Data: Interview with Danny Reeves, CEO of Exonar

Data has never been a sexy word for businesses or startups alike, but with the onset of COVID-19 and working from home, it's become more necessary for companies to know not only where their data is, but also how to leverage it. We spoke to Danny Reeves, CEO of Exonar about data, 5G car automation, and how startups can begin to build up and use their data to their advantage from the onset.

Temps de lecture : minute

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My background is in data and tech as a CIO across businesses big and small. And every one I've worked in has had a universal problem: they don't know what data they've got, they don't know where it is stored and they can't extract value from it. Now I'm at <u>Exonar</u>, I'm seeing the same problem across our customers, which is why they come to us to find a solution.

The issue with not knowing what you've got tends to be less around <u>structured data</u> – that's information held in databases – because they are known, managed and secured (although sometimes they get forgotten about if they are legacy systems).

The major problem lies with unstructured data which includes documents and information which has been shared and stored in email inboxes, Word documents, Excel spreadsheets and cloud storage drives, and can pose a security risk if it contains sensitive information. I know from my experience and from our customers at Exonar that it can represent up to 92% of an entire data estate. And you can't secure, or use, data that you

don't know you've got.
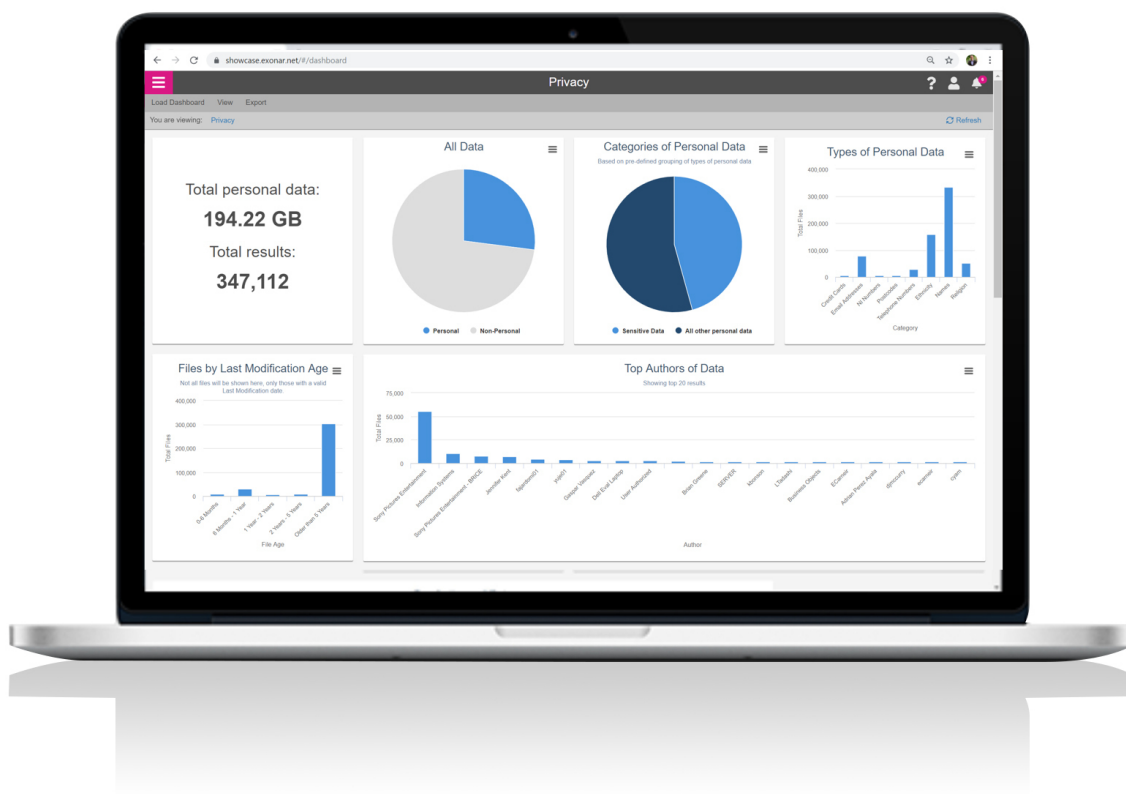
I joined Exonar as CEO a few months ago because for the first time in my career, I'd come across a software product that could discover data at vast scale, with coverage across any data store, and enabling the information found to be delved into, right into the detail of a single document. This is a game changer for businesses wanting to protect their organisations and the people they serve.

What's really exciting once you've discovered and protected your data, is the ability to find the insights and the value in that data that can power an organisation forward and create a compelling advantage. We have a customer who is using data discovery to unearth scientific information and extract knowledge from documents in their unstructured data, which were considered long-since lost.

There's simply no other software available today which can do what

Exonar does and that makes me incredibly excited about leading the company forward.

If we understand that data discovery is useful for two purposes, safeguarding data and also driving revenue, can you explain the value in these for both existing businesses and startups who are specifically looking to scale?

An example from one of our customers demonstrates well how important data discovery is for both safeguarding data and driving up revenue. They are a huge financial services company, but the principle holds true whatever your size of business.

This customer is using data discovery to gain total visibility over their data estate. They've been able to identify what data they have and where it is, which means that information can be secured in a regulatory and contractually compliant way. Now they have this view of the data, they are able to join the dots to combine it in highly complex ways and in a visual format. By doing so, the organisation is giving technical and non-technical users the insights they need to make strategic decisions about how to commercialise its data and strengthen its competitive advantage.

With data discovery, an organisation can get a much clearer understanding of what data's out there, where it is, how it's developing, and how it's moving, changing and growing and use those insights to scale up the business.

Can we discuss why even early stage startups should start to look at and adopt data discovery into their business model? How can this add value and drive the direction of the business forward, especially in their future iterations?

Moving from being a startup to a scale-up business is often highly challenging. Just doing more of what you've done as a startup, but on a larger scale, isn't going to drive the growth required. Successfully scaling means identifying where growth is going to come from, narrowing the focus down on that area and then working out how to make it repeatable.

Having access the right data helps entrepreneurs and business owners make better decisions about where they are going with their companies. Data is a powerful enabler of progress, because it can hold valuable information about where to go next. That could be finding new audiences, working out which products to develop or which new markets to enter. But data can be a blocker too, because it can be challenging to understand how to find the insight.

Here at Exonar we help our customers discover and then access their data. Once they know their data at scale across the whole data estate, the business can make informed, strategic decisions and drive growth. We refer to that as being 'informaion intelligent' and it enables start-ups to scale up in a measured way. Data is essential to enable decision-making that will drive a company forward.

How will 5G change the way an automated

car drives, can you explain this to our readers?

In its most basic form 5G is simply the ability to wirelessly transfer lots of data between two points super fast. So one area where this gets exciting is when you combine something like autonomous cars and edge data centres. The ability for the supercomputer in a car to make sense of the randomly changing environment around it is absolutely necessary to ensure safety. The car needs to be able to communicate its immediate environment to the other cars entering that environment, whilst also sending that data back to an edge data centre for analytics and that newly analysed data is sent back to all other cars entering the location. By doing this we will improve traffic, journey efficiency and safety to levels not even remotely possible by humans.

COVID-19 has illustrated that growth can occur rapidly for certain businesses, how has this acceleration impacted Exonar?

What COVID-19 has done for data is to put it right in the spotlight. With staff forced to work from home with almost no notice, companies have had to open their digital borders in ways they may not have been prepared for. There's no longer an IT 'perimiter' to secure because everyone's working off different devices, connected to different wifi networks and using different collaboration apps, leaving businesses exposed on multiple levels – both in security and efficiency.

According to research we ran to find out about the attitudes towards data protection of people working from home due to COVID-19, 72% of those polled said they need to access, share and receive sensitive customer information in the course of their work*. It only takes one mistake by one person handling sensitive data to cause an unintentional data breach.

This has shifted attention towards the importance of data discovery in finding and securing the data that's held by organisations. Knowing both your structured and unstructured data means being able to find information that has been left accidentally exposed by employees. It means better understanding of how employees are handling sensitive data and opens up more targeted training and awareness. It also highlights which protective technologies are required, and how best to place data so that it can be effectively utilised by people just getting on with their jobs from wherever they happen to be working from.

Research based on a survey of 2,000 UK COVID-19 homeworkers, conducted in May 2020 by Exonar, in partnership with market research house, OnePoll.

What is your favourite book and why?

The Truth Machine by James L.Halperin. I read it a long time ago and remember how it inspired my belief in how technology can evolve society in ways we are yet to explore.

What is a quote that you like to live by?

Always try to understand before attempting to be understood.

À lire aussi
Time to take back control of our data

Article écrit par Cleo McGee