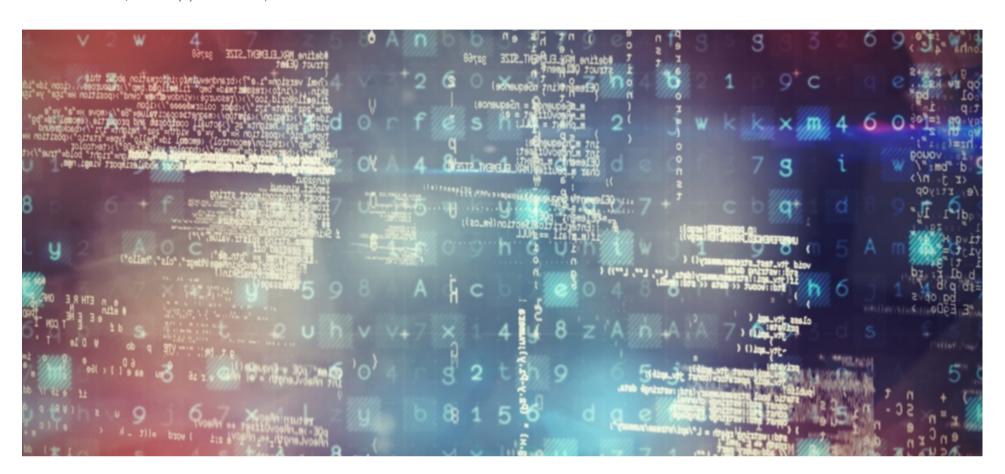# Mobility Blog

How much data can you handle? Interview: Xavier Delmotte, Chief Data Officer, ALD

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As Chief Data

Officer of ALD, what is your role within the company?

Xavier Delmotte: My role is to oversee a range of data-related functions and facilitate a data management strategy across the ALD Automotive Group. These functions include data governance, data processing, data quality, data science and business analytics.

With 1.59 million vehicles under management, we already have connected cars today at ALD, and know that self-driving cars are coming. This means that we'll soon have even more data to analyse and put to use, so it's important that we be ready when that happens.

What was your first priority?

XD: My first task has been to instil a data culture within ALD. It is essential to know who in the company uses data – which basically means everybody - and then explain how data can be collected, processed, analysed and shared. Data security and the importance of protecting our data is also paramount – my priority is having access to valid, secure data at all times and we all play a role in making that possible.

How important is data management for the fleet industry?

XD: As a mobility services provider, data is key to our client offering and will allow us to be quicker and more transparent through initiatives such as detailed analytics or artificial intelligence. Our clients also expect to have fast and easy access to data. Big Data is paramount as it increasingly adds value to our clients' business – and to ours. We can also better spot odd or vague data, which will help us improve good governance. It's an undogmatic, step-by-step approach.

We have access to a wide range of data, but we've decided to concentrate first on what matters to our clients: contracts and vehicles. It also goes without saying, of course, that we never disclose client data.

How will the market benefit from the digital transformation?

XD: In two ways: by better anticipating our clients, and the market as a whole. We're creating algorithms to help us do this, and we're also working on data quality and classification. Because even if a piece of data relates to one area, it can also be relevant for others. Efficient data management processes which enable us to have real time responsiveness and data availability.

Do all multinationals require a data strategy and structure like yours?

XD: Very much so. But companies each have their own traditions and cultures, and these will determine what's best for them. What all know is that efficient data management helps to make better decisions.

Where do you stand on data ownership?

XD: Data can be owned by the driver, the client company or ourselves – it depends. But that's a legal issue, not an operational one. What's more important is knowing where the data is, whether it's safe, and how it can be accessed.

Does the new EU regulation on data protection help or hinder your dealings with other parties?

XD: GDPR provides certain advantages to everyone, yet also clearly brings with it some constraints – we have to document more things, for example. But we look on the positive side and find the added value for our clients in all this – and make them aware of the possible consequences on data use.

Will data ever become a more valuable asset than the car?

XD: It's clear that data will become an increasingly important asset, helping us make decisions and to improve the services we provide our clients. Some companies already include algorithms on their balance sheet. But that's not part of our current business model. Our strategy is not to sell data, but to provide mobility services.

What do you tell a client who wants to set up a data management system, but doesn't know where to start?

XD: Don't try and do everything at once. Make choices in what you're trying to achieve. Look at how to improve certain situations by using data – that's what we do. Don't aim for theoretical purity, find practical solutions. And don't look too far into the future as things change fast.

Final question: Can you express how much data you actually handle?

XD: Well, to start with ALD Automotive manages 1.59 million vehicles, so the short answer is: *a lot*!

If you want to know how data management can bring added value to your company, please contact your ALD account manager.