Sean Putman, Head of Learning Services
Sarah Mercier, CEO

& build capable XCL

Why Data Standards Matter

Data standards matter because data is only useful if everyone agrees on what it means. Without that agreement, the same information gets recorded a dozen different ways, and every attempt to combine, compare or move it becomes a cleanup project.

01 They let systems talk to each other

A standard is a shared language. It's why a hospital can send your records to another hospital, why a payment clears across banks in different countries, and why an e-learning course built in one tool can run across different LMSs.

02 They make data comparable

If one team records "completed," another records "finished," and a third records "100%," you can't add them up without a translation step. Standards remove the guesswork, so you can compare across teams, vendors, regions and years.

03 They prevent expensive mistakes

NASA lost the Mars Climate Orbiter in 1999 because one team used imperial units and another used metric. In 1983, an Air Canada jet ran out of fuel mid-flight after a pounds-vs-kilograms mix-up during fueling. Most data errors are less dramatic, but the cause is usually the same: two parties assumed different meanings.

04 They save time and money

Analysts commonly spend most of their time cleaning and reconciling data rather than analyzing it. Standards shift that effort upfront, where it's cheaper.

05 They reduce vendor lock-in

If your data follows an open standard, you can switch platforms and take your history with you. If it's in a proprietary format, leaving gets painful.

06 They build trust

When everyone defines a metric the same way, people stop arguing about whose number is right and start discussing what it means.

07 They support compliance and security

Regulators, auditors and security frameworks expect data to be consistent, traceable and well-documented. Standards make that achievable.

08 They make data last

Data recorded to a standard today can still be understood in ten years, by people who weren't there when it was collected.

THE TAKEAWAY

Data is only useful if everyone agrees on what it means.