

# Data Security: An Organisational Issue for Everyone

Reprint of Financial Times Paid Post



As companies look to differentiate themselves through digital transformation, data is the new currency driving this trend.

Estimates suggest that more than 2.5 quintillion bytes of data are now created per day<sup>1</sup>, with 90 per cent of global data created in the past two years<sup>2</sup>. Such vast amounts of data offer opportunities for inventive new ways to interact with customers and gain their trust.

Businesses in many sectors are therefore in an ongoing race with their competitors to maximise the insights they take from the data they collect. But before organisations can concentrate on this task, they need to be sure their data is secure and can be trusted.

## Security and strategy

International Data Corporation (IDC) says a useful way to think about data controls is through an analogy with internal controls for finance. Internal controls ensure reliable financial reporting, compliance with laws and regulations, and so forth. Data controls can play similar a role in the processes and practices applied to the data an organisation generates, collects or gets from its partners. Good data policies ensure a company knows what data it has stored where, which individuals have access, and how safe it all is from theft, loss or misuse.

They can safeguard privacy, intellectual capital and reputation. But data security can also help to drive digital transformation and new relations with customers; it is a vital issue for strategy, as well as efficiency and safety.

Arash Ghazanfari, Field CTO at Dell EMC, says good data security inspires a level of trust that can lead to new business opportunities. "Consumers and other businesses are more likely to form relationships with vendors that have a transparent and clear privacy policy that adheres to data standards," he says. "Consumers with granular control over personal and private information will also be more willing to barter various aspects of their private data in return for personalised experiences with the vendor and its partner ecosystem."

## How to harness GDPR

These lessons are especially important for UK-based and European organisations following the introduction of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in May 2018. Much of the publicity around GDPR has focused on new rules relating to notification of data breaches and the potential penalties for breaches. But experts say businesses can also use GDPR to help them deliver innovative, data-driven digital services.

Sue Daley is Head of Programme for Cloud, Data, Analytics and Artificial Intelligence, at the trade association techUK. She says GDPR gives organisations an opportunity "to build trust and confidence with consumers about how their information is being used" and ensure their systems are robust enough to meet the new rules. "Gone are the days where data protection was the responsibility of one department," she adds. "GDPR will require everyone in an organisation involved in using individuals' information to be aware of their responsibilities. This in turn will ensure everyone who is involved in using data is acting more effectively, which will allow the true value of data to be realised."

Ghazanfari agrees that "responsibility belongs to everyone" in a healthy, open security culture. He adds that people should be rewarded for doing the right things – some companies even offer cash incentives – but also that systems should be designed to ease the burden on people.

"Security needs to be intrinsically built into systems and processes, from infrastructure services delivery to the business services development life cycle," he says. "We shouldn't bash people as the weakest link in the architecture but that's often the attitude we see from technology people."

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## Managing big data

As well as the volume of data and the speed at which it is collected, companies are also challenged by the many varieties of data. Processing unstructured data – found in emails, Word documents, PDFs, videos and so on – is hugely different from simply sifting through statistics.

Cloud technology offers businesses flexible tools with which to store, manage and securely access data as and when they see fit. The UK has a “thriving and competitive” cloud market, says Daley, allowing companies to “choose from a range of cloud services and scale up and down these services as their use of technology and data needs evolve and change”. Ultimately, this helps ensure data scientists are free to concentrate on unlocking value from data.

“Cloud providers take away concerns around infrastructure scalability or inadequately designed and engineered architectures,” says Dell EMC’s Ghazanfari. “Data scientists are expensive resources and they need to fail faster without concerns around the friction associated with operating the infrastructure.”

All-flash storage arrays offer the kind of performance demanded by applications that support big data analytics in real or near-real time. “You want infrastructure taking advantage of modern technologies, such as flash and scale-out, and pre-validated architectures delivered to the business via trusted strategic partners in partnership with IT,” says Ghazanfari.

Furthermore, projects involving artificial intelligence (AI) often cause infrastructure requirements to quickly scale up, leading companies to “repatriate” AI workloads to on-premises environments.

“We believe a comprehensive multi-cloud and ‘platform agnostic’ approach to AI, underpinned by a consistent cloud operating model is a more sustainable strategy in the long-term,” says Ghazanfari. “Organisations need to adopt an as-a-service cloud operating model, regardless of the platform. In some cases, it may make more sense to bring the cloud to your data and not necessarily take your data to the cloud.”

## A crucial complement

Research by IDC has shown that modern data protection enables organisations to shrink data backup windows (by 33 per cent) and disaster recovery time (by 41 per cent). Good data security drives efficiency internally and creates new opportunities externally. It helps to safeguard your brand, as well as ensuring a reliable foundation for decision-making about resource allocation. Businesses upgrading their IT infrastructure should view data controls as a crucial complement, not an optional extra.

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<sup>1</sup>Source: Data Never Sleeps 6.0, published by Domo

<sup>2</sup>Source: IBM