

Why electronic records could cost a CIO his or her job

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17 February 2011

Tech Republic

Takeaway: Many CIOs, outside of regulated industries such as the financial sector, don't think much about the specifics of data storage until they find themselves in the middle of a lawsuit.

There is one technical decision made by a CIO that could have direct consequences on his or her career: How electronic records are stored. Many CIOs, outside of regulated industries such as the financial sector, don't think much about the specifics of data storage until they find themselves in the middle of a lawsuit. In an interview with *Forbes*, David Canfield, managing consultant for Kroll Ontrack's electronically stored information consulting group, talked about the direct connection between how data storage technology is utilized and the career of a CIO:

IT doesn't think of content. It thinks of massive amounts of data. They don't know where content XYZ lives. The most common reaction is to hold all the backup tapes. So they've complied with the hold notice, but two years later when legal discovery begins the data they're looking for may only be on backup tapes. That means restoring tens of thousands of backup tapes to find the relevant data. It costs millions of dollars and the CIO didn't budget for this and had no way to know it was coming. The argument starts with legal about whose budget should pay for it and that typically starts the downfall of the CIO.

The solution? CIOs should strive to communicate more with Legal. Make sure you understand their recommendations and that Legal understands the technical and budget limitations you're facing. This means listening to what is required to be legally compliant, and then returning to the table to make sure the steps taken in IT are enough. It also means that CIOs should meet with the IT group to verify everything is happening as it should. A lot of times, a CIO will hand down the "commandment" but won't follow through to see how it's being carried out. And don't forget to revisit the situation in six-month intervals.