

Dataminr - Vice President, Global Threat and Crisis Management at ViacomCBS

Interview conducted on January 05, 2022

Vice President, Global Threat and Crisis Management at ViacomCBS, a customer of Dataminr. The expert is the final decision maker on sourcing this software, can speak to the process, and averages annual spending at \$150K.

Vice President, Global Threat and Crisis Management at ViacomCBS. Reporting to Senior Vice President of Environment Health and security, the expert is responsible for overseeing the global security operations center which manages risk intelligence, travel safety security, everything for ViacomCBS as a whole and all of its affiliates.

The expert can speak on multiple safety management software. The implementation and sourcing of software into ViacomCBS.

Q: (Customers): Are you a customer of Dataminr, or any other similar solution?

A: Yes I use Dataminr. I have also sourced Factal in the past as well as some other solutions.

Q: (Customers): Were you the final decision maker to work with Dataminr? If not, were you a part of the evaluation process? When was it you made this decision (year)?

A: I am the final decisions maker. we resigned a contract with them last year but have had them for probably 5 years.

Q: (Customers): What is your ballpark annual spend on Dataminr?

A: Current spend is close to \$150k per year.

Tegus Client

Hello. Thanks for taking the time. So, I'm trying to better understand the solutions that people kind of use to get real-time data or information on events happening around the country, the globe, wherever it may be and what vendors can provide those services. And one of the names I'm kind of really focused on is Dataminr. I kind of want to understand what the value proposition to the users are.

And as a user of this particular product, how do you enjoy this product? What did you kind of evaluate when you decided to go with this product versus somebody else? And any other places that they could kind of improve on? That's the kind of the background for the call. But before we kind of jump into that, would kind of love to kind of just get your background on your role at ViacomCBS and kind of first understanding like how you're using this product.

Vice President, Global Threat and Crisis Management at ViacomCBS

Sure. So I started at Paramount working in the physical security space. I've been there on and off now about 17 years. So currently, I'm the Vice President of Global Threat Management for Paramount, which encompasses ViacomCBS since we're owned by them.

I oversee the GSOC, Global Security Operations Center as well as any security technology to Global Risk and Intel, travel safety. Like you said, the GSOC itself and then international Security Feature, Television Production Security and then crisis management. So it goes across all the different subsidiaries. So we do it for Paramount, Paramount Plus, MTV, CBS News and Sports, Comedy Central, Nickelodeon, Awesomeness,

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there's whatever name it.

I guess there's a bunch of different things that we kind of oversee and have our fingers in. So it's a lot of work, which is why using technology is super important to us. My background is in tech, so I've always been curious on how to use the system to automate the process to be able to manage a large amount of employees in an efficient way and kind of maintain that duty of care that they expect and that we want to provide that we can't do manually.

Tegus Client

Right. So I've heard this term GSOC. So essentially, a big part of your role is you're essentially protecting your employees. I mean how big of a concern is this? Like is there a deal with day-to-day basis that you're kind of monitoring threats? Or kind of like help me understand like you're in the entertainment business, right?

Are you worried about kind of like some kind of group of fans coming in and like attacking movie stars or are you worried about cyber threat? Kind of like let me help me understand how this product helps Viacom kind of to conduct his business.

Vice President, Global Threat and Crisis Management at ViacomCBS

Sure. So for us, it's all encompassing, since entertainment like the Paramount side with the A-listers and that stuff is a portion of what we do. It is definitely important from that perspective. I think working in the cyber realm, working with our Infosec teams and content security for intellectual property theft is also very important to us. That's where financially, I guess the most damage could be done from that perspective. I mean physical threats of things like that do happen.

But as far as business continuity, things like that, our big money losses would be if a big movie leaks before it may release or something like that, right? So that's a huge concern to us from that perspective. The physical side is what I mainly delve in, I do work with those other teams, scouting or doing other things and kind of build that into these types of systems.

When we're looking out for kind of pre threats at the same time, it's an interesting dichotomy because usually, we're risk-averse where we try to keep people to stay away from those risky areas, and that's when we do kind of research on these platforms, but we also oversee news and sport, and news goes towards it instead of away from it.

So there's a lot of real-time monitoring and proactive stuff involved in that as kind of breaking news is happening. We're checking that stuff out and working with those teams on what's actually happening in the area, where they're at and giving them access to kind of live feed that they can monitor stuff as it comes in. So we do monitor 24/7. We deal with this every single day. We track it's slowing, obviously, with the pandemic, but we're about 1,500 travelers a day and I'm tracking all that stuff as it's coming in now.

It encompasses about 25,000 employees. I think we're in like 40 countries or something like that. So it's a large operation to deal with this stuff, but that's why we kind of use this technology and the filtration of it to bring as much actionable evidence as we can because we don't want to deal with anything that actually doesn't have anything to do with us. So that's one of my main concerns from that perspective is getting actionable intel and filtering out the rest. But it is like a full-time gate from that perspective.

Tegus Client

Understood. So then if you were to kind of talk about Dataminr specifically, can you talk about how you use this product.

Vice President, Global Threat and Crisis Management at ViacomCBS

Yes, sure. So we've used Dataminr for and probably five or six years now. I think Geofeedia was before that. And then a lot of the systems got in trouble when they were doing the active monitoring of protests. I know

the NAACP filed a lawsuit against them, and a lot of those businesses actually got shut down. Dataminr survived that. So we rotated over to them a while ago, and we've been using the member since.

So we really expanded our use of them as far as kind of different realms and different ways that we utilize were before it's only alerts coming in. I'm loyal to ViacomCBS' assets, right, in protecting them. I'm not loyal to a vendor itself. So we always do reassessments as contracts and stuff come up.

I try to get the best bang for my buck and the best way I can use it if a company is not willing to evolve and the company does not want to listen to us. And there's another one that does it or does something better for cheaper price or even does something better, then I can get something better out of. I'll move that way.

And I'm also the same way with multiple features. So if I can use one platform for multiple things, and I can alleviate my financial pressure on other systems and bring them all under one house. I'll do that too because I'd rather have one connection, one built-in, and log in and use that rather than 10 or 15 that I got to deal with. So Dataminr has kind of helped with that stuff.

So kind of going back when we first did the original stuff. We built them in. We were using keywords and stuff before, which was kind of the Geofeedia way and all of the other platforms that were around at the time. And like I said earlier, we found there was a lot of problems in getting information that we don't care about. For us, if you're killing it on set, that's a good thing, and I don't want to be alerted that there's potential with a kill keyword around set. So there's a lot of different things that the Dataminr algorithm was able to filter out, and that was the big difference for us. Are you familiar with the platform at all?

Tegus Client

I have got a basic understanding, but I would love to get a summary from you.

Vice President, Global Threat and Crisis Management at ViacomCBS

Got you. So I mean, as far as the platform itself, what it does is if you say, I want to geofence an area like us, so we're shooting mission impossible in the U.K. for two or three months, right? So we can put in all our locations and then we can select what we actually want to see there. We want to see protest activity. We want to see police activity, if you want to see natural disasters. Those are all kind of checkboxes within their system that you can check for them to monitor.

And if something comes in, if it's something that before, like a keyword would target on and send you alert, this would kind of filter that stuff out because it knows it's not an actual threat to it. And it obviously refines over the years, so it's gotten better and better at it. But it's one of the things where you can really, I guess, key in what you actually want to see and what you want to receive. And you can set at different parameters, obviously, for different things.

I know with earthquakes, you want a wider radius but protests you want like 0.1 miles or something that could actually impact you. So kind of the usability from that perspective was always important to us. And expanding out from there, we did it across multiple sectors and multiple businesses.

Where if I have a business office that's in a certain location. If I want to monitor it for different things, then I do with production set where I want to get the cyber interest and leaks and to see even if we set up our own keyword search around behind the scenes or backstage or those different words where it can alert within that same platform, but do it differently across different types of assets because we have tons of different types of assets.

And I know for television or television antennas for broadcasting are huge and I don't care about protestors on a broadcast antenna, but I do care about wildfires for natural disasters or things like that.

So kind of being able to utilize that for all these different things, I think it was very important, too. The uniqueness of it has always been great from that perspective. There was a big change of their platform where they brought in Pulse, which is kind of their new updated version, which innovates a bunch of things.

I know they've done some acquisitions recently and were doing some beta testing on the acquisition technology right now, which has brought a lot of features and new features into the platform, which, if done

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right in the future, I think I could see me rotating out a couple of the systems that we currently use and keeping it all in Dataminr, which, like I said earlier, is I think an important thing for consideration from my perspective.

But at the same time, them wanting to constantly evolve and kind of having those conversations with us and letting us get involved in this kind of the testing atmosphere of what would you like? What do you see that's wrong here? How can we improve this? That's been an important part of us using that software and using it to kind of the best of our ability. I know throughout the industry, at least entertainment industry on my colleagues that the other studios, the Netflix, Amazon, Warner Bros, Disney. We get together all the time.

We have system subcommittees, and we have what we call a studio chiefs kind of a roundtable where we get together internally and have a lot of conversations about different things going on in the industry, and one of them is technology, and I know, I think we're all pretty much users of the system, but it also helps that we can get together and have these same conversations, bring them back to them and they're willing and open to kind of listening to what we do. So that's kind of an important part for us in using Dataminr at the same time. But the evolution of it, I think, has been super important with them, like I said willing to listen and change with us.

Tegus Client

That's helpful. So I guess I'm sure you're pretty plugged into some of the peers. So I'd just say MGM Studios. Is there approach like security and protecting assets kind of similar to yours and where they're kind of using a similar solution to kind of go about providing the security?

Vice President, Global Threat and Crisis Management at ViacomCBS

Definitely. And like our industry is very intensive anyways. I mean we all know each other. A lot of us have worked at other studios and then go back and forth between and work our way up. We don't have direct competition with each other because we kind of have the same end goal in protecting assets. We do a lot of work for other studios, and we work in collaboration with a lot of studios, and they come to our studio to shoot. So from that side, we do work together. We do definitely talk back and forth about what we're using.

We're pretty similar in that aspect because we have the same kind of insight on what we want to look for or the same need to protect a certain amount of intellectual property or protect people themselves. So it is a pretty unilateral approach. I mean, it always depends upon your budget at the same time, right, and how deep you want to get into and then there's different ways of doing things. And if you're an international team rather than a domestic team and what you're monitoring, and what you aren't.

If you have a parent company, what they're monitoring? And like for us, when ViacomCBS remerged there was a big push on bringing the subsidiaries back underneath that umbrella. Paramount self-ran as its own kind of entity for a long time, and that really changed in the past two or three years where they wanted to bring everyone back under that main umbrella. And that's when we got involved because CBS had nothing, and Viacom had nothing kind of tracking the stuff as it goes through.

And like I said, like with my background at tech, I've always been pushing this from the Paramount side. So we expanded that out to ViacomCBS. We did showcase with them and we showed them what the capabilities were, and everyone was on board with it.

It's just something you don't think of kind of outside of that realm or even when you think of studios, it's something that you don't think we do. But it's something that we do in the background. I think that every studio does in the background that kind of builds that bubble around the set to keep people safe, and this is one of the tools that we use to help accomplish that.

Tegus Client

No, that definitely makes total sense. So it seems like this solution kind of has augmented your ability to kind of provide this protection. Like you had mentioned that you were even using this product for the last couple of years.

Before this time, how was this kind of done? Like, was this like people just monitoring active news feeds and then kind of alert people, like this technology solution seems very powerful. I'm sure I saved a lot of manpower and hours. But just kind of wanted to understand what was done before because I'm trying to understand the threat of this going away.

Vice President, Global Threat and Crisis Management at ViacomCBS

Yes. So basically, I mean, it's a capability expansion, right? Because it actually allows you to do stuff that you couldn't do before because you can't react. I mean, to be honest, like my internal ROI for my team is to try to get stuff 15, 20 minutes before it hits the news. So by the time you see it on the news, we've already assessed the situation, we've reached out to our local offices or travelers. We've gotten a response from them, and we reported it up to upper management.

If there needs to be an explanation if we need to do anything with it, that's already been done by the time it hits the news. And I think that's the big difference because by the time it hits the news, it's too late because you're reactive instead of proactive. This type of technology helps you do that. I think before, it was always reactive because like you said, we cover stuff, we'd see stuff as it comes through. You can't monitor everything at once. It's just not possible, especially with smaller teams if you're dealing with different things.

And if you're stretched then already, it's just not possible to do with the type of job that you want to do. So before we did do that stuff you monitor news and then we'd reach out, we deal with stuff as it kind of happens. But dealing with an incident in London when you're sitting in the Hollywood lot, after you see it on the news, it's too late, like they've already handled everything and dealt with everything there locally. Now we can get ahead of stuff.

And I know we've had some instances in the past like I think the shooting or stabbing on the London Bridge. This is probably four or five years ago. We got the alert, I don't know, a couple of minutes after it started. We had an office in the area and then we had three or four travelers in the area too, we reached out to.

They hadn't heard of anything locally. We just told them to stay away from the area, avoid everything that's going on and they checked back on us, everything was fine. We updated our management before anyone ever knew it was even happening. So once that hits the news and they realize everything is fine, we can just move on with our day. But it also makes us look good from that perspective where it shows that we're on top of things.

I mean we had a large movie shooting there as well. We actually were shooting in Paris and I think it was a 1,000, 1,500 feet away. There was an attack on two police officers. And we got the alert about that. We knew they were shooting right in that area, so I called the local security guy and told them this is the situation that's happening. He said they didn't know what's going on. They heard gunfire and police and helicopters.

So they were able to evacuate the set, get everyone to the green hotel that we had designated in advance and get everyone away from the area and out from the safe zone. But at the same time, I mean there's going to be a lot of confusion and stuff going on the ground, but us taking kind of that overhead view and then feeding them intel as it's coming into us can help alleviate their situation on the ground and keep everyone safe and away from the area. And that's pretty much all we can do. I mean we're not in alarm for sure we're not anything from that perspective.

So we treat it as an Intel source like kind of a new source. And we pushed that intel out to the people, the ops teams on the ground. I mean we're the kind of the support system for them, but we use the technology to give them up-to-date features that they wouldn't have otherwise.

Tegus Client

That's helpful. So when you were thinking about like using certain products or a solution that helps somebody provide a certain competitive advantage over their peers. In this situation, you're not really competing against other studios to kind of do this, but it's kind of your advantage here is that you're kind of providing real-time updates before they hit the news and the benefit to you is that the real assets, which are such as the human capital at Viacom feels they're constantly like protected or made aware of any kind of danger. Is that fair?

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Vice President, Global Threat and Crisis Management at ViacomCBS

Yes, that's correct. Yes. And I mean, we definitely use other systems to do that stuff, too, like as far as travel awareness and travel alerts and different things like that. But I mean a lot of that stuff gets analyzed by internal teams at the third-party vendors before we see it. And for us, being on time and being ahead of the game is important.

And that's one of the things that we liked about the social media monitoring systems is they get stuff pretty close to when it happens. I mean you get maybe a couple of minute delay, but that's amazing in today's day and age. And I know it is a sad thing that instead of calling authorities or running away people flip out their phone, start recording and posting about it. But internally, that helps us realize and know what's going on around the world and kind of react to it in that way.

So a lot of these other companies use platforms like a Dataminr to help with their intel gathering, too. I mean just the one thing I guess about it is when you get these alerts, you need someone behind the screen to analyze this, too. It's not like we get these alerts and automatically forward them out to everyone that needs to be alerted by this.

I have my team of analysts that take a look at it, see if it's an actual situation that's going on, spend a couple of minutes on looking at the alert, what it is, how it could possibly impact us and then start sending out the notices and things like that, too. So it's more raw intel than a polished alert coming in.

But for me, in having that side, it's important to be able to get that stuff analyzed internally because, obviously, we know what's going on, better than someone from a third-party vendor would know what's going on internally with ViacomCBS, where we're at, where we're shooting in the world, who's where, who's important, who's not, that stuff that we can do internally. And this kind of raw intel is something that facilitates that in the time of this manner possible.

Tegus Client

That's helpful. Speaking of like alerts and kind of informing your team and whatnot, how integrated is this solution? I mean, like is this kind of embedded into like the core operating systems that Viacom employee. Or it's like, hey, an alert comes in, and then you kind of analyze and then you kind of send out an e-mail to whoever needs to know about it.

Vice President, Global Threat and Crisis Management at ViacomCBS

Well, before we did our last negotiations, we had plans to fully integrate it in our system. So we have a middleware, it's called PSIM, the Physical Security Information Management system that is the ingest, I think, for all of our third-party vendor application programs or anything. So whenever it comes to that system, it hits our middleware system, which is the only thing that our operators see.

And it ingests all that information, it attaches it to a resource if it has one like an office, or a traveler or anything like that. So all the information is immediately at their fingertips. I mean the biggest thing for us is the first question I whenever they come in, you have a way to connect to the back end. Do you have an API, do you have an SDK, something that we can connect to and integrate into our middleware?

Like I said, we were in talks of doing that last time when we did negotiations at this time. I put it on pause, so we can finish that stuff up. I'll probably bring it up again next year. The filtering is huge for that type of system, like I said, I don't want to spam our operators with alerts that they don't need to see.

So currently, it comes in and hits our analyst team and our frontline GSOC team as an e-mail alert. We do have a system integrated within that PSIM that whenever something comes in, the type of alert it is, they bring up an automated action that would send out e-mails, text alerts to preset parties depending upon location it's at. All that stuff is kind of built-in and automate it. The alert itself is what they look at first.

So if we end up doing that back in automation, like I said, which we probably will, but that would come in as alert already prepopulated and ready to go if they needed to set something, click one button and fill out whatever the basic information is about the alert to get people noticed, and then that system would kick everything out that it needs to, including the actual alert that came in itself.

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So kind of the way our system works is when we get something, if it's something that they deem major, we use Send Word Now as our emergency communications tool, but they will immediately send out an alert, which will hit the designated team, whether it's the crisis management team, with the management team, it was international, whoever needs to be notified depending on a situation, like I said that's already prebuilt into the system.

But that will go out immediately saying there's a situation happening. This is what it is. We'll get back immediately about the impact to us. And then they do the research, which could be two, three, four, five minutes about potential impacts. We'll send an update on these are the potential impacts, and we'll start doing the reach outs. And then we'll send an update on the reach outs. If there's need to escalate, we will. If there's not, we can close it out and move on to the next thing.

So I think as stuff comes in, Dataminr itself, they'll send you an initial alert and you'll know if it's a major incident. They have different levels like a flash alert to know that there's major incidents. And you can get 10, 15 different views and videos and tweets about the same incident, especially in a specific location, you know that there's something major going on.

So there's easy ways to figure out if this is a big deal or not. It's not just a one-off of a car on fire. You'll see 50 people tweeting about the same thing and gunshots in the background. And you can kind of tell that there's something major going on so we can do updates from that. But that's the kind of read that you'd get with this raw intel is having someone take that look at it. Send out the alert, give an update and then see the impact afterwards.

So as you're doing that stuff, there's more stuff coming in and more intel being gathered from Dataminr like it doesn't stop with one alert, you'll get more stuff coming in, coming in, coming in and you can pay attention to the situation evolving as it happens to notify out. So that's also an important piece of it.

Tegus Client

That's helpful context. So it seems like Dataminr is not the only one doing this, right, like trying this kind of solution. Curious to know if you work with other providers or know other providers that provide similar solutions, would I kind of want to know about them and how they kind of compare to Dataminr?

Vice President, Global Threat and Crisis Management at ViacomCBS

Yes. So we have. We've worked with Dataminr longest, but like I said, I'm not loyal to vendor. I'm loyal to how I can best serve ViacomCBS and its assets. So I relook at things as negotiations and things come up. So we have used LifeRaft in the past, which we did enjoy. It's a little different than Dataminr, but it's a lot more kind of cyber-based and intellectual property-based, and it needed a lot more handholding, which I didn't have time to really dedicate a person at the time.

I know it's been a couple of years so it could be completely different now. And I'll relook at it again, probably in a year or two. But that was a good solution that we have for a little while. And it's a little more detailed for investigations and things like that online. We did look at Factual for a while and I did like their platform. When we do stuff, too, we try to compare technology apples-to-apples like alerts coming in, which one comes in first, which one has the more detailed information.

And Factual did pick up on a lot of things, and it seemed pretty comparable with Dataminr. Dataminr did as a more, I think, developed business and has been around longer, it offered kind of more bang for your buck, where there was multiple features and things that you can use. We like the different parameters and settings that you could talk about. I mean, like with the assets earlier, even the different types of assets and different words around it.

And I know now with the different kind of geofencing capabilities, where if it's one kilometer or five or 10 or 50, you can kind of set that per asset or per type of asset. So that was an important part of that. Like I said their alerting itself and the alerts coming in, we did like from Factual, too. I think they have a good program and good technology as well. Dataminr has just a little more developed. And the same went for this last round of negotiations.

We were pretty close to switching out to a company called Samdesk, so it's samdesk.io. They are a lot

younger, smaller company. I like companies like that or like hungry companies that are really willing to kind of work for that site and work with you? I think it's the evolution of the corporation, right, where when we first signed on with Dataminr.

I think we were one of their first customers way back in the day. And they've done a lot of growing and evolving since then as it shown with their work and their product now, which is way more mature, I think than anything else in the market right now. I think Samdesk could get that way in four or five years maybe. But their base core software was good. The user interface was good. They were willing to work with us on a bunch of things. And for us, it would be a growing process with them.

I mean, I guess we were willing to do that from that perspective to see, but Dataminr stepped up in their new technology and acquisitions they made. Like I said, the Pulse that they just came out with, there's a lot of technology and time and research and effort that they're putting into things. Their person-to-person communications has always been great, and that's important to me. We have team meetings with them all the time. We have a dedicated person that you can call on their cell phone.

I'm not a big fan of calling an automated center and putting in numbers and trying to get a hold of someone. I'd rather just call them directly or e-mail them directly and get a response and work with them on evolving the solution to what we need. I know a lot of times if there's a feature request things like that, from a business perspective, I think they're smart to listen to the customers, which they do. But I mean, not everything we ask is going to be a want from everyone else.

So I think we're aware of that kind of situation, too, but at least they're willing to listen. And so these smaller companies like the Samdesk, the Factal, they were like that too willing to listen, but we wanted to do more mature solution, obviously, which would be best for protecting ViacomCBS as a whole. So that's why we went kind of that route. But there are other systems out there. Budget is obviously a big concern from that perspective. But I mean, Dataminr is definitely the more mature solution for sure.

Tegus Client

Okay. That's fair. So they probably are one of the more prevalent or this is not the right term, but the most grown-up.

Vice President, Global Threat and Crisis Management at ViacomCBS

100%, yes. I mean, prevalent too, at the same time, but definitely in the most mature solution as far as their solution itself and what they've integrated and what they've built out. I'm sure their AI, I mean, has grown tremendously in the background with all the data and stuff they're gathering. We actually use them across ViacomCBS ourselves.

And then I don't know if you know, Dataminr also has a specific news platform. So it kind of feeds different information in the news team, which is more breaking news. So it's more raw and tough for their sites that it's not like more of a risk analysis, it's more of breaking news on what's happening, and our news division uses that as well.

So it is separate from what we do where they just want to get what's going on in the world and should we send people out there where we get kind of the security threat analysis and what's happening so we can respond in different ways. I guess this is different ways of looking at the same data, but there is kind of a different operations scheme behind those two sides. I don't know if you knew that existed, but there's two kind of different versions of it.

Tegus Client

Got it. Kind of curious, so they say you'd be the best person to answer to this, but Dataminr is doing a great job, but say now Factal has kind of matured a lot, and like now their solution is very similar to what Dataminr is providing. How easy is it for you to rip out Dataminr and put in Factal? Like talk to me about like the switching cost or like disruption that could kind of take out Dataminr and put in Factal.

Vice President, Global Threat and Crisis Management at ViacomCBS

Well, I mean, the reason why I paused that integration last time, when we were going through negotiations, was specifically for that, right, where if it's something that I integrate in the system in a back end and we go through that price and process, it's a lot harder to tear it out and put something new in because you got to go through that whole process again with the new platform. If it's something where we can pull down alerts and set up locations and deal with that stuff.

And then, I mean, it's something that if we switch something like that out, I mean, I would have tested fact which we did for a month or so, right? That's something that I would build into the front to make sure if we're going to do a rip and replace that we're going to get near the same type of information in intel coming in. Because obviously, I'm not going to sacrifice what I see or the type of information or the quality of the information to save a little bit of money.

Like I said, if I can protect it the way I am, I want to continue that. If a budget is an issue, that's obviously a different kind of conversation. But if Factual is doing the same type of thing, and we needed to switch that stuff out, as far as escalation from my perspective, we do that stuff outside of Dataminr now.

If I needed to rip and replace it, it would be pretty easy from that perspective from my team because I deal with everything internally. I'm in charge of the technology. I make the decision. And the reaction would be from my operators and from my analysts. They would just see a different logo on top of the e-mail coming in and then still react as far as an internal organization the same way.

And that's just speaking from my integration, my perspective, like I said, if it's integrated in our middleware, it would be a lot harder because we'd have to build, and we duplicate system and duplicate way out from the other perspective. But as it stands currently, if it was the same information, same stuff coming in, it would be pretty easy to switch it out.

Tegus Client

Got it. And do you care about where like these vendors are sourcing their information from? I don't know where Factual sources it so like kind of information from, but I know that Dataminr or has just like one or two sources of that is the primary component of its data.

Vice President, Global Threat and Crisis Management at ViacomCBS

No, not really. I do care that they expand those sources over time. The more stuff they pull in the better I know originally, Dataminr was Twitter only. And in every single meeting with them, I said that's not acceptable, like you need to keep expanding because if someone doesn't have Twitter, then I don't see what's going on in the organization. So they've definitely done that. They've gone into a ton of different areas. They get in the blogs. They do many things now, which comes from making more money and expand your kind of research capabilities.

I think the other platforms are way behind in an aspect, just because they haven't had the time or resources their money to do it. I think they'll get there eventually, too, as stuff opens up a little bit more and know it was a lot tighter after that lawsuit when they really lock things out on who in the public sector has access to what the private sector has always been a little easier to do because we don't have the capabilities, but the public sector does to is, affect people's kind of liberties with us.

It's just more intel gathering and notifications. It's not actionable stuff dealing with those specific people. But I mean I think Dataminr itself has just kind of done that stuff a lot better from that perspective than the other companies.

Tegus Client

That's helpful. Like obviously, it's happened a long time ago, but like what was the sales pitch like from them like how long does it take? How long does it take you to make a decision? And then from the time you said yes, like how quickly was it in your systems?

Vice President, Global Threat and Crisis Management at ViacomCBS

So originally, it was a lot easier because honestly, they were one of the only couple ones left after that whole shakeup. I mean, I think almost every other one went bankrupt, went out of business just because they were banned. I mean Facebook banned them, Instagram banned them, Twitter banned them, I mean they had no feeds coming in, so there was nothing they could do anymore. So they pretty much had to close up shop.

I think Dataminr, I think they were partially owned by Twitter at the time, which obviously helped them still get those feeds. So as far as integrating everything building in at that time, it was relatively new. So I think it was simple in us negotiating what we wanted to see, seeing what their capabilities were. I don't think there was like an RFP at that time because there wasn't that much competition around.

So that was kind of different from that perspective, where it was a lot easier. We were a lot smaller, more than just the Paramount side, not ViacomCBS at the time. So I think that integration was a lot more simple compared to recently where when we did negotiations, we looked at the other platforms, and we looked at what was happening. And we talked about bringing them in through the back-end system and pricing was huge from that perspective and how long we do contract for and who needs to get involved.

So they were very reactive in dealing with things, dealing meetings and bringing in the appropriate people that were needed kind of onboard to help with negotiations and work with legal team and work with me on my needs and escalate as they kind of need to. They are a growing business. So the price point has changed dramatically from when we first started to now which is one of the main reasons, I went back to negotiating table with them.

But I guess that's part of the maturity of business and part of putting money into research and dealing with things like that. So I mean I understand kind of both sides of those, that coin. I think a big problem at the time that everything was happening too as it was the beginning of COVID, which a lot of budgets were cut during that time, especially us when you don't put out a movie for 1.5 years or two years, you really have to take a look at what you spend your money on, how do you protect things.

It was always a good conversation back and forth about that stuff and the realities of what's going on in the world at the time. And if we have no travelers, nothing going on, no production, how do we deal with that going forward? And is this the appropriate time to do this or should we look for something else? So they are reactive from that perspective, like I said, getting a hold of someone there having a conversation with someone or getting escalated to the appropriate person is never a problem there.

You're definitely not just another number. They are very responsive from that perspective. So I've never had a problem or issue with talking to someone or dealing with someone or getting the appropriate people involved in any conversation that needs to happen.

Tegus Client

So to dig into that particular point, are you able to tell if you are like one of their larger clients or you're like a typical client for them? I'm not sure, I guess another part of the question is like, on average, like how much are you spending on their products? Is it five-digit figures, six-digit figures, seven-digit figures?

Vice President, Global Threat and Crisis Management at ViacomCBS

It's 6 digits. And I mean I guess it just depends, right, on your use case on what you're going to use it for, on what technology or other stuff you have coming in, on the size of your organization. Obviously, if you're a larger organization need more users, more accounts, more access, it's just going to cost you more money if you want to deal with it. So I mean, I think I have a medium buy-in with them. I try to run stuff as effectually as possible, like I said, so I don't overdo things. I don't get excess user accounts involved if I don't need them.

I do my research and due diligence upfront to see what I need from them and plan that out over the next year or two just to make sure I have the growth ability kind of built-in to what I need to do with. I mean other organizations could be completely different from that perspective. But I know there was a need, like I said, we were a pretty early adopter of the program in the system, and they've changed a lot since that time.

So when we did the ramp-up, I mean, it was a large increase in our yearly payments, but also what we've expanded to and the use case of it expanded the same percentage in the growth cycle. So it was understandable from that perspective. Like I said, they're always willing to listen and negotiate a deal with things like that.

But I mean, from my perspective, if I don't think I was getting the bang for my buck, I would not have signed on with them. And the way we went, the way we did, I think it's still worth it and I would still move forward from that perspective. And I think we finished like 1.5 years ago negotiations. That wouldn't change. I don't regret doing it or having those conversations or going back to it. So that's never been a consideration. I think the value is there for what they offer.

Tegus Client

Understood. But you've kind of harped on this a couple of times that you are loyal to Viacom. What would cause Viacom to kind of shift from Dataminr to another provider? It seems that you're the decision-maker here, like whether it's like product capabilities or whatever or pricing, whatever it may be, what would cause you to go to a different vendor versus Dataminr?

Vice President, Global Threat and Crisis Management at ViacomCBS

I think there's a couple of things. I mean first for me is price, right? The reason we went in negotiations this last time is because there was such a dramatic increase in it at the wrong time.

Tegus Client

Because of COVID?

Vice President, Global Threat and Crisis Management at ViacomCBS

Correct. I think like six months after the start of it. And it was just coincidence that when our contract was up that we needed to increase. We expanded to Viacom and CBS and covering more countries, more travelers, more users. So all that stuff coincided it into one. I mean price is huge from that perspective. I don't mind paying more money if I get more out of the system. If you come in and like, try to double or triple what I'm paying now and don't offer me anything else.

That's when I have the biggest problem. Like I said bang for the buck, I'd need more bang for my buck. I'll pay you more if you give me more or if I can phase out other software systems because your system does that same thing, I don't have a problem doing that because I can try to keep my budget kind of flat, which is the goal, right?

I can use one program, pay them a little more and then rotate out other ones. So I mean, that would be the main concern of mine. If they stopped dealing with customers the way they do now, I would have a problem with that. With a lot of stuff that we do, a lot of ideas we have. We're kind of fast-moving and fast pace. If we get stuff that comes up, I don't want to make changes or edits if I have a breaking news and then I want to set up some monitoring for, right?

I mean, we'll build it. We do a lot of stuff internally, but also check with their expertise and teams on making sure, hey, we got everything right. We built this right. We're getting too many others, how can I whittle this down? Or I just got back from Hungary, where we filmed the European Music Awards for MTV over in Budapest, right? And I wanted to monitor the stuff a couple of weeks out for any protest. A lot of LGBTQ+ stuff happening out there and threats coming in and out.

And we set that stuff up and then also get with their teams, like look, we're going out there in a couple of weeks. I want to make sure we build this correctly to see everything coming in. This is what I'm mostly concerned about. Can you just double-check our work on this stuff? So they answer those phone calls, they answer those e-mails. They work with us, they'll set up a meeting that same day or the day after and make sure everything you need to know or need to monitor is up there and it's happening right, right?

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So is that stopped happening, that kind of customer service, I'd have a problem with that. And then they may miss things. And I mean, it happened to the growth cycle where we'd get stuff coming in and I send it over to them and be like, hey, this is a major thing that impacted us, and we didn't get any alert or anything coming in. Did we not build it right? Or did you guys miss it? Did no one alert on it? Like there's a bunch of different things.

I mean, if no one takes a picture, tweets about it or whatever, we won't see it. But there's also different ways it kind of dealing with that through the back end on, did they miss a keyword in the AI? Did we not select the right box? Do we have it too far away from our assets? So then, kind of, I guess, handholding as we go through it. We like to learn. I'd like to use a technology or a platform for all of its capabilities if possible, right?

So another thing, too, is if they're not willing to grow, they're not willing to grow with us to change or they're not willing to listen to what we have to say or help us kind of build it in that aspect or even check in with us and say, hey, this is what's new coming up. You guys could use this for this, or you're not using this part of the program, which I think you could use it for kind of teaching us because we set stuff up, and we let it run.

And I do kind of internal audits once a quarter or once biannually on our systems. Hey, how are we using this? Let's get back into it. Can we use it for something more? Have we got updates from the team, but they've been pretty proactive in involving us, like I said, with that beta testing. They came to us and wanted us to test stuff out. They always tell us about new features that are coming into the system. We get stuff, hey, next year, this is our road map.

So that kind of communication is huge, too, if that stuff stopped. I've had vendors in the past, that once you signed up from you never hear from them again. I'm not a big fan of that. I'm a big fan of communication and telling us what's going on because since I pay for the platform, I want to use it for the most, I can get out of it.

Money is always the main concern, especially in security, it's hard to build a kind of our line of things. So we're not giving the company any money. We're just the cost center. So it is what it is from that perspective. But it's always being mindful of the budget. It's just the way of life.

Tegus Client

No, completely understand. Last question for you is, any improvements in products that you would hope that the company worked on?

Vice President, Global Threat and Crisis Management at ViacomCBS

Yes. Yes, definitely. And they are improving on a lot of stuff. I think we've given them a bunch of stuff in the past. But a lot of the stuff that I see coming in is the different types of technology that I've told them I'd rather stand in their platform and do since they're sort of in that field. Like for us, we get a lot of threats to actors, our CEO on their resources. A lot of public figures. So being able to monitor that stuff from their profiles is important. I think that's something they're working towards.

Using their platform for more investigative means where, like if we're dealing with someone who's threatening our staff, if I can input all of their data and any kind of build a profile around that person. If that person posts again, it'll alert us to let us know. Like I said, it's kind of more of that executive protection type even if it's not a straight executive stuff, is dealing with those kind of investigations or tools where we can get those kind of alerts for specific people or get those alerts for specific locations or specific types of things.

And then you have kind of keyword searches around that, being able to house that in the system, too, where you kind of have its own analytical toolset where you can go to the site and research the stuff and send it out and keep profiles on these kind of people I think is the next thing that would help us the best.

We have been looking at other platforms that do that. I'd rather keep it kind of in that system. And since it is in their vein, as far as the monitoring and the alerting and threat analysis and stuff online, I think it could be a nice build-out for their site.

That's definitely one thing I'd like to see from that perspective is really getting into that investigative and

alerting from public profiles that are involved in threats, either threats to us or threats to executive or threats to a brand, I mean we get stuff like that all the time, too. If I can get some from people threatening MTV and alerts to me if there are specific threats, I would like to notice that stuff as well.

Tegus Client

You're absolutely right to get essentially, it seems like a very comprehensive program, but just rounding out on certain pieces will make this solution much more powerful.

Vice President, Global Threat and Crisis Management at ViacomCBS

Easy for me to talk about. It's harder for them to build and implement and make sure it works correctly. But just the fact that they asked the question, the ones listed and stuff like I said, it's important from my perspective that they do that. And if it's something that they build that stuff out, and even if they say, hey, it's 10% increase in cost, that would save me 50% on billing in another software system or another system that I would have to buy from the outside.

So that's where I see that value add, right, where if you want to charge you a little more, but you give me this? That's fine from my perspective. So it's kind of the give and take from there. But since they're willing to do that kind of stuff, that's why you kind of stick with a company like that because they evolve, and that's something we've always liked.

Tegus Client

Absolutely. Absolutely. Sounds a good partner to work with. Well, great to hear. Thank you again for your time.

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