5 Simple Ways the DoD Harnesses the Power of Data

For decades, government agencies have relied on an antiquated approach to data management. In a recent webcast, digital experts from Oracle and the Department of Defense outlined five key steps the DoD is taking to supercharge their approach.

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Introduction

There's no doubt that managing, analyzing, and securing data is a complex task for any agency. Frequently, agencies collect data for some express purpose, which is then stored and siloed-off, never to be used to its full potential. Today, however, the tables are turning and agencies — with the help of vendor partners and innovative technologies — are learning to harness the power of their data not just to understand what's happening today but to better prepare for the future.

A webcast featuring speakers from the Department of Defense and Oracle, outlined how the agency is changing the way it manages and uses data. Simply put, the DoD is transforming into a data-centric organization that harnesses the power of data at speed and scale with the ability to improve operations and efficiency.
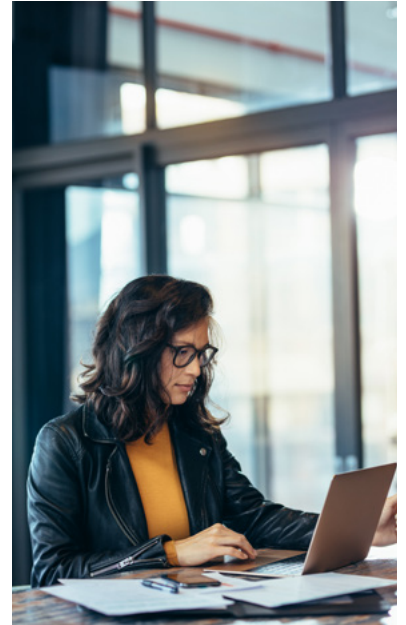
1. Architecture Is Your Most Valuable Asset

The Defense Department obviously is an enormous, global enterprise and data management is an ongoing challenge. As recently as 2018 the department noted that it had "multiple disjointed and stove-piped information systems distributed across modern and legacy infrastructure around the globe leading to a litany of problems." At the time, this was a significant issue that hampered the DoD's ability to command operational advantages anywhere in the world.

To ensure the services could improve their operational advantages, the Defense Department has adopted a new approach to data management that includes using innovative commercial technologies.

Mark Tatum, Oracle's vice president of cloud and mission technology, said industry experts are working closely with DoD officials to ensure antiquated workloads can take advantage of newer cloud-based architectures.

"There's a new network topology, a new virtualization technology with a strong reliance on bare metal edge computing," he said. "So really, at its core, what Oracle has done at the infrastructure level is maximize the usage of the memory, local storage, and processing speed that is critical for high-performance computing and intensive analytics."

With new edge technology and the right processes in place, data integration, data streaming technologies, and data catalogs can easily be integrated for use in real-time. This way, leaders can pivot rapidly and provide improved situational awareness to its warfighters and gain mission advantage.

5 Ways DoD is Harnessing the Power of Data

1 Architecture Is Your Most Valuable Asset

2 Implement Open Data Standards

3 Strong Data Governance Is Essential

4 Data Management Is A Team Sport

5 Commercial Vendors Are Here To Help

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2. Implement Open Data Standards

Before the Defense Department can gain any technological advantage, it must address the weight of restrictive data standards. Legacy data polices have centralized data standardization, leaving data generally inaccessible to those who needed real-time data the most, like operational warfighters.

The Defense Department is now moving to an open data standard architecture that adheres to the VAULTIS goals — seven goals the DoD has set for itself in order to become a data-centric organization.

Ultimately, the DoD plans to scale these efforts by reinforcing defense-wide requirements to publish data assets and associated interfaces, as well as promote data discoverability and access before seeking standardization.

3. Strong Data Governance Is Essential

Using cloud architecture and employing open data standards means little without strong governance. The Defense Department is currently seeking to establish guidelines that promote new data policies, processes, frameworks, tools, and metrics to manage their data efficiently from the point of creation to its ultimate disposal.

In support of this guideline, the department established a data governance community, overseen by the DoD Data Council and the Defense Department's chief data officer. Within this community, the Defense Department can not only adhere to their goal of supporting cloud architecture and open data policies, but they can identify challenges, implement solutions, and share best practices with stakeholders.

In addition to the data governance community, the DoD will soon be able to use internal data to better streamline business intelligence by optimizing management approaches informed by data.

4. Data Management Is A Team Sport

Agency policies and guidelines can only go so far. A truly data-centric organization doesn't just focus on tools and technologies but supports a data-literate workforce.

Historically, agencies in the public sector have had difficulty attracting and retaining talented, data-focused employees. With this in mind, the Defense Department is incentivizing current employees to embark on an educational data journey. Each individual must be willing to further their data education and will be provided with the chance to improve their skills through training. Those that do will be rewarded and promoted as they achieve milestones along the way.

By incentivizing their current workforce, the Defense Department aims to create an operational stopgap while they continue to search for the best

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and brightest data-literate individuals. Everyone they employ, be it service members, civilians, or contractors, is seen as a critical part of the agency-wide push to supercharge data.

In seeking to improve their approach to data management, the Defense Department is attempting to reinvent the entire process from the ground up, starting with architecture and ending with talent, ultimately creating an ecosystem that can harness data in new and unforeseen ways.

5. Commercial Vendors Are Here To Help

The DoD cannot continue to harness data effectively on its own and is looking to support from commercial vendors, including Oracle.

"[The DoD has developed] a very coherent data strategy with a prime focus on the warfighter," said Robert Bussian, Oracle's vice president of mission integration and initiatives. "Oracle is working to implement data-driven support toward decision-makers by offering the best information to our strategic senior leaders as they move the department forward."

Technology industry leaders have long been on the cutting edge of data advances, techniques, and processes. If agencies bridge the gap with commercial vendors and create a truly symbiotic relationship versus a transactional one, the opportunity to supercharge and unleash data management capabilities increases exponentially.

Oracle is dedicated to ensuring that government agencies have what they need to derive the greatest value from their data.

"Oracle has supported modernization efforts like the DoD's across not only the commercial space, but throughout the public sector and national security groups," said Bussian. "We provide the security community with the highest levels of support by helping them secure, analyze, and act on data in a timely manner."

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Oracle

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