



Bringing more discipline to the management of unstructured data

For a multinational biotechnology organization, a new discipline led to the development of standards for managing its unstructured data in a coherent way.

CHALLENGE	A biotechnology organization needed a way to manage its growing amount of unstructured digital information.
APPROACH	We identified who had created the data and who made use of it. Then, to help the client decide what to do with it, we identified key elements of the metadata.
OUTCOME	Our client was able to reduce the volume of its unmanaged unstructured data by nearly half and build processes to manage the remaining data.

Our client, a biotechnology organization, had unstructured data. They didn't fully know who used it, whether anyone in the organization actually needed it, or whether it was valuable to anyone. What they did know was that there was a significant amount of it, stored across a half-dozen data centers around the world.

It can be costly to store large volumes of data, but that wasn't our client's only concern. The overretention of information can also expose organizations to

unnecessary risk. For these reasons, the organization wanted to retain data sufficient for its business purposes.

But our client had to be mindful of how it handled the data it retained. As a business, it had responsibilities for the appropriate use of personally identifiable information. As a drug manufacturer, it was also subject to rules governing protected health information. The client was also subject to the General Data Protection Regulation and was obligated to comply with data subject

access requests and litigation-related data collection requests.

On top of everything else, a number of the organization's on-premises data storage environments were reaching the end of their useful lives. It seemed to the organization like the right time to move its data to the cloud, but there was too much of it to do so easily or economically. With that, our client decided it was time to bring more discipline to the management of its data.



Controlling and mitigating risk during discovery

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Mapping the data universe

The organization's global data privacy officer understood that technology alone wasn't going to solve the problem. Deloitte's history of assisting the client's legal department with electronic discovery had revealed the limitations of using software tools alone. Deloitte had qualified specialists and process knowledge to go with the tools, so when the time came to take action, we were the ones selected to help.

The first thing we did was generate an inventory of the data in two of our client's major data centers. From that inventory, we created an augmented data map that helped our client to understand some basic facts about particular files or groups of files—including name, location, who had access to it, who created it, and who had changed it most recently.

This provided our client the ability to tie the data to the appropriate internal data user groups. The idea was to empower business users—the ones who created and made

use of the data—to make quick and simple decisions about what to do with it.

To assist with that, we worked with the client to develop a process called segmentation. Segmentation gave business owners a consistent way to identify the data they still needed. For each type of data that they decided to keep (for example, contracts or patient health records), we worked with the client to assist in developing a set of standards around data storage and disposal.

Forging a path forward

Ultimately, our client was able to delete nearly 25% of its unstructured data and classify and archive another 25%. They also better understood the remaining 50% after removing dark data, identifying PII and PHI hotspots, and rectifying access permission issues.

As a result, this biotechnology organization was able to remove more than 30 terabytes of data from its information estate. It could also retire some old hardware, accelerate its managed archive use, and train staff on data retention.

Next up for the client to consider are the remaining data centers. As we help our client address these, several lessons will remain top of mind. The first is that data governance isn't a software problem—it requires education, training, and communication. It's also a matter of helping people to know what kind of information to look for, where to find it, and what kind of action they should take on it. Above all, growing volumes of digital content should be managed in such a way as to make it more useful—and less of a burden—to organizations and the stakeholders they serve.

Ready to manage
information as an asset?
Let's connect.



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