

Guidelines for effective data management and protection

 By [Johan Scheepers](#)

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Organisations today are faced with multiple data challenges. Increasing adoption of cloud-based solutions creates numerous repositories of data across various platforms, while explosive data growth fuels this challenge by requiring effective storage, management and protection across these siloes.



Johan Scheepers

In addition, the emergence of always on, anytime, anywhere computing has reshaped and revolutionised the IT industry as a whole, and data management along with it. A number of key trends are currently emerging as growing technology priorities, which are in turn driving and shaping the data management and data protection landscape. Businesses need to keep pace with these changes and the principles of modern data protection to ensure their most valuable asset remains safe, secure and easily accessible now and in the future.

IT needs are continually evolving as technology changes and adapts to new developments. One of the key trends currently gaining impetus is an increasing drive towards open and standards-based infrastructure. This is driven by the need for increased interoperability and openness between various technology solutions, as well as growing requirements for improved cost effectiveness and flexibility. Infrastructure has essentially become a commodity, and open standards will help businesses leverage their technology foundation effectively for maximum value and return on investment.

Data is a critical asset

However, what is having the most significant effect on the IT landscape today is data. Data has fast become a critical business asset, one without which organisations simply could not function. This means that businesses have practically zero tolerance for any sort of data loss event, and data recovery times need to be as short as possible.

Analytics have become increasingly important, as organisations need to be able to easily search for and correlate data across platforms. In addition, customers need to be able to access their data and ensure collaboration, with seamless, universal access to information no matter where or what device it was created on. Governance too has gained importance, and organisations need to ensure they have all of their data managed effectively to meet visibility, security, access and compliance requirements.

However, exponential growth of data volumes is making achieving these requirements a challenging task. The reality is that data volumes are beginning to exceed the ability of traditional data backup and management solutions. A new approach is necessary, and six principles can be used to guide data management strategies today and in the future.

As previously mentioned, data has become a critical business asset and a crucial part of daily operations. Managing data however is a challenge given the sheer volumes generated at a rapid and growing pace. It is essential for organisations to protect and maintain the right information to ensure it is available and accessible when needed, and can be recovered in the event of data loss.



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Checklist

In order to achieve this, organisations can utilise a sort of 'check list' of six core principles to ensure their data management strategy is not only effective today, but well prepared for the future:

- Get rid of obsolete solutions and vendor lock-in. Obsolete solutions will cost organisations money without providing any real benefit, while vendor lock-in prevents the type of agility required in a constantly changing technology environment. Adopting an open, standards-based platform can go a long way toward removing these barriers, by providing control over data while enabling the flexibility for organisations to choose and change their technology relationships without risk. Infrastructure roadmaps can therefore become more agile and able to meet changing conditions.
- Enable data availability in its native format. Direct native access, also known as on demand data delivery services, can be enormously beneficial in reducing data recovery times. They provide near-instant data recovery points in the correct format for applications, which ensures that in the event of data loss, information can be restored quickly with minimal effort and risk.
- Effective search and query ability. The usefulness of data can only be unlocked if users are able to perform effective search and query on both live and historical information. It is essential to implement seamless and powerful search and query ability across multiple data sources, applications and storage locations for effective analysis and data optimisation. This includes but is not limited to virtual data storage, Software as a Service and cloud solutions, and on premise data repositories.
- Universal access and collaboration. Data management solutions and strategies need to support the need for access and collaboration across devices and platforms. The ability to securely share and synchronise applications, files and information is essential for improving productivity and collaboration. Modern data management needs to give users seamless access to all copies of their data no matter where or when it was created.
- Manage data throughout its life-cycle. It is no longer sufficient to put retroactive data management in place. Effective data management requires that information is under managed control from the moment it is created, right through to the moment of its deletion or destruction. This means data must be both visible and secure throughout the life-cycle, which significantly reduces the risk of breach, loss, theft or compliance failure.
- Ensure solutions enable Incremental Change Capture. Instead of backing up hourly or once a day, Incremental Change Capture enables all data to be protected and usable immediately, while reducing the workload impact during data protection operations. It also improves network efficiency and storage utilisation, since only changed data is read and stored, which in

turn helps to optimise bandwidth consumption and storage utilisation.

Selecting a vendor

Selecting and vetting of vendors is essential for effective data management and protection. Choosing a vendor that will be able to deliver on these six core principles is obviously essential, and organisations also want to look for a provider that will enable future-proofed and agile solutions.

However, while vendor selection is a key criteria of the purchasing decision, it is not the only consideration. Effective data management and data protection requires that organisations firstly gain a thorough understanding of their market and the changes that are likely to occur, before partnering with their selected vendor to implement an efficient solution.

By working with vendors, organisations can ensure that solutions meet their requirements and support their data needs both now and into the future.

ABOUT JOHAN SCHEEPERS

Johan Scheepers is Commvault systems engineering director for MESAT

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