

# SA businesses underestimate the need for data management

A recent data management survey conducted by Gabsten Technologies has revealed some interesting insight into how South African businesses view their data.

While the results showed that the majority of local organisations employ some form of data management, including data protection, backup and recovery, a worrying number of businesses do not.

In addition, a significant proportion of businesses believe their data is not impacted by legislation. In a world where data is the heart of any business, this attitude could lead to disaster. Data is a critical business asset and must be protected properly. The main takeaway of the results is that it is imperative for all businesses to understand the importance of their data, and how they can manage it effectively to ensure business continuity and compliance.

## How critical is data to your business?



Hemant Harie, managing director at Gabsten

Based on the survey results, 63% of businesses indicated that they are unable to function without their data, while a further 14% answered that they could survive one day without access to their data. However, only 4.5% of respondents indicated that they can easily function without their data.

“These results reflect that the majority of businesses understand that their data is mission critical. In a digital age, it is almost impossible to conduct business as usual without access to data. For the respondents that believe they could function without their data, this is unfortunately not the case,” says Hemant Harie, managing director at Gabsten.

It is often only when something goes wrong that businesses realise just how reliant they are on data, but by the time this happens it may be too late to recover. If your data is lost or stolen, the impact on your business could be severe.

In fact, many businesses that experience a significant data loss event never recover. The reality is that practically all businesses today will need access to some form of data at some point. It is not just about productivity, but the ability to survive. Whether it is email or accounting systems, data is pervasive, and therefore must be managed and protected effectively to ensure business continuity.



Chris de Bruyn, operations manager at Gabsten

Chris de Bruyn, operations manager at Gabsten, further explains, “A disaster can take many forms, such as a flood, fire, malware infiltration or hardware failure, and how it affects your business depends on a number of factors. However, when an organisation’s data is put at risk, it will cause challenges and prevent businesses from functioning fully until access can be restored. A business impact assessment is critical to understanding how data affects an organisation, and what will happen if they cannot access it. Ultimately, any data loss event will have a financial impact on a business’ bottom line.”

### **Regulations and Compliance – does it affect my business?**

According to survey respondents, only 55% believe that their data is impacted by legislation and compliance requirements.

However, this is an erroneous belief, since the Protection of Personal Information (PoPI) Act is applicable to any and all data and therefore affects all businesses. The other 45% of businesses need to take note that non-compliance with PoPI can have detrimental results, including a maximum prison sentence of 10 years and hefty fines up to R10 million, that could cripple any business.

### **A strategy is essential**

It is now more important than ever to ensure data is protected, yet as per the survey, only 64% of respondents have comprehensive data management tools and strategies in place. This shows that more than a third of South African businesses simply do not understand the impact on their business should they lose access to their data for any reason.

“For those businesses that have a strategy in place, it is essential to test systems and then test them again to make sure that disaster recovery and backups actually work. Business evolves rapidly and IT systems need to keep pace with this change,” says Harie.

On the other side of the coin, 18% do not have any backup strategy at all. Of those that do have a strategy in place, only 60% included disaster recovery and high availability. A total of 70% of respondents indicated that their data is secure irrespective of where it is stored.

“This may sound controversial to the 23% of respondents who advised that their business could operate without information for more than a day but without data organisations cannot function. Moreover, it is imperative for organisations to recognise the necessity of data management. Those organisations without any data management in place are placing their organisations at significant risk. Even those with a strategy in place may be vulnerable if they do not test their systems and ensure they function correctly. Underestimating the impact of data could result in a business being unable to recover from a disaster,” de Bruyn concludes.

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