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Unifi's End-to-End Data as a Service Platform Takes On Point Solutions—and the GDPR

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Introduction

At Stratecast | Frost & Sullivan, we have seen the future of IT, and it is big data. IT's focus is now less about providing basic connectivity and more about using data to help organizations connect with markets and customers. IT faces serious challenges as it evolves to this new reality: On one side, a massive and growing collection of data sources, with more volume and higher velocity than ever before; on the other, a rapidly growing (and increasingly ravenous) pool of both technical and business data users. Continuing to install often-overlapping solutions, integrating them into what is still usually a non-cohesive whole, and maintaining them over time is a losing proposition. In short, the era of talking about providing data as a service (DaaS) is over. The time has come to deliver.

A Unified Data as a Service Platform Offers On-Demand (and In-Demand) Functionality

Adopting DaaS is the key paradigm shift companies need to make, but equally important is the functionality that awaits across the cloud delivery divide. In a big data and analytics (BDA) market that topped \$48.4 billion in 2016 and that we forecast to reach \$67.9 billion by 2019, buzz is growing around machine learning (ML) and artificial intelligence (AI); data preparation; data catalogs; and data governance. A growing number of companies are basing their entire solutions models around one of these areas. That leaves enterprises to integrate a collection of point solutions in order to satisfy the requirements for data access and use—and those disparate toolkits are by and large not attuned to the needs of business users. In our ongoing research of the BDA market, Stratecast has identified Unifi Software as a provider that pulls all of these capabilities and desired characteristics together under one roof. Unifi's platform offers a self-service data catalog and data prep tool, with collaboration tools and sophisticated workflow operationalization features, combined in a cloud-optimized Data as a Service (DaaS) platform, governed by IT and operated by business users.

Real-time Response and Granularity are Key to GDPR Compliance, and Unifi Delivers

In addition to availing their organizations of the most capable technologies to deliver the freshest data, when and where needed, IT and data science teams also face the overarching responsibility of helping organizations maintain governance and compliance. On those fronts, the most pressing issue of the day—in fact, arguably the most important factor with regard to governance and compliance that data professionals have faced in their collective lifetimes—is the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Adopted by the European Commission (EC) and slated for enforcement beginning in May 2018, the GDPR is intended to show the world that when it comes to protecting the privacy of EU citizens, the EC means business; however, the unintended consequence of the GDPR could be to show the rest of the world that the EU means “no business.” The good news is that potential technology solutions could hold the key to addressing the desires of all sides of the simmering worldwide privacy debate.

The important word there is potential. Most of the technology initiatives that we assert should be providing answers to the problem of privacy are still just a gleam in an analyst's eye, requiring cross-industry cooperation and innovations yet to come. In the case of Unifi Software, however, the solution is already here. On 22 August 2017, Unifi announced a new offering, RegAlert!, which provides real-time monitoring of all data assets to help to ensure GDPR compliance. Unifi's

Compliance Data Hub with RegAlert! provides real-time monitoring of all data in use. If a GDPR violation appears imminent due to a user request, RegAlert! immediately blocks the dataset from further use and notifies the user of the potential regulatory infringement. The system also notifies the data steward to ascertain, via Unifi, who is trying to access the data and grant them either unconditional or restricted access.

Given the Right to Be Forgotten and other provisions of the GDPR, one of the core capabilities essential to GDPR compliance is the ability to access data at a granular level and remove a consumer's data from anywhere in the system, or provide it in a portable format upon request. The Unifi platform's row- and column-level security features enable data stewards and compliance officers to readily obscure the actual values in fields that fall under the restrictions of use and still let analysts access the data. For example, if a user at a global online travel site wanted to compare recent activity associated with a new direct route to Germany, from a smaller airport in the US versus a major hub, Unifi would give the user a count of people that chose the new route instead of one with a previous connection, but not allow a user to drill down to see their names. A key differentiation of the Unifi Data as a Service platform is that its suite of compliance tools provides governance across the whole platform including the data prep function. This protects corporations from the potential risk of identifying personal data by the combination of otherwise masked data. Rounding out the GDPR-friendly features of the Unifi Compliance Data Hub are its data lineage features, which highlight the derived data sets that are most likely to lead to data breaches.¹

¹ For a detailed analysis of the GDPR and other crucial privacy issues, we recommend this four-report Privacy series, as follows: Stratecast, *We Have Seen the Future of IT, and it is Big Data: Part 1 – Will IoT Privacy Issues Steal the Future?* (BDA 5-01, 30 June 2017); *We Have Seen the Future of IT, and it is Big Data: Part 2: A Blueprint for Privacy, in the IoT and Everywhere* (BDA 5-02, 7 July 2017); *Big Data is in Big Trouble, Starting in the EU: How the EU's GDPR Threatens to Destroy Big Data Initiatives and Business Opportunities, in the EU and Elsewhere* (BDA 5-03, 2 August 2017); and *Our Detailed Privacy Blueprint: What All Parties Should Be Doing Right Now to Protect the People and Organizations They Care About* (SPIE 2017-28, 11 August 2017); all available [here](#)

Stratecast The Last Word

The time to stop talking about delivering data as a service (DaaS) is over. Now is the time to deliver. The market is also seeking productized solutions to deliver capabilities in machine learning and artificial intelligence (AI), data preparation, data catalogs, and data governance. **Unifi Software pulls all of this together in a unified platform offering self-service data catalog and data preparation in a cloud-optimized data as a service (DaaS) platform.**

Developments such as the emergence of this innovation at Unifi may be just in time to save the world from a potential data-driven disaster. Over the years, nations around the globe have thrown a patchwork of regulations at the issue of data privacy, and in some cases have begun calling companies on the carpet to answer for their misdeeds. In one fell swoop, however, the EC enacted, in the GDPR, the most impactful set of privacy regulations ever seen. The EU's action will certainly enhance privacy protections for its citizens—but its unintended consequence may be to limit economic growth across the region, with ripple effects around the globe. As a result, there is now a greater sense of urgency for the private sector to get data privacy right.

Unifi's new offering, RegAlert!, provides real-time monitoring and granular control over all data assets. Those are attractive qualities in a data system in all situations, and they are absolutely vital when it comes to ensuring compliance with the GDPR. Stratecast recommends that any company in any region grappling with what to do about the GDPR take a serious look at Unifi and its RegAlert! offering for solutions.

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