

CIO

How Next-Gen Data Management Can Drive Business Transformation



Host: Charles Pelton, CIO Contributing Editor, IDG

Expert Speakers:

Chris Wiborg, VP – Product Marketing, Cohesity

Rampal Singh, Head – Hybrid Cloud Services, HCL Technologies

WORKING TO MANAGE massive amounts of data will remain a key business challenge this year and will be a top priority for organizations across industries.

Organizations — from banks to universities and nonprofits — are focused on intelligently handling data, from collection to retirement and every life cycle step in between.

Smart data management is critical at a time of increased cyberattacks and to remain competitive as customers demand information privacy and protection, plus seamless service.

HCL Technologies and Cohesity recently hosted a CIO virtual roundtable to address the challenges of legacy approaches. Participants agreed that many organizations continue to struggle with storing and mining huge amounts of data for insights.

The panel spoke about current obstacles and how they're approaching data management from a strategy perspective. They also discussed modern solutions and successes.

The meeting followed the Chatham House Rule, so not all participants can be identified.

Data overload

The roundtable included experts from the finance, food service, technology, biopharmaceutical, construction, manufacturing, accounting, and consulting industries as well as academic and nonprofit institutions. All of them regarded data management as a key business challenge. However, individual concerns and needs varied.

One participant from the food service sector said many companies are experiencing “data overload” and are struggling to identify the right metrics to zero in on.

Chris Wiborg of Cohesity responded, “Maybe we just have too much data, and there’s a cost to that.”

Massive amounts of data, he added, are also creating storage and compliance issues over time.

Rampal Singh of HCL recommended that enterprises give enough thought to data management plans to reduce regulatory risks, build a business continuity plan to prevent revenue loss, and derive high-quality insights to drive decision-making.



A participant in the biopharmaceutical sector commented that his company generates some 20 to 25 gigabytes of data daily and that that number is continuously climbing.

“We’re going to start hitting some ceilings soon,” he told the roundtable.

Complicating matters are new hires who bring data with them from previous roles. Shadow IT is a major worry, too, because it introduces security and compliance concerns.

Addressing these issues is slow going. “We’re making inches of progress,” he said.

For a participant from the financial services sector, acquisitions only add more data and make the problem harder to solve. “We know what to do, but when and how it’s to be done is the challenge,” he said.

Wiborg added, “Companies struggle with what goes where, when, and why.”

Classifying and storing data

Participants are also struggling to settle on the most efficient and cost-effective way of storing and archiving data.

A participant from the biopharmaceutical sector spoke of the difficulties in figuring out the best place to put backup data.

“We have multiple places where we can store and back up data,” he said. “We’re still deciding what are the best methods for backing up, and I don’t want them to inhibit our process of creating data.”

In the manufacturing sector, one participant is also focused on how to best organize and get actionable insights from data that’s spread out across the organization. “We’re trying to figure out where to centralize resources,” he said.

Others struggle with data classification. It’s hard to identify which data falls into what classification. Tagging/labeling is cumbersome, because, for many, it’s manual.

The food service participant said that “a lot of time we find ourselves jumping through hoops because things are too manual.”

Singh emphasized the need for data strategy to encompass data governance, data management, and alignment with business goals. This involves changing familiar methods or practices that introduce concerns or instability.

Navigating cybersecurity and regulatory risk

Participants are approaching the challenge of data management with security concerns as well as regulatory requirements being top of mind.

“Companies struggle with what goes where, when, and why.”

— Chris Wiborg, VP, Product Marketing, Cohesity

Said a financial services sector participant, “In everything we do, security comes first.”

His organization is experimenting with a squad model, where certain cyber teams are dedicated to specific functions to help avoid prioritization conflicts.

Meanwhile, a food services sector participant is focused on allowing the right people data access while ensuring that bad actors aren’t able to breach the perimeter.

Regulatory concerns top the list for a healthcare industry participant.

“We have some pretty unique regulatory requirements around data, so data security and cybersecurity are incredibly important,” she said.

Meanwhile, for a participant from academia, a key challenge continues to be how to unite unique data sets — academic, administrative, and clinical — in a way that fully meets regulatory requirements.



All roads lead to hybrid

Many participants shared that they currently have data in the cloud.

“I have nothing on-premises,” said a construction industry participant. His organization also no longer relies on email as a file store, having put a two-year email retention policy in place.

A financial services participant’s organization is slowly testing cloud, and migration to it is prefaced by the multiple controls the organization’s cybersecurity team has put in place. A biopharmaceutical participant is also “all in on cloud.”

Some participants envision an eventual shift to a multicloud or hybrid-cloud strategy, especially given the often steep cost of cloud.

Wiborg acknowledged that many startups he’s encountered begin in the public cloud but then gradually pull at least some data into a more traditional data center (private cloud) environment.

“I think we’re going to be with this hybrid balance for some time,” he said. “We believe that eventually all roads lead to hybrid [cloud].”

Singh echoed Wiborg, noting that enterprises today are increasingly focused on adopting a cloud-first approach that centers on migrating data and workloads to the cloud in a hybrid setup.

He described four key elements that define an enterprise’s cloud transformation journey: digital core transformation, redefining customer experience, a sharp focus on business outcomes, and change management. The common element binding the steps and enabling a seamless cloud transformation journey is effective data management.

Strategies and solutions

As participants work to refine, and in some cases completely overhaul, how they manage data, they’re making inroads. Progress, however, can be slow.

A construction industry participant sees artificial intelligence (AI) as a helpful solution for data tagging. It could minimize mistagging or mislabeling because of human error.

For a food services sector participant, less is more when it comes to data. “Getting the right data and getting it clean is more important than having all the data and figuring out what to do with it,” he said.

Data mobility is also seen as an essential part of the solution moving forward, with certain data living in a variety of places across its life cycle, said Wiborg.

For a manufacturing sector participant, starting with an outcome-centric approach is key in what’s likely to be a “forever journey.”

“Enterprises today are increasingly focused on adopting a cloud-first approach.”

— Rampal Singh, Head, Hybrid Cloud Services, HCL Technologies

“We really need to charge the hill on data,” he said, “but you’re not going to get there by next Tuesday.”

Getting buy-in from senior leaders — the CEO, CFO, and program directors — has been and continues to be essential, as is building trust.

“We really want to drive transparency in our data while creating analytics,” said a participant from academia.

No matter what tactics they’re adopting, all participants agreed that taking steps toward automating and digitizing data is key. “It’s critical to have digital transformation in place,” said Singh.

Moving forward, participants will continue to experiment and test solutions as they focus on their top priority of managing massive amounts of data.



To learn more about how next-gen data management can help you drive business transformation, [download](#) the Everest Group white paper.