Report: Big data is doomed unless basic data management improves

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Big-data projects will never meet expectations if the underlying data is inaccurate or missing. It's time to fix the "dysfunctional cycle of data chaos," says a report by TechVision Research.

Before companies can do fancy things with data, like predictive analytics and data monetization, they need to fix the "broken fundamentals of data," according to a new report by TechVision Research.

The report, by Noreen Kendle, a principal consulting analyst at TechVision, says organizations are mired in a "dysfunctional cycle of data chaos." They spend "ridiculous amounts of time hunting for missing data, correcting inaccurate data, creating workarounds, pasting data together and reconciling conflicting data. This results in tremendous unaccounted loss in productivity," the report says.

One problem is that nearly all IT funding goes into technology, not the data itself, despite high-minded pronouncements that data is an important business asset. The report identifies challenges such as poor data quality and data governance, and then makes general recommendations for fixing those problems.

Today's hype-fueled "big data" projects will fail unless data quality and governance are improved, the report suggests. "All of the great data technology advancements will continue to fall short of expectations mostly due to the reality of our data—redundant, disparate, inaccurate, missing, misplaced, undefined, ill-defined, dirty, old, reused, misused, etc."

In the report, Kendle tells the story of a basketball coach who would always say "if we cannot get the basics right (e.g., dribble, pass and shoot) then we cannot possibly pull off the fancy plays it takes to win the games." She says the same back-to-basics principle applies to using data for business intelligence, predictive analytics, artificial intelligence and data monetization. "Information is truly powerful, but only if the data is right."