at an **upper-mid level** who need to play some extra cards to convince others of the importance of **Data Governance (DG)**.
2. Data Governance is something that **every company can implement** - software companies being an arguably easier case study.
3. A majority of the book is spent either convincing the reader that DG is important or giving advice on how to convince others that DG is important

Luckily for me, since I agree that **DG is important** and I can see the concepts in practice, the book was a lot more digestible and let me **focus more on the project management advice given**. If you're curious on *why* DG is important then I'll provide a very quick list of examples where DG aids in some capacity:

- Tracing dataset owners, producers, consumers, and history
- Ensuring data remediation efforts are completed swiftly and correctly
- Centralizing data exploration when developing new models, analyzing market trends, and testing new scripts.

While it's easy to state out all the great things DG can accomplish, **it's short-sighted to look at these benefits in a vacuum** and the book's driving point is actualizing these gains in an existing company. So to achieve proper Data Governance you need to do these super fun things:

- Identifying the current state of data **storage** and **retrieval** including general pain points, costs due to inefficiencies, and history leading up to the current state.
- Defining **who** is responsible for these data domains, **what** rules need to be in place to govern data, **when** will each step of governance roll out, **where** should data boundaries be drawn, **why** any particular employee should care about DG, and **how** granular data should be managed.
- Persuading **literally everyone** that DG is not only important but a system that everyone must participate in. Not only will they take on extra responsibilities but **the benefits gained aren't something that can be tracked at an employee level**.

- Cementing DG as a process that's **integral to the company** by pushing systemic changes in the form of teachings, processes, interviews, and audits.

Of course I'm simplifying a lot here but the idea I want to reiterate is that **convincing people (especially upper management) that there *is* a problem is the hardest part**. Even once you've overcome that hurdle the second hardest part is **convincing the same group of people that *everyone* has to take part in this system - not just one organization or section of the company**. Finally you have to make sure that **every new project that adopts DG doesn't have an easy way to throw the effort under the bus** via deadlines, business value, or just finger pointing.

Overall I really enjoyed the book since it opened my eyes on how projects are pushed at an enterprise level - something that I don't think I'll ever work on(?). The level of detail that the book requires in the initial stages of Data Governance kind of goes against what I've experienced in both work and school which usually emphasizes implementation and results over ideation and planning.

Even once we're in the implementation phases I can see the value of good planning since any potential resistance and obstacle can be prepared for in advance. Of course it's impossible to identify *all* problems but having the ability to pre-emptively solve a majority of issues ahead of time seems pretty sweet to me.

Finally, going past the implementation of one particular company and reading the stories of various failed DG efforts it's safe to say that I have a newfound appreciation of managers who are able to enact enterprise level changes without the power to impact the employees' year end reviews. It's hard enough to get people to even fill out random Google Forms so it might be worse than pulling teeth convincing them to take on extra work for no tangential reward - just anecdotal benefits.

Now that I've written my incredibly short review the question now stands: **Should you read this book?** Unless you're intensely interested in the management of people or the management of data (and we're not talking about a single database) then it's an easy **NO**. Even with my background in data and interest in DG I found certain sections of the book to be very grueling since you're asked to imagine a lot of imaginary meetings where the action items extend past the second page.

So yeah that's my book review. Not sure what I'll talk about next time but I really hope it's something not work-related because I'm an advocate for WLB...