WHAT IS DATA GOVERNANCE?

ZOVY

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Introduction

Data governance is a broad topic, but at its core, data governance depends on managing data effectively throughout the information lifecycle. Based on experience with numerous organizations in diverse industries, Zovy believes that robust data governance strategies are based on three pillars: archiving, backup and eDiscovery. The goal of this whitepaper is to educate readers about why these three functions are so important and how they can be united into a data governance approach that meets organizations' unique business needs.

Data Governance – What is It?

Data governance occurs at the cross-section of technology, rules, processes and different stakeholder groups. The Data Governance Institute defines it as, "a system of decision rights and accountabilities for information-related processes, executed according to agreed-upon models which describe who can take what actions with what information, and when, under what circumstances, using what methods."[1]

Data governance is essential in an era when:

- Most organizations expect their data to grow between 26% and 50% over the next year.[2]

- It's common for businesses to face regulatory requirements which mandate how organizations maintain their information. Examples include the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure (FRCP), Sarbanes-Oxley (SOX), Bill 198 and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

- IT teams must maintain systems as efficiently as possible, given limited technology budgets.

Once data is created, it must be managed throughout the information lifecycle. Yet, a recent survey by Zovy found that 44% of organizations don't have a formal data governance policy in place.[3] Zovy believes that three pillars form the foundation of true data governance: archiving, backup, and eDiscovery.

Data Governance Pillar 1: Archiving

Archiving is often confused with backup. While there may be overlap between the information which resides in an archive and that which is in a backup, archiving is a separate and distinct element of data governance.

Archiving is required for capturing and finding data that is hard to sort and catalog. Examples include files or emails that may be located in many different places throughout the IT landscape. Regulatory requirements have made archiving increasingly important. To comply with regulations, certain types of data must be search-able and retrievable. For instance, suppose that an organization had to find every communication between their company and another business. These pieces of information could reside on different servers, laptops or databases.

Despite the important role that archiving plays in data governance, many organizations see shortcomings in the solutions they have. Research conducted by Zovy found that over 32% of organizations ranked their data and email archiving solutions as average or poor. The more data an organization had, the lower they rated their archiving solution.

Data Governance Pillar 2: Backup

From a data governance perspective, enterprises must analyze their information with an overarching question in mind: If this data were deleted accidentally, would it cause harm to the business? If the answer is yes, that data must be backed up.

However, backup alone is not enough. Data must be backed up in a way that allows for rapid and dependable restoration. When Zovy surveyed organizations, 98% said they had a backup solution in place. Yet, only one quarter (25%) were extremely satisfied with it. A robust solution that guarantees both backup and restore improves organizations' resilience in the face of unforeseen problems.

Data Governance Pillar 3: eDiscovery

eDiscovery is an essential component of data governance, but it's often overlooked. eDiscovery systems provide organizations with the ability to efficiently locate and review data for legal processes and to audit their conformance to data management standards. Organizations may have the best archive and backup solutions, but these provide little value if process adherence can't be proven in a court of law. Most organizations can't demonstrate the integrity of their electronic data in the event of litigation.

Predictive coding is one of the fastest growing and most effective technologies for eDiscovery. Predictive coding relies on mathematical models to create accurate subsets of relevant documents, reducing the time and resources needed to respond to litigation. Despite how well predictive coding works for eDiscovery, many organizations have never heard of it and fewer use it. Although eDiscovery solutions based on predictive coding were once prohibitively expensive, affordable and easy-to-use options now exist.

Uniting the Pillars into a Data Governance Strategy

Because electronic data pervades most organizations, it's not surprising that overlaps exist between archiving, backup and eDiscovery. Information in backups is often also included in archives. During a lawsuit, information everywhere in the organization is fair game for eDiscovery, whether it resides in an archive, backup or in business systems.

To deliver the greatest value, an organization's archive, backup and eDiscovery solutions must fit into an overarching data governance strategy. To develop such a strategy, Zovy recommends that organizations take the following three steps:

1. Use a cross functional approach. Data usually touches many different stakeholder groups. As a result, a cross-functional approach is needed to determine the best processes and technologies to support archive, backup and eDiscovery needs. It's important to recognize that technology isn't a single silver bullet. According to the Data Governance Institute, the most overlooked aspect of data governance is the communication skills of staff who are responsible for data related concerns and decisions.[4] The key is facilitating cross-functional discussions with all stakeholder groups ranging from frontline employees who generate electronic data to IT departments and compliance teams. By identifying the pros and cons of different approaches to the three data governance pillars, organizations increase the likelihood that the ultimate solution will support their unique requirements.

2. Analyze legal, regulatory, and business continuity requirements. Organizations should inventory which regulations they must comply with and then decide which data is affected. This analysis will help inform what information should be archived. To determine what role an eDiscovery solution will play, it's also essential to consider how accessible data needs to be during legal proceedings. From a disaster recovery perspective, it's important to examine different types of data and decide how crucial they are for business continuity. This information will form the basis of a data backup plan. A key part of the data backup plan is information about how quickly data would need to be restored after an unforeseen emergency.

3. Consider whether the data governance solution should be hosted, on-premise, or a hybrid configuration. In a survey conducted by Zovy, nearly 60% of respondents reported that they use hosted data governance solutions. However, hosted isn't right for everyone. Data governance discussions should explore what type of archive, backup and eDiscovery solutions will best meet the organization's needs. Some organizations will want a hosted solution, some will prefer to keep their data on-site, and others may want a hybrid architecture where some data resides in a hosted system and some is stored on-premise.

Conclusion

Data governance is the key to handling growing volumes of information, while meeting regulatory and legal requirements. Developing an effective data governance strategy depends on balancing organizational and technical challenges. Zovy can help.

[1] http://www.datagovernance.com/adg_data_governance_definition.html
[2] 2013 Zovy Data Governance Survey Results.
[3] 2013 Zovy Data Governance Survey Results.
[4] Data Governance: The Basic Information. The Data Governance Institute. http://www.datagovernance.com/adg_data_governance_basics.html

About Zovy

Zovy is a leading provider of data governance solutions that combine ultra-security and high-performance with simplicity, accessibility and affordability. Zovy offers industry leading data archiving, email archiving, backup and eDiscovery solutions that allow companies to simplify IT strategies, lower overall costs and free up resources without having to make sacrifices in terms of functionality, security or control. Zovy is headquartered in Waltham, Massachusetts.