- **The Importance of Data Conversion:**

  Data conversion is a critical process in the migration of information from existing information databases to new ones that often requires changes in data formats. Data conversion refers to the transformation and transfer of data between different systems when the systems undergo replacement or updates as well as the change in the format of data to ensure that it is compatible with the new database.

  Data conversion is very closely associated with system conversion and till date, this aspect has not received the attention it deserves, when planning for such a system change. So far, it has been relegated to the position of a minor task of the major legacy change. Hence, data conversion deserves a special standing of its own- as a separate strategic initiative as part of the whole data management process. Especially in the healthcare sector, the quality of historical data conversion plays a crucial role in determining the quality and availability of patient data accumulated over time. Data conversion is also of great importance for the insurance sector. Companies can make use of different data conversion and document strategies that help ensure that their data is compatible with their systems.

  Correct data conversion should ensure the following:

  - Data is converted into an appropriate format that fits the destination database
  - Data is transferred correctly
  - Data works in the new destination database
  - Data retains its quality
  - Data consistency is maintained at all times across all systems using that particular data

The present day challenges to ensuring a smooth and successful data conversion include the following:

  - Challenges of migration of data from legacy systems and replacements to new systems as well as system consolidations: this process is associated with high failure because of the size, breadth, and complexity of the projects.
  - Complexity of data: the merging of structured and unstructured data creates new difficulties. This renders it more difficult to convert such data into a particular format.
  - Project timelines: this creates challenges in completing the task.
  - Effect on the quality and accessibility of the data: challenges persist in ensuring that the quality and accessibility remains unchanged following the conversion.

- **5 Key Strategies of Successful Data Conversion:**

The complexity of data conversion requires that certain strategies be put in place. Here are some essential strategies that you must apply in order to ensure the success of your data conversion projects.

1. **Proper Planning:**

Successful data conversion requires proper planning. Any data conversion project needs to start with defining the boundaries of the project. You can plan your project by asking a variety of questions to define these boundaries. These include:

   - What kind of data needs to be converted?
   - What is the quality of data and its availability? Does it require full or partial conversion?
   - Which data should be moved to the new database?
   - Which data should not be moved?
   - What kinds of formats are needed for data conversion? For example, your project may require SGML, XML, HTML, and other formats. You can then use this data for your SGML-compatible databases.
   - What is the original data format and what is the final format?
   - What would be the extent of digitization?
   - Is the destination database compatible with the software used for data and HTML conversion?
   - What are the data conversion standards to be used, if any, for the successful completion of data conversion projects?
   - What are the guidelines for the process?
   - What would be the tentative duration of project?
   - How frequently would do you need to carry out the data conversion?
   - The cost of data conversion is one of the limiting factors for a data conversion project.

The more detailed your planning, the easier it would be for you to control the project.

2. **Ensure Business Engagement:**

Sometimes, those in the business side of the organization do not understand the importance of data conversion. It is important to make them understand the importance of data conversion in data processing and management: about how the quality of data conversion can affect subsequent processes that makes use of this data. Data conversion is thus, a task critical from both business and technical perspectives.

3. **Implement Data Standards:**

   Defining and implementing data quality standards helps to ensure consistency across the different databases. Consistently measure and track data quality and constantly check the effect on the business value. (hyperlink to article on data quality impact on business value).

4. **Data Profiling and Cleansing:**

   Ensure that proper data profiling and data cleansing procedures are in place so that the original data is of high quality. This helps to smoothen out the subsequent data conversion procedures.

5. **Data Management and Data Governance:**

   Following data conversion, ensure that the duplicate master data is eliminated, reducing the risk of incorrect transactions and unreliable reports. The project should satisfy all principles of data management and data governance.