

The background is a complex digital-themed composition. It includes a network of white lines connecting various nodes, some of which are 3D rendered as spheres and polyhedrons. There are also several large, 3D arrows in shades of blue, green, and cyan pointing upwards and to the right. A hand is visible in the lower right, with fingers slightly curled as if interacting with the digital elements. The overall color palette is dominated by blues, greens, and greys, with a warm, orange-toned hand.

Seven Steps to Gain Control of Your Data Sprawl

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Linda Coniglio

Data sprawl – what do you really know about it? You know you have A LOT of data, and it keeps growing. You’ve heard 69% of this data is redundant, obsolete, or trivial (ROT), and it’s risky to keep it. You know your organization is moving content to the cloud and it does not make sense to move ROT to a new home. But what can be done about it?

The answer seems clear -- rid the organization of content that no longer has business value. What may not be clear is **how to succeed**. Innovative Driven has perfected the approach to gaining control over data sprawl. It includes analyzing content and removing ROT. As a bonus, it incorporates finding and properly managing content with business value according to policies and regulations. The following steps make it possible to gain control of your data sprawl and strengthen your information governance program:

ASSESS THE PROBLEM

Determine how big the problem is. Do you have terabytes or petabytes of unmanaged content to be analyzed? Where is the content stored? Who is storing it, and how are they using it? In addition, knowing your organization’s policies and processes regarding content retention and proper records storage will be necessary.

BUILD A BUSINESS CASE

For most companies, the foundation for a strong business case is the changing data risk and compliance landscape. For a variety of legal, compliance, privacy, security and economic reasons, content can no longer be kept forever. Across the enterprise, data must be managed according to its value.

MAKE A PLAN

The plan should include an executive sponsor who introduces the program and shares why the initiative is critical to the entire organization. In addition, the plan must include specific goals, a timeline, a realistic rollout method and support for content on legal hold. Build in frequent status updates with management, project champions and participants. Prioritize a solid communication plan that includes short, clear expectations using a variety of mediums.

SELECT A ROT ANALYSIS TOOL

The tool must be easy to use and fast enough to assure project timelines are met. Keep in mind quick wins increase success factors and reduce project fatigue. Innovative Driven’s proprietary tool, IDentify File Analysis, can be used to quickly scan terabytes of file share content for ROT. It also includes an easy-to-use feature allowing individuals to quickly give their blessing to the deletion of questionable files.



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DESIGN A PROJECT PILOT

A well-designed pilot provides the “test drive” for your plan. You’ll discover what adjustments may be necessary before an enterprisewide rollout. Your project team will have rehearsed the process, and you’ll quickly have realistic statistics to share with executives and project sponsors. Most importantly, confidence in ROT identification and deletion will be established.

SELECT A RECORD CATEGORIZATION TOOL

With this step, the goal is to automatically find records within the remaining content of value. With substantially less data, it’s now more economical and less time consuming to thoroughly analyze the full content of files. Innovative Driven uses tools like Brainspace to quickly find training documents and train record classification models for reuse again keeping end user involvement to a minimum.

SET DAY-FORWARD EXPECTATIONS

No one has an appetite for repeating a content cleanup project; thus, make your go-forward content retention expectations clear. These days, the badge of honor goes to those who keep content only as long as necessary and store it according to approved business processes. Make it widely known there are only three reasons to keep content:

- a. Legal obligation such as a legal hold
- b. Regulatory requirement such as an HR regulation
- c. Business value – it’s needed to support the business

Proper content hygiene is at the heart of any information governance program, but it’s not a walk in the park. To control data sprawl or prepare for a move to cloud storage, establish policies and procedures for how information is created, stored, used, valued, and deleted. These seven steps will have you speeding down the IG highway. Each milestone realized moves your organization closer to regulatory compliance and data risk reduction.

The journey is unique for every organization, and the solution is rarely found in out-of-the-box services. Innovative Driven is happy to guide you through these steps working alongside you every step of the way. It’s not what we do; it’s who we are.

