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Who is Sword?

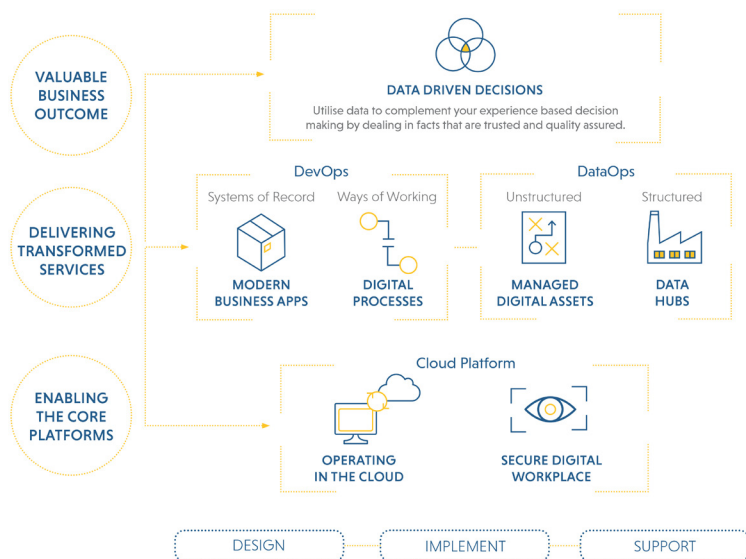
Phil Brading, Sword CIO, has worked with energy industry data for almost 25 years. He is responsible for the data services and solutions that Sword offers from its offices in the UK, Netherlands, and US.

As the North Sea's largest provider of digital services, Sword focuses on building solutions to the industry's most critical business technology challenges by enabling our clients to capture, manage, and utilise data to make informed decisions. This is supported by technology adoption and people engagement, together with modern ways of working to give confidence that the right decision is made every time.



Phil Brading, Sword CIO

THE IMPORTANCE OF STRONG FOUNDATIONS IN REALISING THE VALUE OF DATA



At Sword, everything we do is geared towards supporting our clients make successful data-driven decisions. All parts of our organisation, from IT services and information management to digital solutions, are ultimately focused on placing the right data in the right hands at the right time. We recognise that the value of data is only realised when it is being used effectively. Whether we are looking to support change or make efficiencies in operations, strong data foundations are the starting point.

This desire aligns with the aims of DataOps, a way of approaching the development of applications and products where business goals are delivered through data-centric services. DataOps is a methodology that seeks to break down barriers between IT operations, software development, and business engagement, and offers a flexible framework that serves data where it is needed.

Increased value, even through the deployment of methodologies such as DataOps, can only be achieved when we look after our data foundations and provide content that can be trusted. All too often we jump ahead to scenarios which rely on data science and new software to solve our problems.

At Sword, there are several key areas to consider when delivering foundational data management to our energy industry clients. Responsiveness and alignment to user needs are the starting points for fostering an improved business relationship and healthy data culture. It's important therefore that data services combine the necessary soft skills and decision workflow appreciation, with an in-depth technical understanding.

Building and maintaining trust with the businesses we serve means nurturing sustainable partnerships that can scale with changing levels of demand.

This flexibility can be reflected in the governance models we apply to our data, where effort should be concentrated on the consistent supply of business-critical information. As manual processes are replaced, we look to new technologies to achieve greater data integration, completeness, and assurance to enhance value. Demonstrable data quality improvement and articulating its positive impact on the return from investments made is key to our clients.

Collaboration between the data community and IT is increasingly important. Data Managers understand data and how users want to work with it, and should be active participants in digital programmes of change. This will reduce cycle times by placing data analysts and data engineers into project and development teams. We all know of initiatives where data is an afterthought, rather than integral from the start, and we've seen how that neglect constrains project returns.

Finally, we need to ensure continual improvement is in all that we do. This can be achieved by embedding digital skills within our operational data teams to target process optimisation and using agile approaches to test ideas quickly. In addition, integrating more unstructured data sources into the workflow to access additional insight, and converting to machine-readable formats, will make sure data is more searchable and contextualised.

Data management need not be a hidden task. At Sword, we are unlocking the potential of cloud technology to help our clients access data they need through simple to use data hubs. We are instilling a data culture throughout our industry and into the businesses we support. To maintain the goal of delivering analytics-ready data, we are engaging at the business user level as this requires champions to promote the potential of what we have and how to achieve it.

Production optimisation, real-time data, DataOps, digital transformation, and the energy transition all provide us with the opportunity to better appreciate how data should be accessed and used. We can aggregate content from multiple sources, we can write code to perform complex analysis, and we can automate manually intensive processes, but none of that is possible without trust in the data.

It is with this understanding that we link data value with its useability, interconnectivity, and certainty, all of which are reliant on strong data foundations. Data management is more relevant today than ever, and the promotion of good practices is key to maintaining data health. If we are to achieve data-driven outcomes, then we need to make sure that data is placed at the heart of our operational and project thinking.

