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What GDPR forgets: the physical security

The EU's GDPR legislature will have consequences for every company doing business in Europe, including American companies. The new directive promises sizeable fines to anyone that does not take personal data seriously. Meanwhile, the data center company DigiPlex urges companies to focus on another important aspect: physical security.

The General Data Protection Regulation's (GDPR) purpose is to harmonize legislation related to personal information across the EU's member states. It does however also create radical challenges for American businesses holding information on EU customers. Come May 2018, when the legislation enters into force, companies will have publicly disclosed how the data is used, in addition to offering transparency for individuals seeking access to their data. The GDPR includes a sanction mechanism, and the fines for non-compliance can reach 4 percent of a company's annual revenue.

Business will obviously change for everyone not taking personal information seriously. This will clearly raise awareness regarding how the data is secured, but it's also vital not to forget where the information is located, says DigiPlex CEO, Gisle M. Eckhoff.

Moving data to safety

American computer security company, McAfee, published a study of over 800 company leaders from different sectors. The report reveals that 50 percent of the respondents state that they would like to move their data to a more secure location. A motivating factor is the new EU legislation. The report also reveals that 74 percent of the business leaders specified that they thought protecting the data correctly would attract new customers.

Data security is not just about protecting yourself against hacking and other digital threats. The overall security critically depends on where your data is stored. Companies who actively select a secure data centre to host their data will gain a competitive advantage in the market as the management of personal information is in the spotlight, says Eckhoff.

Physical security is forgotten

While EU-based companies are in the process of adapting to the GDPR, Gartner predicted only 50 percent of American firms will be ready for the strict regulation by the end of 2018. It's primarily the largest companies and public enterprises that are furthest along in the process of adaptation. According to Eckhoff, they are usually the ones that are the most concerned with data security and where it is stored. Fire and operational safety are two obvious challenges, but physical security also includes securing yourself against theft.

Several smaller businesses and organizations keep their data servers at their offices, and the physical security in many of the smaller data centers is almost absent. If your data is stored in such a data center, where someone easily could break in and physically remove the hardware

containing your information, then you are very vulnerable – both operationally and in relation to GDPR.

At DigiPlex's data centers, several layers of security ensure the safety of the data and the personal information that is stored there. Physical security is one of the most complicated and expensive features when building or updating a data center. That is why newly established data centers have to reach critical mass, allowing them to store enough data to compensate for the large security investment.

Adapting to GDPR

One consideration to take, as we are getting closer to the implementation date of GDPR, is where your data center should be located. Several US based companies are already relocating their centers to the EU in order to comply. Multiple database providers are helping non-EU companies organize and segregate EU data from other personal information. The data center industry is well established in Europe, and some of the most cost and climate efficient centers are located in the Nordic countries.

In the Nordics, the cool climate helps chill down vast amounts of hardware that otherwise would have been cooled down solely by electricity. Additionally, the electricity that is required by data centers to run their operations is supplied through easy access to affordable renewable energy.

In recent years, we have seen political turbulence in larger parts of the world, Europe included. The stable political environment in the Nordic countries is also a climate to consider, as the establishment of data centers is a long-term investment, says Eckhoff.

About the Author

Gisle M. Eckhoff joined DigiPlex in August 2014 as Chief Executive Officer. He brings nearly thirty years' experience in senior positions in the IT industry in the US, Sweden, UK and Denmark as well as at home in Norway.

Gisle is the former Senior Vice President and Managing Director of CGI's operation in Norway, and has also held a number of senior management roles at both country and regional levels in CSC Computer Sciences Corporation. The experience and knowledge gained from heading up the Financial Services vertical in the Nordic region, before becoming Vice President and Managing Director of CSC in both Norway and Sweden, is of great value when implementing DigiPlex' growth strategy in the Nordic markets.

Gisle holds a Degree in Business Administration from the Norwegian School of Management.