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BIG DATA ANALYTICS

Definitive Questions to Determine if Your Data Is Big



John Edwards, Technology Journalist & Author
4/15/2013
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How big does data have to be for it to be considered *big data*? Try asking that tongue-twisting question three times, fast -- then check these points.

Seriously though, many businesses with lots of accessible data are wondering if what they have is big data or just plenty of plain old data. It's an important distinction for organizations that would like to know if it's time to ditch their traditional business intelligence (BI) software in favor of something like **Hadoop**.

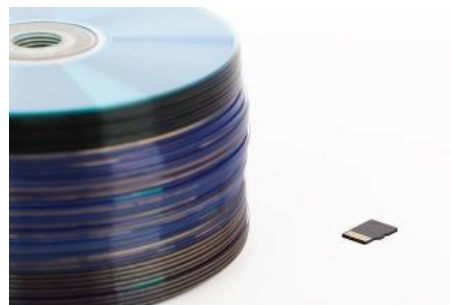
Defining the issue

Market research firm Gartner -- with its widely cited "3V rule" -- offers a simple, although not altogether fulfilling, definition of big data. Gartner states that big data is characterized by data that arrives in high volume, at high velocity, and with high variety. Gartner's interpretation tells us that big data is relative and isn't dependent on database size or how many databases a company wishes to draw from.

Consider, for instance, that structured information -- even very large datasets, such as credit card transactions -- tends to be better served by conventional BI software than by big data tools. Does this mean that a firm that needs to process large amounts of unstructured data, such as social media content, will automatically benefit from using a big data tool? Usually yes. There's no question that many big data apps excel at making sense out of many different kinds of unstructured information. Yet there are also limits when working with large unstructured datasets. Hardware, for instance, often can't

be scaled large enough to handle petabyte and higher-level streams of unstructured data.

It would be wonderful if there were a simple way of defining a specific tipping point at which a business should leap from BI to big data tools. Yet data arrives and exists in so many different ways and forms that it's impossible to delineate a decisive "time-to-move" moment that would apply to all businesses.



Another definition

Expanding on Gartner's 3Vs, Forrester Research has developed what it feels is a more **pragmatic definition** of big data. Forrester states that a useful interpretation of big data acknowledges that exponential data growth makes data continuously difficult to store, process, and access. Forrester also notes that all measures of data are relative. In other words, one firm's big data may be another firm's molehill.

According to Forrester, big data lies at the edge of a business's ability to store, process, and access all the data it needs to operate effectively, make decisions, reduce risks, and serve customers. To understand when it may be time to move from the world of "a lot of data" into big data, Forrester suggests that companies ask themselves these three questions:

- Can you capture and store the data?
- Can you cleanse, enrich, and analyze the data?
- Can you retrieve, search, integrate, and visualize the data?

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What's your answer to these questions? Has your big data moment arrived?

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— John Edwards, *Technology Journalist*

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Saul Sherry, User Rank: Blogger
6/6/2013 | 12:17:34 PM

Re: Two out of three?

But at the same time a very difficult one - how can you predict your needs in five years time? The Netflix approach is to imagine where all the bottle necks might be and avoid them - but that's from a basis of having loads of time to examine and load of money to invest - how does your average business manage?

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MDMConsult, User Rank: Exabyte Executive
6/6/2013 | 8:17:17 AM

Re: Two out of three?

It is crucial for the enterprise IT department to update, analyze and develop a data centre plan to execute for the software. Choosing the right storage platform for the shared infrastructure is a critical and strategic decision.

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Edwin Willems, User Rank: Exabyte Executive
4/30/2013 | 8:07:46 PM

Re: Two out of three?

@john - I agree that Big Data has a very important technology component related to the volume etc, but as data storage technologies still evolve at lightspeed, I think 'Big' is only a temporary challenge, so my take is that Smart is going to replace Big. What's your thought on that?

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Saul Sherry, User Rank: Blogger
4/16/2013 | 4:51:23 AM

Re: Two out of three?

And it's an ongoing concern too @legalcio - as we know, that data will continue to come in. When cleansing now is too big of a job, in six months there will be six more months worth of unclean data - it becomes akin to running up a sand dune, hard work and very little progress.

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legalcio, User Rank: Exabyte Executive
4/15/2013 | 9:38:43 PM

Two out of three?

Most small to medium sized businesses can capture and store. Most can retrieve and search. Integration and visualization are more difficult. Cleansing and analysis, at least the type of analysis that pays dividends, I think are beyond the scope of many small to medium sized businesses. Is their data Big? To them it probably is.

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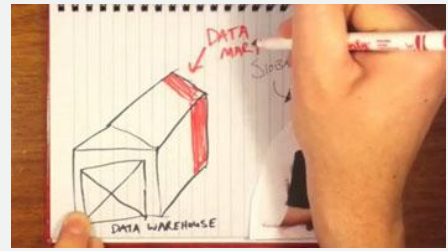
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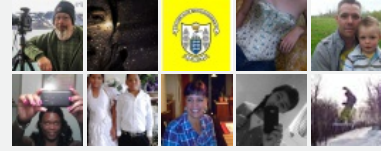
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