

Inbox

## **The complex data availability picture**

From: Jason Bryant, commercial director for Data Intelligence

Dear Editor,

I read the article *Riding the data stream* with much interest last month, mainly because it painted such a complex and varied picture of the opportunities and threats presented by this new paradigm in data availability. I'd like to try to highlight just a couple of the considerations from my own point of view – having worked in pharma data-related disciplines – in the hope of stimulating some debate and further views from the industry.

First, the integration issue: yes there are constraints in handling the sheer volumes involved – IT can manage the capacity side – but what about the real conflict at play here? While our customers want to be more open with us and are finally opening the doors to engage again, we seem to want to remain relatively closed (or at least not open our cyber doors to all and sundry, never mind the competition).

We also need to respond to the new commercial environment that is placing our resources under tremendous strain. One of the answers to this is to globalise capabilities like IT, reporting and analytics in the pursuit of removing cost at the regional and local levels. But while this makes some financial and operational sense, and does present opportunities for standardisation and leverage, it does mean significant chunks of our relevant data is consolidated at a global level, meaning it's less localised, less relevant potentially to our own people and critically their customers, and even more significant in volume terms than before, which only compounds the accessibility and interpretation issues. And this is before you get stuck into the relevance of business metrics and key performance indicators, both of which are affected by this shift to globalisation.

And then there's the other can of worms – compliance. In the non-pharma world we can share our opinions, experiences, preferences, recommendations, purchases and outcomes freely. You only need to look at TripAdvisor, Amazon and Facebook to see that in action.

But in pharma we can't possibly link non-vanilla sales related activities to commercial outcomes, let alone openly share key opinion leader and medical advisor opinion on our products without the real possibility of igniting a compliance explosion. Some naysayers will see this as suppressing, even killing off, the endless possibilities offered up by the big data revolution. Some of us would view both of these dynamics as opportunities to think about and do things differently.

I'm hoping my letter generates some debate around both viewpoints. I have mentioned just two top-line thoughts, there are probably hundreds and thousands more, and I look forward to more discussion and chewing of the cud on this issue.