

**DATA DECODER**

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Worlds collide in information management

The convergence of several interrelated functions of information management are fueling a push toward unified information governance

Developments affecting the information management landscape—some recent and some taking place over many years—are spurring convergences of several different, but interrelated spaces. Such developments include regulatory pressures (e.g., new privacy regulations such as GDPR), advancements in analytics, movement of enterprise data to the cloud, and an influx of data volumes and data types creating data silos across the enterprise. The lasting impact of these changes is a building necessity for governing the entirety of enterprise data and its many functions with a unified approach.

Convergence of information governance and analytics

Advancements in analytics are making waves across nearly every major industry, and while analysis of consumer data has long been a staple data of marketing and sales initiatives, organizations are just now realizing the possibilities of a whole new type of analytics: communications analytics. For example, just by looking at the flow of emails within an organization, a manager can instantly discover who the go-to people in each department are, who is most knowledgeable on a given subject, and conversely, who is likely to quit. These are incredibly powerful use cases that could potentially redefine how organizations are managed; pretty much anything you'd want to compute about human nature is bared in unstructured data.

However, despite this excitement around analytics, no one is talking about the other shoe that hasn't dropped: information governance. Without control over information, analytics gets a little dicey. For instance, what's to stop an analytics initiative from using

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Similarly, the absence of information governance leads to a sandbox approach to analytics: Organizations must sample, collect, test, and finally analyze data, with delays between each step, extensive resources used on data scrubbing, and no repurposing of data.

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Governance is necessary to analytics. However, at times there will be a great contradiction between the two sides, with policies that will have to be reconciled. For example, do companies expose themselves to the potential risks of keeping dark data—regulations, breaches, legal suits, etc.—for the sake of reaping analytical benefits, or do they play it safe and get rid of it? There will be a religious fight in every organization between the philosophies of keeping more and keeping less data, and that's one for the board of directors. Information may be an enterprise's most valuable asset, but when unmanaged, it's also its most dangerous.

Structured and unstructured data—documents created *by* people *for* people such as emails and files—have long been managed in isolation. However, new privacy regulations such as GDPR create stipulations on personal data management regardless of its classification. Additionally, combining unstructured with structured data—for example, broker dealer communications with transactional data—can lead to powerful insights in several areas. We’re slowly being led to the natural conclusion that structured and unstructured data be unified. But how do you marry two alien universes? Organizations have already implemented initiatives to solve this fundamental question, but much work is still needed.

Convergence of disparate data silos

Large organizations currently house many data silos, aligning with the different types of data used and the various governance functions. For instance, email, file shares, ECM, and SharePoint data are managed in disparate silos, and even more silos are created once that data is needed for functions such as records management, compliance, and e-discovery. Under today’s approaches, these functions are treated as unrelated, yet there needs to be a convergence of these various smokestacks.

The impact of silo-based architecture is felt in many areas: It becomes difficult to reconcile policies across silos (for example, what do you do when a records management policy says to keep for seven years, but a regulatory compliance policy says to delete immediately?); searches are often inconsistent and incomplete, and must be repeated across silos; controlling duplicates creates its own hazards; and the challenge of deleting data is magnified, complicating tasks such as GDPR compliance and retention.



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Toward unified governance

As the market converges, the nature of the space we're in changes dramatically. Organizations are now tasked with bridging across all data types, data formats, locations (cloud, on-premises) management modes, and functions. The convergence is happening—and has been happening for some time—and the pace is quickening. The composite spaces that fall under information governance are all affected. We're now reaching the brave new world of the other side of data: the management.

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