

Simple, Smart and Fast: Search-Driven Analytics for Data Privacy and Compliance



Helen Xing, senior director of global public sector and industry alliances at ThoughtSpot, discusses how agencies can use search-driven analytics to simplify and improve data privacy and compliance.

Describe the challenges of identifying, monitoring and protecting data and ensuring compliance in today's extended enterprise.

As data grows in volume and number of sources, compliance becomes more difficult. The challenge is compounded by the increasing number of citizens and employees who need to utilize that data. Security and compliance must be built into any solution's DNA from the very beginning. Security has to be at the center of the entire pipeline of data consumption — from how data is collected, to the infrastructure used, to the way it's analyzed.

How has the pandemic introduced new risks and complexity into data protection and management?

The pandemic further accelerated risk and complexity, especially as more public servants work from home. Today, CIOs and IT workers are essential employees. The work they do is more critical for citizens and the country at large than perhaps ever before. We're starting to see them use data more and more to deliver these essential services. Addressing issues stemming from the pandemic often requires data from multiple departments and agencies. Bringing all this data together in record time to drive better decision-making while ensuring compliance and protection is no easy feat.

What are search-driven analytics?

Everybody is familiar with search tools. We all know how to go to Google, YouTube or Amazon and enter a few words to search for something. Search-driven analytics brings a similar experience to the world of numbers and data. It allows people to interact with data in a more natural way, with everyday language, instead of using code. This enables people to interact with data on their own, even if they are not analysts or programmers, and get answers back in seconds. It's a simple user experience for everyone on the front end, but also provides powerful analytics and infrastructure on the back end.

How can search-driven analytics help alleviate workforce issues such as staffing shortages and lack of trained analysts?

In a recent report by Harvard Business Review, 72 percent of respondents who have brought analytics to their frontline workers are seeing significant productivity gains. Search-driven analytics help make that possible because extensive training isn't required. The easy-to-use language enables anybody in the organization to quickly turn data into insights and actions. Everybody can make better decisions in the moment. There's no need to rely on data specialists for reports, dashboards or coding for every question. IT workers and analysts can focus on more strategic, higher-level work, such as predictive analytics, data modeling, data curation and data strategy.

What functionality should organizations look for in modern self-service analytics?

One, the technology needs to be simple and intuitive so everyone can use it without extensive training. Two, it must be smart.

Modern analytics must be able to ask questions and also proactively remind users of questions they didn't know to ask using augmented analytics. Three, for usability, the system must be fast enough to crunch through the insights in seconds. Four, it should be cloud native. With organizations moving more data to the cloud, analytics must be able to find insights for all data living in cloud sources. Last, what makes all this possible is a modern architecture that has the scalability and performance to handle billions of rows of data and look down to the most granular level to extract insights.

Where should organizations start on the road to using business intelligence analytics for data privacy and emerging regulations?

Clearly defined use cases are critical. What questions do agencies need to answer to fulfill their mission, and what data do they need to obtain those answers? Once you find that data, how do you store it, and how do you track compliance requirements on that data? How do you enable data sharing and transparency without interfering with privacy and security? Another critical piece is the criteria and best practices used for tool selection. Can you get to granular levels of data and customize security clearances down to the role level or column level so you can govern who's seeing what without having to create duplicate data lakes for each department? That can create a lot of economies of scale and enable organizations to more easily and confidently share data across agencies.

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