Enterprises struggling to reduce the impact of spiraling storage costs or to comply with emerging regulations, such as the HIPAA/HITECH Act, the Dodd-Frank Act and the Presidential Memorandum — Managing Government Records, are looking for solutions to address the challenge of managing “dark” data — the currently unmanaged, and often unknown, electronic information that exists in various repositories across virtually every organization. At the same time, the judiciary is keen to sanction organizations that cannot preserve and produce business content reasonably and accurately in response to a litigation inquiry. To address these requirements, business leaders need to implement and enforce a comprehensive information governance strategy that is legally defensible and does not rely on manual processes or outdated search techniques that could potentially exclude relevant information.

Today’s reality

IDC, Gartner and other industry analysts continue to predict the explosion of big data, with new, unstructured data types to manage. Rich media from social media websites coupled with burgeoning electronic mailboxes, proliferating SharePoint sites and unmanaged file shares challenge the most efficient IT organization, create grave concern for the general counsel and overwhelm the typical knowledge worker, reducing productivity. Even organizations that have not grown significantly through acquisitions are sitting on terabytes, if not petabytes, of dark data.

To complicate matters, social media, mobility and BYOD trends are reshaping many aspects of global business — and complicating the challenge of governing information. Social media and file-sharing services, often running on mobile devices, lie outside the traditional boundaries of the enterprise and create potential exposure; 67 percent of end users have three or more computing platforms, all containing enterprise data that must be protected. This trend shows no sign of abating as users expect more, not less, real-time access to data via applications that are always available, anywhere.

Both regulators and the judiciary demand near-instant access to comprehensive information stored across myriad file formats and repositories. Without comprehensive information governance capabilities, businesses face increased costs of discovery due to an inability to manage and govern effectively across all systems. A successful information governance program must enable organizations to understand and govern information cohesively across diverse systems, throughout the information’s lifecycle.

Curating the content

How can organizations achieve governance cost effectively and with minimal disruption to the business? Because information governance is a process and not a single action, organizations are wise to set expectations accordingly. But for many, it is difficult to know where to start. Establishing knowledge about what information exists, where it is located and its current status is the first step in developing an informed approach to information governance.

To govern stored information effectively, including dark data, you must have visibility into the information stores. This is important in order to:

- **Know what information you have.** Create an information inventory that enables real-time visibility into all content types and repositories
- **Know your information is secure.** Leverage company security policies and manage access accordingly across distributed systems

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She joined CA in 2006 with the acquisition of MDY Group International, where she served as founder and CEO. Galina is a Certified Records Manager (CRM) and is recognized around the world as an expert in information governance and associated technologies. She has been widely published in academic journals and speaks frequently for industry organizations such as ALIM, ARMA International, The Association of Legal Administrators, Gilbane Conference, Association for Work Process Improvement, ILTA and Cohasset Associates/MER.

She received the NJBIZ: Best 50 Women in Business Award in April 2010. Prior to founding MDY, Galina consulted for IBM and Bell Labs and taught at the Fordham University Graduate School of Business and the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences at Columbia University. She received her CRM certification in 2004 and earned doctoral and master’s degrees in Computer Science from Columbia University.
• **Know the information is managed appropriately.** Automate policy application across all repositories, data types and social media interactions in a consistent and effective manner

• **Ensure regulatory and legal compliance.** Prepare for and respond to audits, discovery and compliance obligations to reduce costs and mitigate systemic risk exposure

• **Dispose of unnecessary information.** Ensure retention and disposition of assets in a defensible manner in accordance with all applicable policies and workflows

Exposing and understanding dark data within a governance program enables organizations to classify information for both business and compliance purposes. By bringing visibility and organization into content silos, enterprises mitigate the risk of exposure from dark data through policy-based information management.

### Managing information based on policies

• Policy-based information governance allows businesses to tame the growth of dark data. With a comprehensive policy-based information governance program in place, organizations can take action on content based on policy or a desired outcome. Actions might include:

  • Designating content for deduplication
  • Migrating information to lower-cost storage
  • Preserving information subject to a legal hold
  • Declaring certain content as records and associating them with a dedicated records management system
  • Changing security settings and/or encrypting certain information
  • Disposing of content in a defensible manner, according to policy

### Rewards and benefits

Policy-based information governance enables organizations to reduce spiraling infrastructure and storage costs by managing information according to its business value. When information assets are categorized by value, information governance processes can be automated to ensure compliance with business, legal and regulatory requirements. Automating manual tasks not only reduces inconsistencies, it helps keep productivity higher, and at a lower total cost of ownership.

Proactive management of dark data delivers many benefits to the organization, including:

• **Lower operational expenses:** Keep information volumes lean to save storage, compute power, migration efforts and human resources allocated to unnecessary information stores

• **Increased efficiency:** Manage information reliably with accountability, integrity and consistency

• **Improved risk mitigation:** Reduce the risk of penalties and sanctions by reducing the volume of content, minimizing the information to review and classify in case of litigation, audit or regulatory inquiry

• **Better customer service and competitive advantage:** Improve response times to customer inquiries and gain stronger insights into customer needs

• **Greater transparency and agility:** Find the right asset at the right time, which can save thousands of hours in wasted productivity each year

### With governance, Dark becomes Bright

Dark data exists in all organizations, increasing risk and creating inefficiencies. Organizations are increasingly motivated to develop information governance programs that address these challenges for both regulatory and operational purposes. Leveraging ARMA International’s Generally Accepted Recordkeeping Principles, organizations can develop programs that expose, dispose of and optimize dark data. The future is bright for organizations that invest in proactive approaches to managing information more effectively.