SAP Master Data Management – One bite at a time

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"We have a very complex way of managing master data that is spread over multiple systems. We have developed this solution long back and it has evolved over years."

"When we implemented it first, we did want to establish data governance models and the associated processes, in addition to making the IT solution available. However, reasons good or bad, made us postpone this for future since the implementation deadline was around the corner and we did not want the business to wait."

"We have been growing rapidly over last 7 years and have acquired 3 companies in the process. Most of our energy & resources have been spent on integrating the new companies with us. We never got the time to go back to the pending matter of data governance model. Today there are many users who can create and change data as per their priority in their system. We have no control on who is changing what and we are not sure where and how to correct it."

These are the words of some customers, who want to implement a complete master data management solution but are unable to visualize how they would manage to do that while keeping the business running in the given scenario.

While we all know that SAP MDM allows an incremental approach in terms of implementing the IT scenarios, it is also useful to know that one can break this up further and choose to start off with just one master data object. For example, one can choose to focus only on material/product master and follow the incremental approach from content consolidation to central master data management. Further, one can choose to go Business Unit (BU) wise & so on.

By staying focused on one master data object,

- You can manage the data owners (especially when you are a global company) better
- You can manage the change associated with the new solution effectively
- You can implement the new processes/practices in a smaller group more easily
- You can plan to spend the required time and resources to establish the data governance model, even while keeping the overall project timeline and cost under control (as against a large big bang, all-objects-together approach)
- You can leverage on the success of this object to get a faster buy in from other data owners and senior management
- You can make project management a less complex matter & rather focus on the solution
- You lower the risk (of failure) associated with the initiative

The question to be answered next: "**Which master data object to start with?**" I can think of two options.

Option one, is to choose an object that is the least complex has lowest volumes and is the least spread across many IT systems. The chances that you complete a project initiative around this object fast and smooth are high. You could then leverage this success to get the required resources to take

up others. The flip side of this is that you will may find it difficult to make a business case for investing in this initiative, since benefits gets postponed.

Option two, is to take up an object that poses immediate & critical challenges to your business (irrespective of the complexities involved around that object). This approach will help you deliver tangible business benefits quicker. Also, the chances that you get excellent support from business are high since they have high stakes in the project, owing its potential of creating an immediate-n-positive impact!

An approach that works at one company may not work at other. This has to be arrived at after deliberations within the company under the guidance of an experienced external partner. SAP MDM enables you to adopt this approach with its flexibility as you can choose to go object by object and focus on one repository at a time (from design to Go Live). The ease with which you can integrate it in your IT landscape makes the case stronger. In SAP MDM lies a workable solution to address the concerns like the one that I shared at the beginning of this note. Hence, you take a bite at a time; chew what you bit before taking the next bite, using SAP MDM.

However, it does not mean that a company cannot adopt a big bang approach using SAP MDM. If business and IT are committed to make it successful and if the business scale and market environment allows adoption of a big bang approach, it will work & will have its own benefits.