Alation

Alkermes and Alation: The Right Formula for Data Governance Excellence

Alkermes®

Industry: Life Sciences, Healthcare
Headquarters: Dublin, Ireland
Interesting Fact: Alkermes' flagship technology for long-acting injectables ensures better medication compliance for patients

Challenge: Overcoming data chaos

Alkermes, a global biopharmaceutical company, is committed to harnessing the power of data to improve patient outcomes in neuroscience. As the director of Commercial Data Strategy and Governance, Bo Yang and his team rely heavily on data. They leverage first-party data from Alkermes' systems and second and third-party data from external vendors to generate insights that support the company's commercial strategy.

"We have hundreds of data feeds coming from many different internal and external sources," says Yang. Some feeds are refreshed on a daily or weekly basis, and others are refreshed in real-time. And some of those data sets have billions of records when Alkermes receives them. "This data is critical for supporting our day-to-day operations and evolving our commercial strategies, and ultimately making sure that we can make an impact on patients we seek to serve."

Business Outcomes

Improves the quality and consistency of reporting data

Reduces time for data discovery — from days to minutes

Continuously catalogs simultaneous data feeds

As the company prepared for the 2021 launch of a new medication, it undertook an extensive data modernization effort. Yang and his team overhauled their Master Data Management (MDM) processes and centralized their commercial data warehouse on the Snowflake cloud. But Yang's team was still faced with data chaos.

"As we prepared for the product launch, we observed a surge in both data utilization and the complexity of our data ecosystem," says Yang. Information about the data, whether simple table and column definitions or more nuanced directions about proper data usage, was scattered in spreadsheets, documents, and various databases. This made it difficult to find and trust the data. "My team's goal is to better enable data-driven business decision-making, and it became clear that we needed to have a centralized repository for all this information. That's where a data catalog comes in," says Yang.

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> Director of Commercial Data Strategy and Governance
> Alkermes

Objectives

To support Alkermes' commercial strategy with data insights, Yang and his team sought to:

- Improve data accessibility and understanding
- Reduce the time needed to find data to generate insights faster
- Enhance data governance and literacy within the organization

Implementation: A comprehensive data intelligence platform for the commercial organization

Yang sought to implement a data catalog to improve data accessibility, governance, and literacy across the Commercial organization. After evaluating several data catalog offerings, Alkermes ran a proof-of-concept (POC) and ultimately chose the Alation Data Intelligence Platform for its:

- Flexibility in structuring and organizing information
- Easy-to-use search engine that consistently generates reliable results
- Presentation of data lineage in a user-friendly manner
- Seamless integration with existing technology platforms such as Snowflake and Tableau

According to Yang, "Alation has evolved from a simple data catalog to a comprehensive data intelligence platform for Alkermes." Using Alation, Yang's team can capture data information ranging from basic table and column definitions to complex business rules and usage caveats. Additionally, it scans data processing pipelines, providing useful data lineage information that simplifies impact analysis.

Most importantly, Alation empowers the broader data user community by making information easily accessible, eliminating the need to consult colleagues. "Users can quickly find the information they need through the Google-like search engine," he says. "Alation really allows people to find, understand, and trust the data they're using."

Yang notes that engaging cross-functional stakeholders from the POC onward was crucial to ensuring the adoption of Alation. His team worked with the IT department to configure the tool to boost automatic metadata curation. As data subject matter experts (SMEs), his team also ensured that business content was curated. Training and change management were integral parts of the process, helping integrate the data catalog into daily operations.

Results: Faster data discovery and improved data literacy

Since implementing Alation, the Commercial team at Alkermes has benefited from a centralized repository for data definitions, business rules, and data usage guidelines. This has improved the quality and consistency of data used for reporting and sped up data discovery across the organization.

"Users often spent hours or even days finding answers," says Yang. "[This was] due to reliance on a few busy data SMEs or the need to hunt for information in multiple places. And even when found, the information could be inconsistent. Now, these questions can be answered in minutes with a simple search within Alation." As a result, the broader data community at Alkermes has become more knowledgeable.

It's also led to efficiency and time savings. Making important data easily accessible in Alation empowers users and frees up Alkermes' IT and data management teams to focus on higher-value tasks with greater business impact. Instead of helping folks find and understand the company's data, they now spend their time optimizing the data portfolio, identifying cost-saving opportunities, improving data quality to ensure people can trust the data, and improving business domain knowledge. All of this enables Alkermes to gain faster insight from the critical data that ultimately helps support patients affected by complex neurological and psychiatric conditions.

"Alation has become a trusted partner for our business," concludes Yang. "It is really helping us take data literacy and data governance to the next level. I really hope that over time Alation can become the operating system for our data teams. Just like you have Windows and Mac OS as the operating system for computers, we would have Alation as the operating system for our data."

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About Alkermes

Alkermes plc is a global biopharmaceutical company that seeks to develop innovative medicines in neuroscience. The company has a portfolio of proprietary commercial products for the treatment of alcohol dependence, opioid dependence, schizophrenia, and bipolar I disorder, and a pipeline of clinical and preclinical candidates in development for neurological disorders, including narcolepsy. Headquartered in Ireland, Alkermes also has a corporate office and research and development center in Massachusetts and a manufacturing facility in Ohio.

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