

# Effective Data Management: Imperative to align Business and IT interests

## Why Data Management?

Electronic Information (Data) is the most important resource of a company. Using best practices in storing, securing, analyzing and using this data effectively is critical to a company's success.

However, the reality in enterprises across the board is vastly different. Typically, companies do not have a coherent data management policy that is aligned to their long-term business objectives. This shortsightedness is exhibited in various ways – in incomplete or inefficient data security systems, database management systems that do not scale to meet business growth, storage solutions that rapidly run out of space, and valuable data that is mined inefficiently. When regulatory or compliance needs arise, IT throws its hands up citing technical issues. Business Continuity plans are woefully inadequate when disaster strikes.

In the short term, this leads to missteps while executing the business plan, economic waste across departments, and frustrations while dealing with data. In the long term, companies will feel the impact on their bottom line.

### ***How Companies Don't Manage their Data***

According to a 2007 Gartner survey of 1,400 CIOs worldwide, "...successful CIOs understand that "business knowledge has to become the highest common denominator across the IT shop."<sup>1</sup> Increasingly, CIOs are becoming aware that without bridging the chasm between their business and IT divisions, it is impossible to meet their strategic objectives.

One of the most important ways to achieve this is by understanding that data and information are critical resources that aid in business decisions, rather than assets that have to be managed and moved around the company's computer systems.

Problems plaguing CIOs of enterprises worldwide include:

- *Infrastructure that doesn't scale to meet changing business needs:* Whether catering to a local or a global economy, companies need to be on the job 24X7 catering to customers. However, most companies will not invest in infrastructure for the long term as many businesses don't know where they are going and what their needs will be. IT concentrates on a technical focus but does a poor job at predicting future growth because of its disconnect from the business. Point solutions are put in place as and when the need arises.
- *Storage that rapidly runs out of space and performance:* The storage solutions and SAN IT shops buy need to be replaced in less than three years because organizations do not proactively plan their data growth. At the business end, managers save more and more information with no management and classification of that data. Oftentimes the solutions fail to meet performance demands even before they run out of space.

A 2007 report<sup>2</sup> by Forrester states that companies are not buying Storage Resource Management (SRM) tools or those that are buying them are not using them effectively, the likely reason being, as the report surmises, that most IT shops are too busy with reactive management.

- *Business / IT chasm:* Business divisions just want data to be highly available, scalable and analyzable, and do not want to be bothered with the "under-the hood" issues. On the other hand, IT departments have no clue about the business objectives and strategic plans of the organization. They are busy firefighting day-to-day issues and providing band-aid short-term solutions to maintain the status quo.

According to a survey by InfoTech Research Group and KnowledgeStorm, this problem has become endemic<sup>3</sup>. If not bridged, this gap can lead to disastrous consequences.

- *Disaster Management is a disaster:* There is a big disconnect between what business thinks is included in Business Continuity and contingency plans, and what IT is doing. All systems are treated the same, and key communication systems like e-mail and mobile workforce systems are often left out of contingency plans. Most companies don't have a priority setup for downtime: it is critical to have a plan detailing which systems need to

come up first during times of crisis, so that business is up and running as soon as possible.

When things go wrong, procedures such as who talks with the media, who coordinates where people are going to work and so on are often overlooked. The real risk, however, lies in operational disasters such as losing data, operational mistakes, and power problems. These common occurrences can be disastrous to a business.

- *Data Security is not watertight:* IT has always had the charter to protect data. But companies wrongly put all of their effort into firewalls, Intrusion Detection Systems (IDS) and antivirus packages. The real risk of security breach comes not through this “front door” but through a mobile workforce that uses laptops, PDAs, Smart Phones, and Zip and USB drives. Most IT shops deploy no encryption on sensitive info in their mobile devices.

Similarly, most organizations don't encrypt their backup tapes. These devices are often not adequately protected, and their movements are often outsourced to couriers. What happens if they are lost or stolen? Sample: In February 2005, Bank of America lost a backup tape containing the credit card information of 1.2 million customers.<sup>4</sup> An unencrypted backup tape belonging to the Ohio State Government, which contained information of 200,000 taxpayers, was stolen from an intern's car in June 2007.<sup>5</sup> The damage to some of these companies will never be repaired.

- *Data Classification is non-existent:* Companies treat all data the same way instead of classifying data into categories so that different types of data can be treated differently. IT needs to clearly understand that business attaches different importance to different data: all data is not created equal. This value needs to be clearly factored into IT's classification and maintenance plans.
- *Data Normalization is not a priority:* Data needs to be normalized so everybody in the organization is on the same page and calling a spade a spade. Many organizations implement Business Intelligence (BI) systems without first making sure their data is classified and normalized, which results in dashboards that have inaccurate or missing information. The end result is the business gets frustrated and views the BI project as a failure.

Decisions are often made with misinformation or worse, incorrect information. Information about the data (metadata) is contained in isolated sources and is not uniformly disseminated through the organization. Unless a holistic view of this data can be put together, key elements will be missing in decision making.

- *Regulations are becoming tighter:* The Federal Rules of Civil Procedure that took effect at the end of 2006 give companies 120 days to produce all electronic business documents—e-mail and IM, spreadsheets, Word and Excel files—pertaining to a lawsuit. Forget sending the lawyers to say, “Too expensive! No tools!” The onus is on you to prove to a judge you can’t pull it together. Other regulations such as the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and Sarbanes-Oxley Act (SOX) have made compliance and legal discovery major challenges for IT organizations.

As management and securing of data becomes increasingly complex, external regulatory and market pressures as well as internal misalignments exert undue influence on a company’s bottom line. It is then time to take a strategic approach to data management. A “big-picture” approach to the issues plaguing a company’s data can help mitigate them.

At Strategic Data Management we are a company that takes precisely such a big picture view of an organization’s working process. We have a proven track record of stepping in to unite a company’s IT department with their business division, and helping companies deploy the right technologies to effectively manage their electronic information.

### ***Why choose Strategic Data Management?***

1. Our vision: As your technology partner, we take a holistic view of the electronic information scattered across your organization and provide customized solutions to make sure your data is available to your business. Our founder was as CIO and technology leader for years, we really understand your challenges and how to rise above them.
2. Our people: Our Business Consulting Group provides a range of services that combine our experience and capabilities in storage management and design, information management, electronic data discovery and incident management to address growing regulatory and compliance demands facing businesses.

3. Our experience: All our offerings are built to maximize our experience in the field, while delivering industry-leading best practices. Our experience spans the gamut of environments and companies, from small systems with little changes to extremely dynamic 24/7 multi-terabyte systems, at small companies and fortune 500 companies.
4. Our processes: We suggest solutions based on our vast experience, and by conducting interviews with your IT department and business community to identify and evaluate your processes. We assess and document the requirements, risks and impacts to your business; and develop layered business solutions by integrating the best-of-breed technology solutions. We also develop Service Level Agreements (SLAs) and business impact documentation that can be delivered to the business to demonstrate the value that IT is bringing to the business. Through our best practices Strategic Data Management helps your company classify, manage, normalize and access your data no matter where it is stored, whether in a centralized database or distributed across your organization.
5. Our partnerships, tools and technologies: We promote strong relationships with key industry leaders to deliver comprehensive data management solutions for our customers. Through partnerships with our vendors we provide an extensive combination of customized solutions and services to help our customers manage and protect their data. We deploy the best-of-breed tools and technologies that suit your needs best – and not vice versa.

## ***Our Solutions***

The range of data management solutions, processes and services we offer include, but are not limited to:

- Advanced Storage Area Network (SAN) technology from Xitech, Spectra Logic tape libraries, storage networking switches from Cisco, Brocade and QLogic, backed by our experienced Business Consulting Group to integrate and deploy these offerings.
- Our 4-step approach to solve your Business Continuity needs by interviewing, assessing, documenting and delivering solutions that meet SLAs and Recovery Objectives, as well

as data replication, backup and failover technologies provided in conjunction with technologies from Xiotech, Double Take and others.

- Our team of Data Security Consultants can help your organization design a robust security system to manage and protect your data from internal and external threats.
- Our Database Management consultants will analyze your systems and help you with production support and projects such as database design and management, performance management, backup and recovery strategies, replication and high availability, database tuning, capacity planning and troubleshooting.
- Through our Data Classification and Normalization services, we help you align your Information Management operations with your core business objectives.
- With customized Enterprise Content Management (ECM) offerings based on Microsoft SharePoint, Strategic Data Management helps you manage and control the lifecycle of documents in your organization.
- We deploy CEMS, a unique solution from Xiotech that puts you in control of your information; protect your intellectual property; and comply with regulations seamlessly.

To begin the first step toward managing your information strategically, please call (317) 219-0428 or email [info@sdmindy.com](mailto:info@sdmindy.com).

## Sources

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<sup>1</sup> CIO.com, “Gartner CIO Survey Results underscore importance of Business Expertise”, [http://www.cio.com/article/28792/Gartner\\_CIO\\_Survey\\_Results\\_Underscore\\_Importance\\_of\\_Business\\_Expertise](http://www.cio.com/article/28792/Gartner_CIO_Survey_Results_Underscore_Importance_of_Business_Expertise), February 2007

<sup>2</sup> Andrew Reichman, “SRM is knocking: Open the Door”, Forrester Research, <http://forrester.com/Research/Document/Excerpt/0,7211,42177,00.html>, May 2007

<sup>3</sup> Briony Smith, “IT-Business gap grows wider”, IT World Canada, <http://www.itworldcanada.com/Pages/Docbase/ViewArticle.aspx?id=idgml-3be39e3b-82dd-4bcb&Portal=1fa35bf9-d296-4571-8fff-c665a851ec1d&sub=213371>, July 2007

<sup>4</sup> Gary Anthes, “Data: Lost, Stolen or Strayed”, computerworld.com, <http://www.computerworld.com/printthis/2005/0,4814,103541,00.html>, August 2005.

<sup>5</sup> Humphrey Cheung, “Stolen backup tape has more than 200,000 taxpayer records”, TG Daily, <http://www.tgdaily.com/content/view/32562/108/>, June 2007.