



# Alation for Self-Service Data Intelligence

Self-Service Starts with the Discovery of Trustworthy Data

Business favors the fast, the agile, and the nimble. Successful organizations with increasingly distributed teams — often part of a hybrid workforce — respond to industry changes and competitive threats at will, by finding data and identifying expertise quickly to make timely decisions whenever they're needed.

## Transform How Knowledge Workers Experience Getting Data

Traditional business intelligence was a slow process that did little more than supplement the gut feel of a few executives in the C-suite or to signal whether the business met its monthly or quarterly goals. These legacy organizations centralized power and decision making at the top.

This generation of BI was properly named executive information systems, during which decision making was reactive and based on backward-facing analysis — where backward-facing systems took a backward view of future performance.

These systems and approaches fail to work at the speed of modern business. Today's successful businesses operate on immediate, current data. Decision making today is not focused on the top but the middle organization to gain speed-to-market advantage, digital transformation, and competitive advantage.

The problem today lies with the existing request-based model, which fails to provide data fast enough for decision makers. When decisions are made too late, businesses pay the price in waste, unresponsiveness to customers, and lack of timely innovation. And as the data-desiring population grows, IT becomes a bottleneck and analyst productivity suffers.

## Transforming the Traditional Approach to BI



Alation addresses these issues with a platform designed for self-service. It enables all data stakeholders — including business users — to make decisions with universally trusted data. Data scientists can build automations for digital transformation. Business analysts can create reports with confidence, knowing they're using the best data. On a self-service platform like Alation, analysts can focus on creating new corporate IP (reports) and new valuable sources of data.

## Value Drivers from Self-Service

### Create Business Agility

Self-service enables businesses to accelerate business decisions by making reporting IP immediately available (searchable) to decision makers. This means most decisions can be made using current data when a business problem arises. This also accelerates the work of data scientists, who need high-quality data to drive a range of projects.

### Ensure Trustworthy Data

Regardless of business function, users need assurances that the data they use is trustworthy: meaning discoverable, validated, and current. If a business is to scale data literacy to a wider audience, it must also ensure that data is accessible, interoperable, and reusable.

### Increase Analyst Productivity

Prior to self-service, the only path to data was an inquiry. This created a bottleneck as the number of decision makers grew. With self-service, analysts are no longer the only path to needed data.

At the same time, analysts might not have been aware of the data, reports, and analytics that had already been created. Making data self-serviceable eliminates duplicate data requests from users to analysts. Allowing users to self-serve and lower the amount of duplicate requests allows business analysts to focus their efforts on new data sources. As well, IT or data leaders can right-size the team for new requests and support data governance processes.

## Work Faster — Without Changing Your Report-Making Processes

**Gain a major business advantage by making data-backed decisions quickly and adapting to market conditions in real time.** A self-service platform, offered by the Alation data catalog, delivers:

- Shorter time-to-value
- Lower business costs
- Business agility
- Speed of innovation
- Transformation at scale

**Delivering effective self-service** is built on four principles:

- Fixing the end-to-end data value chain
- Making data easier to acquire
- Quick to determination of data trustworthiness
- Focusing analysts on developing new data sources

## Alation Data Catalog: The Foundation for Self-Service

Alation's data catalog is the foundation for self-service because it empowers enterprise-wide access to everyone in the organization. Alation enables users to find and understand data using natural language. Supporting technical understanding with clear, natural language raises functional data literacy across the enterprise. Two key elements are:

- Employing faceted search (with data organized by domain) so users get the most relevant information faster
- Converting technical terms to easy-to-understand business terms and automatically providing a business glossary

Meanwhile, delivering data that users can trust requires key features, which:

- Surface recommendations, flags, and policies to data consumers
- Integrate with a data quality tool to score data for quality issues
- Add popularity rankings, user recommendations, and usage recommendations
- Promote best practices directly within a user's natural workflow through signals like data health flags
- Provide quality, privacy policy, age, etc., to avoid data misuse and compliance problems

Alation helps enterprises create thriving data cultures where anyone — a business user, a data scientist, or business analyst — can find, understand, and trust data. Alation pioneered the modern data catalog, led its evolution into a platform for data intelligence, and uses automation and continuous improvement to transform data governance.

Created by experts in distributed systems, the Alation Data Catalog provides a living inventory of data assets through an iterative process. More than 200 organizations, including American Family Insurance, Exelon, Munich Re, and Pfizer, leverage the Alation Data Catalog to confidently make data-driven decisions. **For more information, visit [alation.com](https://alation.com)**