EMA™ IT & DATA MANAGEMENT RESEARCH, INDUSTRY ANALYSIS & CONSULTING

Enterprise Management Associates (EMA)

# Research Calendar

*Data and Analytics*

2027

# Data and Analytics

## Data Quality for AI: Fitness for Machine Consumption and the Cost of Fragmented Control

EMA research consistently finds that data quality stands in the way of IT and business outcomes. Fixing data quality at the source ranks as one of the improvements most likely to produce better AI outcomes. Teams struggle to trust data collected and managed across fragmented toolsets, with half of organizations running six or more tools to govern, secure, and operate data and AI. This research will survey data, analytics, and AI leaders on how quality standards change when the reader is a machine, which dimensions (freshness, completeness, semantic consistency, and lineage depth) determine whether an agent's output can be trusted, and what fragmented quality control costs in incidents, rework, and engineering time.

## Autonomous Data Operations: Observability, Orchestration, and Accountability When Agents Run the Pipeline

Agents are beginning to run the data stack: triaging quality incidents, rerouting pipelines, choosing models, and remediating failures. The distinction between observing data operations and orchestrating them is beginning to disappear. EMA research finds that two-thirds of organizations say AI-driven workflows are becoming significantly or fully dynamic in execution; yet data pipelines with downstream dependencies rank among the lowest priorities for centralized, orchestrated control. Data observability, orchestration, and streaming vendors are all converging on the layer where these agents get watched, sequenced, and stopped, and none of them owns it yet. This research will examine how autonomous data operations are observed and audited, which platform coordinates agents that span pipelines, quality remediation, and data products, and where accountability lands when coordinated agents break the data.

## Convergence From Above: Workflow, CRM, and ERP Platforms as the Data Stack

The data stack is being assembled from above. Workflow, CRM, and ERP platforms are reaching downward into data management, integration, analytics, and AI, offering enterprises a path from raw data to agent action inside the platforms that already run their business processes. Instead of assembling a horizontal data stack and connecting applications to it, enterprises can increasingly consolidate data capabilities within the application platforms themselves. This research will examine how much of the data stack organizations expect application platforms to own, which capabilities they are willing to consolidate there, and where they still require an independent data layer.

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### Data Federation: How AI Changes the Fight Against Data Silos

Data silos have survived every architecture designed to eliminate them. As AI expands both the range of data sources organizations want to use and the speed at which they need to access them, federation is increasingly viewed as the answer: stop trying to eliminate the silos and make the data usable where it already lives. EMA research finds that accessing data across systems without moving or copying it is the capability organizations say their current environment delivers least well. Nearly two-thirds have been unable to use data they already hold because of access or integration constraints. This research will examine where federated access is working in production, what forces organizations to copy or centralize data, how governance and domain ownership work when the data remains distributed, and whether federation is finally becoming a mainstream enterprise data architecture.

### No-Code After AI: Citizen Analytics, Prompt-to-App, and the Governance of Generated Work

No-code promised that business users could build without engineers. Generative AI changes the interface from assembling applications to describing them, making it possible to create analytics, workflows, and business applications faster than governance processes were designed to absorb them. EMA research finds more than half of organizations are concerned about poor-quality or insecure output from prompt-generated work, while automation programs remain cautious about citizen development. This research will examine who is generating production work with AI, where that work runs, whether it inherits the identity, permissions, testing, ownership, and audit controls expected of conventionally built applications, and whether no-code platforms become the governed runtime for AI-generated work or AI simply routes around them.

### Data Contracts and As-Code: Enforcing Data Rules in an AI-driven Stack

The data stack is becoming declarative. Pipelines, transformations, quality rules, governance policies, and data contracts are increasingly defined as version-controlled artifacts rather than configured through interfaces and enforced by convention. AI makes that shift more consequential: agents need infrastructure they can inspect, invoke, and change programmatically, while organizations need a durable record of what those agents were allowed to do. This research will examine how far as-code practices have moved into production across the data lifecycle, whether data contracts are becoming the enforceable boundary between producers and consumers, where CI/CD principles translate cleanly to data operations and where they break down, and whether declarative control becomes the operating model for a data stack increasingly run by machines.

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### When the Data Doesn't Have a Schema: Data Quality for the Unstructured Content Feeding AI

Enterprise data quality practices were built primarily around structured data. The documents, tickets, transcripts, and email feeding retrieval pipelines and agent memory create a different problem: quality depends not only on accuracy, but on provenance, relevance, recency, duplication, and whether the content grounds the answer the model produces. EMA research finds data governance teams own governance of AI assets such as datasets and vector stores in only 10% of organizations, while a third of enterprises are still working out how to govern data that agents generate themselves. This research will examine how organizations define trustworthy unstructured content, how they detect when an agent retrieves the wrong or stale version of a document, where quality controls belong in retrieval and grounding pipelines, and who owns the problem when traditional data quality tooling no longer fits the data.

### AI Analytics: How Natural Language and Autonomous Insights Perform in Production

Natural language query, automated insight, and AI-assisted analysis are becoming standard features across analytics platforms, but availability is not the same as production use. EMA research finds model accuracy and data quality rank at the top of what organizations say would improve AI outcomes. This research will examine where AI analytics is running in production, from data preparation and anomaly detection to natural-language analysis and predictive decision support; which use cases earn enough trust to influence decisions without an analyst rebuilding the work; and what separates features that survive enterprise data complexity from those that remain demonstrations.

### Data Sovereignty in Practice: From Compliance Checkbox to Architecture

Data sovereignty is becoming an architecture constraint, not simply a compliance requirement. EMA research finds only a quarter of organizations keep retrieved data inside their own environment when AI models connect to enterprise data, while jurisdiction factors into an agent's data-access decision in fewer than half. Encryption-key ownership and physical residency already shape storage architecture for a majority of enterprises. AI adds a new placement problem: the data, the model, the inference workload, and the resulting context may each cross different technical and legal boundaries. This research will examine how residency and jurisdiction shape platform selection and workload placement, where organizations draw the boundary between data that can move and computation that must move to the data, and which sovereignty capabilities are becoming non-negotiable architecture requirements.

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## Herb Blecher

*Owner and Lead Analyst*

Herb is Owner and CEO of EMA, where he also serves as lead analyst for the Data and Analytics practice. His research focuses on data trust, governance, and the foundations enterprises need to put AI into production. Before EMA, Herb directed national data programs for the U.S. Treasury and the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency and built large-scale data platforms covering 80% of U.S. mortgages. Federal regulators and leading media outlets, including the Wall Street Journal, the New York Times, and Bloomberg, have cited his research and analysis, and he has appeared on CNBC, Fox Business, and NPR.

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