TECHWORLD

Data Management Survey

IN ASSOCIATION WITH

IBM®
Many firms struggle to effectively control the management and circulation of their business data.

The cloud is a viable data storage silo according to some IT managers, while others strongly disagree.

Only a fifth (20 percent) of technology leaders say the IT department “owns” the data in their organisation, according to a Data Management Survey of over 100 executives carried out by Techworld for IBM. Eleven percent say it is the master data management team that owns the information.

**Master data management**

Master data management (MDM) can help to ensure that organisations are not using multiple and potentially inconsistent versions of the same master data in different departments. Master data can include information about customers, suppliers, products, employees and other business areas.

In last year’s survey, over 40 percent of firms said they didn’t have a master data management team or a centralised data integration strategy, and a further 10 percent were not sure whether they had one or not.

So, going by the relatively low 11 percent that say their data is owned by the master data team in this year’s report, MDM still does not seem to have caught on at firms, even though it is seen as important by some to enable data to be more effectively used across organisations.

Rob Karel, an analyst at Forrester, puts it like this, “Business process professionals recognise master data management (MDM) as a critical enabler to deliver optimised business processes and trusted business insights.

“But without taking responsibility and accountability for the delivery of trusted master data, your business process improvement, business optimisation, and decision support efforts will continue to underperform.”

Some 44 percent of respondents surveyed say data was owned by the business unit where the data was created, and 14 percent say it was owned by the individual who created it.

When asked separately about who should own data in their organisation, a similar 40 percent said the business unit that created it, and a lower 15 percent said the IT department. MDM is clearly seen as a potential data management tool because 22 percent said the master data management team should own it.
Considering these responses, including the fact that some firms are currently failing to adopt MDM, CEOs and boards of companies will be hoping essential business data is being shared across their organisation and not sitting in inaccessible silos.

**Cloud security**

Asked whether they were confident that business critical data was secure in their organisation, 40 percent said they were. However, fifteen percent of respondents said they were not confident of the data’s integrity, while another 21 percent said their datacentre was secure but that they worried about what happens to the data elsewhere in the organisation.

This uncertainty about data security is more pronounced when the issues of virtualisation and cloud computing come into play.

On virtualisation, 27 percent said it had increased “data integrity” problems, but that they were “handling it”. Another 27 percent said they are “struggling” to keep a grip on virtualisation. And yet another 27 percent agreed with the statement that “despite the hype, there is little virtualisation in the production environment yet”.

Only 12 percent said outright that they would consider the cloud to reduce the cost of managing data. Another 38 percent said they would, but only if they could be confident about security and compliance.

Over two fifths (41 percent) said their data is “too precious” to use on third party applications.

Cloud providers clearly appear to have more to do, according to respondents, to convince companies that they can be fully trusted on externally handling company data. One respondent to the survey said, “The use of cloud computing will trigger numerous audits and assessments targeting vendors.”

Analyst house IDC acknowledges that cloud security, compliance, service level agreement (SLA) and data location issues will not be fully solved in 2011. While cloud governance will grow in importance, IDC says market growth will not be impeded.

Organisations have adopted cloud, despite the security questions, and the challenge now is to keep control over cloud adoption. New technologies released in 2011 will help manage this complex, flexible and always changing IT resource.”

Eric Domage, an IDC analyst, explains, “Security was a long-term inhibitor to cloud adoption. But organisations have adopted cloud, despite the security questions, and the challenge now is to keep control over cloud adoption. New technologies released in 2011 will help manage this complex, flexible and always changing IT resource.”
Staffing Requirements

New technologies aside, the survey seems to suggest that most firms currently have the right staff in place for their data management requirements, although there were additional pressures.

Addressing the question, “Do you have sufficient skilled staff for data management”, thirty one percent said “yes”. An additional 20 percent said “yes, but it is hard to recruit and retain good people”. Also, 19 percent agreed with the statement that “so far, but cost pressures could undermine the team”.

A worrying one fifth said they didn’t have sufficiently skilled staff in place to handle their data management requirements.

Respondents were asked what vendors could provide that would most help them with their data management problems. Making it easier for staff to use systems was an area that featured here.

One executive said, “We need intelligent interfaces for archiving software – the current crop of pro-level software requires a PhD in each separate interface to operate them properly. The reality of backup and archiving is simpler than that.”

Another called for “data security coupled with an integrated data management and intelligence framework”. A system “that can carry out business decisions effectively having been fed with necessary parameters” was the choice of another.

No doubt there will be suppliers queuing up to claim they can address just these types of demands, but some observers suggest they need to get their marketing right first to convince users these requirements can already be met.

The survey pointed out that vendors are already developing lightweight data analysis tools for lines of business, and asked, “Do the people these tools are aimed at have the skills to use them?”

Respondents were quite bullish on this question with 21 per cent confirming “yes, and our aim is to give everyone real time actionable information”. And over half (51 percent) said, “Some do, and others will learn”.

But almost a third (29 percent) agreed with the statement, “I don’t know, and until we sort out data quality, we won’t find out”. One respondent said, “I think we have internal issues to sort out before tools can come into play.”
Business intelligence

The area of business intelligence (BI) and analytics still seems to be accessible to only the higher echelons of the business according to the survey, in spite of what other experts suggest is necessary.

Neil Chandler, an analyst at Gartner, says, “By 2014, the metamorphosis of BI from IT-owned and report-centric will be virtually complete for a large number of organisations. These organisations will modify how information feeds decision making.”

When asked how widely business intelligence and analytics systems were used within their organisations, two-fifths (41 percent) said they were used by line of business leaders and above, and 5 percent said they were used at board level only.

Another 12 percent said BI and analytics were available to team leaders. A quarter (25 percent) said the “most appropriate staff members” had access - illustrating there was clearly some growth to come if shared BI was to become essential for the type of growing business the analysts talk about.

Gartner predicts that by 2013, a third of BI functionality will be consumed via handheld devices. It said mobile BI will “significantly expand the population of BI users to include a more mainstream audience”. Firms should recognise that users will want to use mobile devices to access corporate BI data and that they should modify their systems in response, it said.

With so much unstructured data about - including company emails, Tweets, and Facebook data - firms clearly need to get a grip on potentially valuable business data. Gartner says that by 2013, fifteen percent of BI deployments will combine intelligence, collaboration and social networking software into decision-making environments.

Such unstructured data is supposed to go into a business intelligence and analytics system. But a sixth (16 percent) of survey respondents didn’t even use business intelligence and analytics within their organisation.

This is where a huge difference will be made.