Uncontrolled Data Growth Drives New File Analysis Sector

The Uncontrolled Growth of Data

James Cash Penney, the American department store founder, once said, "Growth is never by mere chance; it is the result of forces working together." Perhaps there is no better example of that truism today than the exponential growth of stored data. Forces ranging from advancements in storage compression technology that result in cheaper storage, to legislation such as Sarbanes Oxley that require the long-term retention of certain data, are creating a "keep everything culture." In just the last few years, IT personnel have gone from using terms like "gigabyte (GB) and terabyte (TB)" to much larger storage classifications like "petabyte (PB) and exabyte (EB)."

Most of this stored data is classified as "unstructured data," meaning data not structured in a database. Examples of unstructured data include the word processing files, presentation files, spreadsheets, media files, virtual images, and the myriad of other file types that get created and stored on your organization's network storage devices. Long-term retention of this unstructured data is resulting in a data management nightmare.
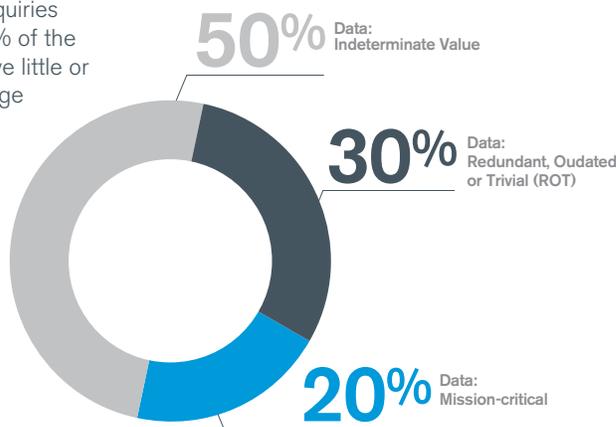
Uncontrolled Data Growth Matters

Similar to a printed document, a digital file has a finite life cycle. It is created, serves its purpose, at some point becomes irrelevant, and should then be deleted—or in some cases archived. But an abundance of cheaper storage, a lack of understanding of regulatory requirements pertaining to file retention, and an employee culture without an emphasis to clean up storage—not

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1 Gartner, Market Guide for File Analysis Software, G00271713, Alan Dayley, Debra Logan, Jie Zhang, Garth Landers, 4 August 2015.

What's wrong with data hoarding?[2]

Gartner points out, uncontrolled data growth does matter. Client inquiries suggest that approximately 80% of the data companies store could have little or no value and only 20% of storage is mission-critical.

50% Data: Indeterminate Value

30% Data: Redundant, Oudated or Trivial (ROT)

20% Data: Mission-critical

2 Chart created by Micro Focus based on Gartner research. Source: Gartner, Inc., Organizations Will Need to Tackle Three Challenges to Curb Unstructured Data Glut and Neglect, G00275931, Alan Dayley, Debra Logan, 17June 2015.

The File Analysis Market as Defined by Gartner

Gartner first classified this market sector in September 2014 and has updated and revised it in August 2015 (G00271713). This report provides information technology and business professionals with information and insight into more efficient, less costly, and less risky ways to manage what is generally regarded as unstructured data through the use of file analysis software.

- **The Emergence of the File Analysis Market:** _File analysis enables storage managers, legal and security professionals, and business analysts to understand and manage unstructured data stores to reduce costs and risk, increase efficiency of business-critical data, and make better information management decisions for unstructured data._[1]

- **File Analysis Defined:** _"File analysis (FA) products analyze, index, search, track and report on file metadata and, in some cases, file content, enabling organizations to take action on files according to what was identified."_[1]

- **Distinct from Storage Reporting Tools:** _"FA moves beyond traditional storage reporting products by providing detailed metadata and contextual information to enable better information governance and storage management actions, in addition to reporting on simple file attributes."_[1]

to mention an understaffed IT department with time to do so—have created organizations of "data hoarders." And as organizations continue to receive vague direction when it comes to management of unstructured data, the data hoarding will continue.

At this point, some of you might ask, "What's wrong with data hoarding as long as storage is cheap and as long as we have the storage capacity?" Uncontrolled data growth does matter. "Client inquiries suggest that, for many organizations, around 30% of data is redundant, outdated or trivial (ROT). Inquiries also suggest that around 50% of data has an indeterminate value, while the remaining data is mission critical."[3] Using these numbers in a simple example, if an organization had a petabyte of stored data, and rounding data storage costs to US$2,000 per terabyte, the cost of storing redundant, outdated, trivial, or data of indeterminate value would be an astonishing US$1,600,000.

But when it comes to network storage total cost of ownership, hardware expenses are in fact, exceeded by storage management expenditures.

Finally, there are the associated costs of compliance to security and access pertaining to these stored files.

Controlling Data Growth

With ample evidence that data hoarding has legitimate costs, what can organizations do? The answer is two-part. Organizations must develop and implement data management policies that include the justifiable disposal of irrelevant data. Second, they must deploy tools that both identify data growth and manage that growth in accordance to the organization's data management policies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Just as there are many forces contributing to data growth, there are, in turn, many remedies—the most important being **deploying a file analysis product to get a realistic view of unstructured storage and growth**.

Additional recommendations for consideration include:

- Recognition that data has a life cycle which includes data archiving and disposition.
- Implementing or making better use of storage tiering.
- Reviewing organizational policies for data governance and implementing changes for improved adherence.
- Enforcing data governance policies with consequences for non-adherence.
- Working with compliance and legal departments to better understand discovery needs.
- Conducting a security and risk assessment of your data.
- Seeking buy-in from all management levels before implementing any organization-wide file analysis initiatives.

Micro Focus File Analysis Products

Micro Focus® File Reporter and Micro Focus Storage Manager are two products whose combined deployment can directly tackle uncontrolled data growth and subsequent data hoarding. File Reporter provides detailed reports about your stored data and its associated security, helping to determine the data's value and revealing who has access to it. Storage Manager then gives you the ability to remediate any necessary changes to the network file system for improved lifecycle management by automatically securing, moving, archiving, or deleting files through identity-based policies.

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3 Gartner, Organizations Will Need to Tackle Three Challenges to Curb Unstructured Data Glut and Neglect, G00275931, Alan Dayle, Debra Logan, 17 June 2015.

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