Data is an asset and needs to be treated like one

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Most companies understand the importance of protecting physical assets and intellectual property. Yet many overlook data as a critical asset class, one that requires the same rigour, strategy, and governance. As organizations generate and rely on increasing volumes of data, failure to treat it as a strategic asset can hinder performance, and increase risk exposure.

Why it matters

Without consistent governance, data remains fragmented, unprotected, or under-leveraged. Identifying which data sets are most valuable — or most sensitive — is key to building a defensible strategy. Crown jewel data may include customer information, proprietary algorithms, or pricing models. The challenge is that few organizations have mapped these assets clearly or applied tailored protections.

Boards that ask the right questions can help prioritize investment and shape a more resilient data strategy.

What management and boards must prioritize

1. Enterprise-wide data inventory

A current and comprehensive view of organizational data is the first step toward consistent governance.

2. Identification of crown jewel datasets

Boards should expect clarity around which datasets are most critical to enterprise value — and how they are protected.

3. Consistent governance across business units

Variability in how data is collected, shared, or secured across departments can create compliance gaps. A harmonized approach is essential.

Final thoughts

Treating data as a business asset, not just an IT issue, empowers organizations to unlock value, comply with regulatory expectations, and protect what matters most.

By

Hélène Deschamps Marquis

Expertise

Cybersecurity, Privacy & Data Protection, Artificial Intelligence (AI)

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BLG Offices

Calgary
Centennial Place, East Tower
520 3rd Avenue S.W.
Calgary, AB, Canada
T2P 0R3

T 403.232.9500
F 403.266.1395

Ottawa
World Exchange Plaza
100 Queen Street
Ottawa, ON, Canada
K1P 1J9

T 613.237.5160
F 613.230.8842

Vancouver
1200 Waterfront Centre
200 Burrard Street
Vancouver, BC, Canada
V7X 1T2

T 604.687.5744
F 604.687.1415

Montréal
1000 De La Gauchetière Street West
Suite 900
Montréal, QC, Canada
H3B 5H4

T 514.954.2555
F 514.879.9015

Toronto
Bay Adelaide Centre, East Tower
22 Adelaide Street West
Toronto, ON, Canada
M5H 4E3

T 416.367.6000
F 416.367.6749

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