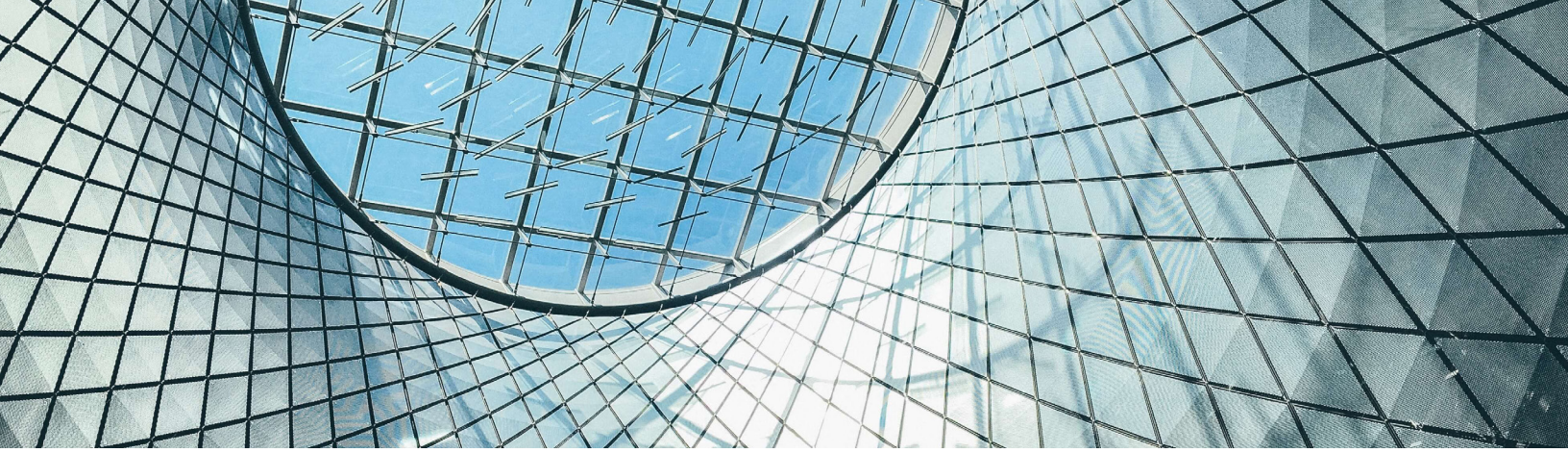

Market Insight Report Reprint

BigID's Data Governance Suite sits at the intersection of data policy and data security

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Data governance has too often been a tabletop exercise where data control policies are clearly documented in a system or spreadsheet, but not effectively linked directly to policy execution mechanisms in the technical sense. BigID, with its heritage in the data discovery market, thinks it may have the answer with its Data Governance Suite.

451 Research

S&P Global
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Introduction

Data governance has gone through a contemporary revival in enterprise opinion. Once thought of as a necessary (and perhaps disdained) conclusion to the requirements associated with regulatory compliance, data governance today is widely regarded as driver of immediate business value. When asked, participants in 451 Research's Voice of the Enterprise: Data & Analytics, Data Management & Analytics 2020 survey reported that 'higher quality of data/insight' was the top overall way data governance initiatives had added value to their business, with 38% of participants selecting this response. Data governance, indeed, is needed to achieve data privacy or compliance objectives. However, it is also needed to ensure reliable and sustainable end-user access to relevant data sources for continued business insight.

BigID thinks of itself as sitting at this logical intersection of 'reactive' compliance and privacy requirement needs and the more 'proactive' potential to sustainably leverage high-quality data. The company's Data Governance Suite, introduced in early summer 2021, inches the provider closer to a more comprehensive data management platform. Initially focused on sensitive data discovery and identity-linked data management mechanisms, BigID is now using its ability to 'touch,' analyze and control data to bridge one of the persistent gaps in data governance: policy execution.

THE 451 TAKE

Nearly half the battle of regulatory compliance is simply demonstrating that an organization is making a good faith effort toward regulatory compliance, so it should come as little surprise that for many years, much of the data governance market was largely oriented toward process management and documentation techniques. Often, policies were documented in detail for specific enterprise data, but there was not a direct way to bridge those documented rule sets with automated enforcement at the data layer. There was already an inkling of anxiety when compliance was the primary data governance driver, but it has been thrust to the forefront of concern now that data governance has proven itself to be the foundation of sustainable and scalable enterprise data initiatives such as self-service models.

BigID counts itself among a vanguard of technology providers that are leveraging their data discovery and data security chops to appeal to a broader data governance audience, primarily under the guise of having more direct control for and context around the data. There is little doubt that sensitive data discovery within the heterogeneous IT environment remains a difficult step for organizations in their privacy and governance journey. The biggest challenge BigID may face is one of its own making – making technology packaging potentially less intuitive for prospects as it rapidly expands its portfolio.

Context

451 Research has covered the dedicated PrivacyOps subsegment of the data management market since 2019 via our Data Management Market Map series, and BigID has demonstrated itself as an active PrivacyOps contender throughout this period – via both third-party acknowledgement and repeated institutional funding rounds. BigID hit a tangible inflection point in recognition when the company was named the winner of the RSA Conference Innovation Sandbox contest in 2018, and funding rounds – 10 total – have accumulated the business a sum of $246.1m. The most recent infusion of capital was a series D round in April for $30m with involvement from Advent International. In a dynamic PrivacyOps market, BigID can currently boast the distinction of unicorn status with a valuation of $1.25bn as of its most recent funding round, something that only a select few technology providers in this specific space can claim.

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BigID was founded in 2016 by CEO Dimitri Sirota and chief product officer Nimrod Vax amid the timeline of coalescing requirements for the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) as that law became formally established. Both founders were CA Technologies veterans. Within two years, by late 2017, BigID had begun to generate revenue, primarily around sensitive data discovery capabilities for data privacy use cases. The company was founded jointly in Israel and the US, and its headquarters is in New York.

As global data privacy and data protection regulations began to proliferate worldwide at the jurisdictional level, BigID poised itself to help organizations accurately pinpoint and successfully manage sensitive and/or regulated data sources – helping businesses successfully meet technically complex requirements related to common data privacy use cases such as data subject access requests, consent management and requests for data erasure. In mid-2020, the company introduced an extensible app ecosystem model that sits atop existing technology platform architecture, allowing trusted third parties and business partners to develop, augment and (optionally) monetize custom functionality suited for specific use cases.

BigID has 350+ employees worldwide. The company has continued to acquire talent via an ambitious trajectory since we most recently covered it in the summer of 2020, when staffing headcount floated at the 200 mark. When we wrote about the firm in March 2019, BigID had approximately 90 employees. To date, the company has roughly 100 customers, practically all of which are defined by enterprise-scale environments by definition.

The company's strategy has been, in part, defined by the steady expansion of technical capabilities supporting enterprise data management use cases originally driven by privacy; the ability to find, classify and catalog sensitive data in accordance with individual identity remains the foundational core of the technology architecture. The Data Governance Suite of product packaging is an example of this continued push, potentially appealing to a broad array of corporate data management stakeholders with interdependent (yet highly nuanced) individual responsibilities.

Product

In early summer 2021, BigID introduced its Data Governance Suite of functionality. Borrowing from the company's architectural design and machine learning (ML)-driven control mechanisms for data management, one of the overarching value propositions is that BigID can ostensibly help organizations bridge the functional gap that often exists between human-defined data governance policy and systematic data governance policy execution at the data layer. The BigID Data Governance Suite, in this context, is both a mix of expanded net-new capabilities and a selective packaging of existing technology.

Key capabilities and supported business objectives of BigID's Data Governance Suite include accelerated business user productivity via embedded data stewardship controls, ongoing data quality support and scoring mechanisms, data retention management, a living business glossary to provide context and meaning to enterprise informational resources, and a ML-augmented data catalog to assist in data navigability and enrichment of enterprise metadata with granular risk and privacy context. The BigID data catalog, specifically, can either operate in isolation or (more commonly) interoperate with existing enterprise data catalog investments.

Persistent connectivity and compatibility with evolving and heterogeneous enterprise data sources is a key metric that both prospective and existing BigID customers evaluate or depend on for functional control of their data environments in data governance use cases. To date, BigID supports and directly connects to a broad spectrum of data categories: files/documents, unstructured file shares, structured databases, data lake environments, NoSQL repositories, messaging/communications sources, middleware, cloud SaaS, cloud IaaS, development tools, specialty business applications and mainframe data sources. For connections, BigID additionally supports both on-premises and cloud as well as data at rest and in motion. Supplemental technology integrations via BigID APIs allow customers to build custom orchestrations with other relevant technology tools and investments in their IT environment.

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As is the case with all BigID functionality today, the company's data discovery architectural foundation serves as the necessary basis for all auxiliary use cases and elective product packaging. BigID's product architecture is inherently designed to detect/discover potentially sensitive and/or regulated data within the distributed enterprise IT environment, as well as provide data management execution driven by ML graph technology, often linked to individual identity. To functionally purchase the BigID Data Governance Suite, customers need to be deployed via cloud (BigID Cloud) or on-premises (BigID Enterprise).

Competition

As BigID continually expands its scope of productized capabilities, it risks competitively overlapping with much of the PrivacyOps segment. The company is prolific in its partnerships and integrations around data privacy, data security and data governance use cases, though there are also numerous instances where product compatibility might be best interpreted best as 'co-opetition.' Competition in this space is defined by both conceptual market mindshare – often defined by product positioning and defined business outcomes – and specific technical product architecture.

BigID has foundational architecture rooted in sensitive data discovery and identity-linked data management controls. In this regard, it may be compared to other data discovery specialists that have similarly expanded their product scope to support multifaceted data privacy and data governance use cases. Examples include 1Touch.io, Ardent Privacy, Hitachi Vantara (via recent pickup of Io-Tahoe), PKWARE (via Dataguise assets) and Spirion. Informatica, a consistent presence in the data management market, offers data discovery capabilities in addition to data privacy and data governance controls via a diversified portfolio including the Axon Data Governance, Enterprise Data Catalog and Data Privacy Management offerings. Varonis is another functional incumbent here, with historical expertise in the discovery and management of content.

Additional specialists in data governance include ALTR, which has data security roots, as well as AvePoint. Erwin is another data governance provider. OpenText is prominent in the market for governance of unstructured content, though content management is likely complementary and adjacent to most of the functions BigID performs.

BigID has a robust ecosystem of technology partners, even for providers that might be thought to overlap somewhat in functionality. So while names such as Alation, ASG Technologies (now part of Rocket Software), AWS, Cloudera, Collibra, IBM, Immuta, Informatica (via EDC offering), Manta, Microsoft, Privacera, Privitar, TrustArc and Wirewheel may come up in data governance and data privacy discussions, BigID has a formal partner strategy with these firms rather than direct competition.

OneTrust, while not a major BigID sales cycle contender today, could pose growing competition. The company is a fellow PrivacyOps market unicorn with underpinning technical assets to now support automated data discovery and classification. These capabilities are powered in part by its 2020 acquisition of Integris Software, and the company's eager acquisition strategy means the competitive landscape could continue to shift.

Other names that perhaps come up in this space, or at least in specific use cases, include privacy upstarts such as 2B Advice and Rownd. Securiti.ai, specifically, has a strong focus on privacy automation, including data discovery. DataGrail additionally looks to automate control of enterprise data for privacy use cases, primarily via connectivity architecture, and has a strong data discovery foundation.

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SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS

BigID has a strong historical foundation of sensitive data discovery, adaptable to idiosyncratic enterprise IT environments. Many providers in the traditional data governance space are more oriented toward process orchestration and policy documentation, while BigID can directly exert control over data within the organization. While many customers use BigID for privacy use cases, the technology has relatively direct security mechanisms for data as well.

WEAKNESSES

Clear product packaging is a potential challenge. As BigID exuberantly expands its portfolio and moves toward a platform approach, there is always the risk of overlap and confusion for specific offerings that may share technical underpinnings. This is especially true in the data governance space, where BigID not only risks confusion within its own product line, but also with the 'co-opetition' of its numerous business partners that may peddle adjacent services and technology.

OPPORTUNITIES

Data governance has undergone a makeover since the market's nascent days when it was primarily driven by compliance requirements. Organizations are realizing that governance initiatives translate directly to measurable value in terms of data quality and sustainability of insight, so while regulations will continue to bear down and motivate businesses to invest, the more compelling incentive will be to ensure the scalability of broader data culture and enterprise data utilization.

THREATS

BigID's data catalog and metadata exchange model both propose to 'play nice' with existing IT investments. However, existing technology providers might not see the situation so charitably, particularly in the metadata management and data catalog market, where competition is tight. Simple confusion with potential prospects could be a risk here as well, because many businesses may not understand the immediate value proposition in supporting multiple adjacent data catalog environments.

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