NORTHERN:
USER DATA MANAGEMENT

In their Digital Universe Study, IDC predicts that data and content is growing at a rate of 64% a year and that a majority of that growth comes from user-generated data. Real life experience confirms this – most organizations see the amount of data stored double every two to three years. The rapid growth implies both challenges and opportunities, and points to the critical importance of actively managing the pool of data.

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THE OPPORTUNITY TO REALIZE VALUE FROM YOUR DATA

Any healthy organization will generate information, and information is a good thing, but too much of anything can be a challenge. Streamlining your data facilitates for individuals throughout an organization to more easily and quickly get access to the relevant information, as well as in identifying business value through, for example Big Data analytics.

THE CHALLENGES OF RAPID DATA GROWTH

Storage space is often treated as a free and infinite resource, where users continue saving uncontrollably, not knowing, or caring, about the extra costs, compliance issues and operational risks this may imply.

STORAGE COST IS NOT JUST ABOUT BUYING DISK
While the cost of additional disk is relatively low, the total cost of providing and managing the storage is not. This becomes clearer when you consider the combined costs of power, IT personnel costs, backup and disaster recovery procedures and so on. Our customers indicate that these costs will add up to approximately $10,000 per year for providing a TB of storage to their end users. Cleaning up unwanted data and slowing the growth curve just a little, will mean substantial savings over time.

OPERATIONAL RISK WILL INCREASE WITH THE AMOUNT OF DATA
As the amount of data handled within an organization and its infrastructure increases, the complexity grows and the environment is stretched to its limits. When a substantial part of the data handled by the organization is unnecessary data, this mean being exposed to an equally unnecessary operational risk, it takes longer to manage the data and downtime will become more likely, effecting business productivity.

COMPLIANCE STARTS WITH KNOWLEDGE
The meaning of compliance varies from industry to industry but one thing is certain – without knowledge it is impossible to stay compliant. If you know what's being saved in your environment, where and by whom, that alone decreases the risk for legal exposure and lays the groundwork for staying compliant with government regulations and other rules that are relevant to your business.

ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES THROUGH UDM

User Data Management [UDM] is about dealing with the challenges and opportunities related to user-generated, unstructured data through insight and control.

NORTHERN is the UDM market leader, having developed The Northern Process and Northern Storage Suite for UDM, ensuring unique, both short and long-term, value for all kinds of organizations.

GAINING INSIGHT INTO YOUR USER-GENERATED DATA
Having insight into the user-generated data is the key factor to gaining control over it. If you don't know what's on the servers, how can you manage the data? Only after getting insight is it possible to start taking decisions on what to do with the data and how to proceed.

IDENTIFYING POTENTIAL EFFICIENCY GAINS
Any large pool of user-generated data will contain inefficiencies. Insight into the data stored will reveal areas that can be improved. It could be that primary storage is teeming with stale data that should be archived, still filled with files created by users that have left the organization, or certain file types that are growing at an alarming rate or that simply shouldn't exist in the environment.

UNDERSTANDING GROWTH PATTERN
With a greater visibility into the data, there is a better understanding of where the growth is coming from and trends can be tracked. This makes you able to craft effective strategies and policies for growth containment without disturbing day-to-day operations.

DESIGNING A UDM POLICY

Armed with insight into the user-generated data, the organization is able to start defining policies to change user behavior and control how storage resources are being used, creating a more efficient utilization of the IT infrastructure. These policies will of course be unique to every situation but should stem from a goal shared by the whole organization.

With UDM policies in place one can start to give them some teeth, making sure they are followed. The goal of any UDM policy is ultimately to change the user behavior and gain control of future storage utilization.

CHANGING USER BEHAVIOR
Users' behavior and attitude towards corporate data is a key factor when trying to control the growth and costs related to storage. Users often don't know the cost to the organization of what they're saving. By directly involving individuals who are responsible for projects, departments or lines of business and exposing storage status, trend, cost and risk exposure generated by the operation they are responsible for, users get a more proactive and collaborative approach to data management.

CONTROLLING THE USERS
Information to the end-users will only take you so far in gaining control of your user-generated data. Eventually you will need to draw a line in the sand, firmly showing what reasonable storage usage is. This can be achieved by allocation of space, by preventing some content from being saved or directing the content to certain places. Couple that with advanced notification and policies will be adhered to, creating a more efficient storage environment adding value to all part of the organization.

THE BENEFITS OF UDM

User-generated data is a very real concern to almost all organizations today. Parts of the challenge can be solved through automated tools built into the storage hardware like de-duplication, compression and file optimization, but all those tools only affect already created data. In order to adjust to today's relentlessly changing demands for IT efficiency you need to start with the creators of the data, the end-users. Northern created User Data Management, as a goal-driven, policy-based process because regardless of your IT infrastructure, gaining insight and control is key for IT to bring real value into the organization's core business.

THE NORTHERN APPROACH TO UDM

GOAL → DISCOVERY → OPPORTUNITY → POLICY → OPERATIONS → EVALUATION

INSIGHT **CONTROL**
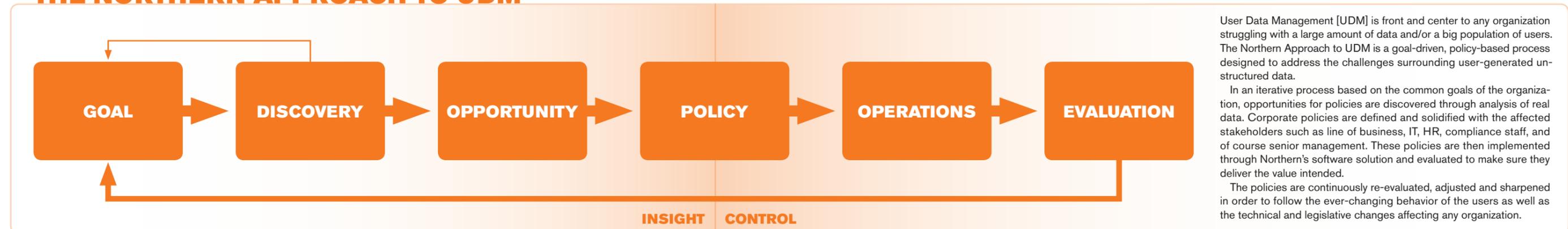
User Data Management [UDM] is front and center to any organization struggling with a large amount of data and/or a big population of users. The Northern Approach to UDM is a goal-driven, policy-based process designed to address the challenges surrounding user-generated unstructured data.

In an iterative process based on the common goals of the organization, opportunities for policies are discovered through analysis of real data. Corporate policies are defined and solidified with the affected stakeholders such as line of business, IT, HR, compliance staff, and of course senior management. These policies are then implemented through Northern's software solution and evaluated to make sure they deliver the value intended.

The policies are continuously re-evaluated, adjusted and sharpened in order to follow the ever-changing behavior of the users as well as the technical and legislative changes affecting any organization.

NORTHERN STORAGE SUITE

Northern Storage Suite is a user and data centric software solution that enables organizations to constrain data growth, align the value of data with the cost of storage, and extend the life of storage infrastructure – making efficient storage consumption a part of business culture. Specifically, Northern Storage Suite delivers:

Insight into the unstructured data through:
- Enterprise wide reporting on global or business unit level showing how resources are currently being used and how they will be used in the future.
- Group share reporting informing for example a project manager how his share is being utilized today allowing him to take action increasing the storage efficiency.
- User-centric reports that detail a user's largest, oldest, duplicate and media files as suggested areas for clean-up.

Control over the storage environment curbing storage growth through:
- Disk quotas bringing hard control over directory size and usage by user, or soft control for monitored growth and enhanced accountability.
- File blocking preventing specific file types from being saved, extension-based real-time scanning and scheduled binary-level scanning preserve system performance.

Exposing actual storage cost to change usage patterns through:
- Internal billing by means of chargeback allows an organization to distribute storage cost on business units, departments of individual users.
- Show-back, simply showing the users actual storage cost in order to increase awareness of the impact their usage have on the organization.

Northern Storage Suite is a Windows-based software solution that provides one pane of glass into user-generated, unstructured data across hardware platforms, geographical sites, data sources and file formats. The solution can be used on any direct attached storage, all CIFS compliant NAS devices and has dedicated support for EMC VNX, EMC Isilon and NetApp NAS.

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NORTHERN is dedicated to helping organizations gain control over their unstructured and user generated data. By gaining control, organizations avoid unnecessary costs, handle compliance related issues with their user generated data, and reduce the operational risks related to their IT infra-structure. Furthermore, control also means that organizations are able to capitalize on the opportunities related to their pools of data.

Founded in Stockholm, Sweden in 1995 Northern has from the beginning served a global market focusing solely on User Data Management [UDM]. The in-house developed solution, Northern Storage Suite, is used by organizations around the world with large numbers of users and/or large amounts of unstructured data. Organizations in all areas, from aerospace and healthcare to government and education, have realized the benefits of the goal-driven, policy-based approach to UDM that Northern can offer.

The company serves a global market through its six bases of operations Sweden [Stockholm], United States [Boston, MA], France [Paris], United Kingdom [London], Italy [Turin] and The Netherlands [Utrecht] For more information visit: www.northern.net