Election-year email troubles are a warning for business leaders

My mornings begin on Outlook, checking email from clients and colleagues in Europe and Asia and WhatsApp, communicating with myfamilyin India. All day, I'm on LinkedIn's messaging system to keep up with industry partners and peers; Facebook Messenger to connect with friends in the UK; and Salesforce, Asana and Skype to collaborate on projects and initiatives with colleagues across the globe. In the evenings, I'm on Snapchat, following friends' adventures here in the U. S. Each day, I'm sending hundreds of messages to hundreds of people around the world, using more than half a dozen messaging systems.

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With so many new ways to communicate; however, it is one of the most basic forms of messaging that has taken center stage this election year -- email. and her deleted emails, , reports of a 10-year-old lawsuit, , in which email was an issue -- just read the news on any given day, and it seems that email-related headlines are numerous and seemingly endless.

Just as the use of email at the highest levels of government has skyrocketed - contrast that he sent two emails in the entirety of his Presidency with -- so has the modern worker's. A 2015 found the average worker spends 6. 3 hours a day checking email, split about 50/50 between work and personal emails.

With employees using email - plus everything from WhatsApp to increasingly popular collaboration tools like Slack, Yammer and Hipchat -- average-size companies generate vast volumes of data of a magnitude that could fill

the Library of Congress many times over. Couple this with the fact that most companies have at least some regulatory or legal requirements to understand what's happening with their data, and the future of data management can seem overwhelming.

For business leaders, the harsh reality is that the email headaches of the 2016 election year are not the domain of politics alone. In fact, it is representative of the challenges surrounding a proliferation of data in the modern world and should serve as a stark warning to business leaders about the urgent need for clear and comprehensive policies on employee email and other messaging systems.

As demonstrated by the departures of executives, like following the company's data breach in 2014, theresponsibilityextends to the highest levels of an organization. For data related to shareholder value, potential breaches could have board and c-suite ramifications. Meanwhile, sensitive customer information, like credit card data and healthcare information, could lead to legal, regulatory and customer scrutiny at the CEO level.

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CEOs are ultimately accountable for understanding the various data types being used by the organization, where and how the data is archived and what retention policies are being established. For regulated industries, these policies can be long, but regulations may not apply to all data types, so companies must understand its regulatory requirements, ensuring preservation policies are compliant.

Next, define what tools and systems to allow for internal employee use. Create policies that are clear, and provide employee training to ensure they are understood. Solutions might not need to be one-size-fits-all, and companies can create segments within the organization based on a measured risk approach, since customer representatives might not need to adhere to the same standards as employees handling sensitive data with potential customer or shareholder implications.

The bottom line: Information management strategy must be on business leaders' agendas.

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In an election cycle, in which we have come to expect the unexpected, there is likely to be more email drama before November. Going forward, I believethis political year will serve as a benchmark moment. When, in the election of 1960, John Kennedy and Richard Nixon met for a nationally televised presidential campaign debate, the moment heralded a new era of transformativetechnology- television. I predict the election of 2016 will be considered the tipping point for managing the headaches of email and data streams in the modern political - and business -- worlds.