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TODAY'S CIO IMPERATIVE: DRIVING GREATER GRC EFFICIENCIES

HOW MID-MARKET CIOS ARE LEADING GRC INITIATIVES IN THE YEAR AHEAD

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For years a loosely defined, oft-debated, industry-agnostic buzzword, in 2020 *digital transformatio*n became a business imperative.

For many organizations, it became a reality overnight.

And for CIOs who were suddenly overseeing remote business operations, new strains on their network and an influx of cyberattacks, it became an immense challenge — and opportunity — to drive greater business efficiencies and maintain customer trust, at the heart of which lies information security.

Yet as digitally enabled, often remote business environments become our new norm, so, too, do their inherent security risks. Not to mention the ever-emerging and ever-evolving data and privacy regulations that are essential to doing business.

Now, more than ever, making the most of governance, risk and compliance (GRC) budgets and resources is critical. And for the mid-market organizations that don't typically staff CISOs, this GRC responsibility falls on the CIO.

To understand how CIOs are grappling with today's heightened focus on information security and GRC initiatives, Reciprocity surveyed 50 mid-market CIOs representing IT leadership across multiple industries nationwide. In this report, we highlight what CIOs are struggling with, what they need to succeed and how they can better achieve their GRC goals.

Feeling the Pain

Let's face it, maintaining compliance and safeguarding vital information is only getting harder. And if you think about it, there are really only two ways to tackle information security: with spreadsheets and consultants, or with a solution that scales.

When company data is strewn across multiple spreadsheets or siloed in disconnected and non-agile systems with terrible user experiences, keeping track of information and organizing it effectively is impossible. Add to that the complexities of managing remote workforces and business partners, and CIOs have more than a headache, they have a critical issue — because being organized is what enables a company to intelligently act on the larger problem at hand: protecting business data.

So what challenges must CIOs overcome to build more efficient GRC programs?

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For starters, according to more than 40% of our CIO respondents, they struggle with limited resources and budget. This reinforces why businesses need to closely evaluate their current GRC resources and processes to ensure they are getting the most out of their GRC investments.

Next on the list, nearly 20% of our CIO respondents cite new and changing regulations. Ever-increasing regulations, coupled with an increasingly diverse set of business risks, means that businesses need to make sure nothing falls through the cracks.

WHAT ARE YOUR TOP 3 GRC PAIN POINTS?

41.67%

Limited resources/ budget

18.75%

New or changing regulations

14.58%

Tracking and maintaining compliance

Ranking No. 3 on our CIOs' list of pain points is tracking and maintaining compliance. This is particularly significant when you consider that tracking and maintaining compliance is not only necessary to meet new and changing regulations, it's imperative for effectively safeguarding business data and maintaining trust among customers and business partners.

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Getting More Bang for the Buck

Given what we know about this past year, we can't say we are surprised by what tops CIO to-do lists for 2021. When asked to list their top three GRC initiatives, increasing GRC budgets takes the top spot.

Also indicative of their experiences this past year were their closely aligned second and third priorities: with investing in a GRC technology solution taking a slight edge over automating their GRC program. While clearly feeling constrained by budgets, this suggests that CIOs realize the urgency in investing in an automated technology solution that will improve GRC productivity. After all, working in organizational silos, filling out spreadsheets and trying to track and organize information across multiple disconnected systems becomes even more duantingly complex and time-consuming when compliance teams and necessary contributors are all working remotely.

WHAT ARE YOUR TOP 3 GRC INITIATIVES?

18.75%
Investing in a GRC solution

37.50%
Increasing GRC budget and resources

16.67%
Automating GRC program

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Investing for the Future

With increasing GRC budgets and technology investments top priorities for CIOs this year, it's important to consider not just what functionality is needed now, but what capabilities are required for future success.

According to our study, one-third of CIOs rank automating the GRC lifecyle the most beneficial feature of a GRC solution. Obviously, the ability to automate and streamline time-consuming compliance processes and audit cycles is key. But even more, with a solution that automatically updates frameworks and enables teams to monitor internal and external risk across the organization, this ensures compliance programs are not just up-to-speed and meeting requirements but actually elevate GRC effectiveness. After all, there's a big difference between "check the box" compliance and defensible compliance, which empowers organizations to quickly and accurately understand the data they control, where it exists and how to properly secure, access and manage it.

Ranking as the second most valuable feature, nearly a quarter of CIOs cite reducing GRC lifecycle cost. Here it's important to note that with a fully automated and integrated technology solution, increasing budgets and resources isn't necessarily required.

WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER THE TOP 3 MOST BENEFICIAL FEATURES OF A GRC SOLUTION?

30%
Automating the GRC lifecycle

24%
Reducing GRC lifecycle cost

20%
Benchmarking Capabilities

Think about how much it costs each year to staff a full-time compliance team. Moreover, consider the cost of evidence collection across your organization, which requires actions from multiple business groups, interrupting workflows and taking time away from other critical work. With the number of audits rising for most companies, so, too, is the burden — and cost — across the organization. By increasing efficiencies, reducing interruptions and freeing up your talent to focus on driving better business outcomes, budgeting for extra resources is no longer necessary. Plus, by adding these costs back into the business, less the price of an annual software license, organizations can actually generate greater business value and immediate ROI.

Rounding out the list of top GRC solution features are benchmarking capabilities. The ability to conduct benchmark comparisons drives unique insights about how to manage information security compared with industry peers. Benchmark reporting can indicate if organizations are meeting market expectations, if their program is competitive and if there are opportunities to improve. Even more, it's one more way CIOs can help foster in-house GRC expertise.

Looking Ahead

We're all still learning from 2020. But one thing that's clear for businesses across all industries: the inability to adapt and digitally connect will make any business obsolete.

Sure, some mid-market organizations may not have been as digitally savvy as their competitors. But thanks to the rapid responses of their CIOs, businesses are better-equipped to face disruptive new challenges in the years ahead.

As our study suggests, for many CIOs, the journey toward digital transformation is far from complete. However, by evolving their strategies and harnessing GRC technologies to not just power greater business efficiencies, but do so with the utmost accuracy, speed and security, CIOs will successfully lead their organizations toward finding their new normal.

Make the most of your GRC Investment.

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About Reciprocity

Reciprocity is powering the next generation of information security with the fastest, easiest and most prescriptive solutions in the market. Its fully integrated and automated ZenGRC platform delivers a full catalog of compliance, risk and other infosec applications through one simple user interface that drives greater transparency, actionable insights and benchmark reporting.

Recognized for its GRC expertise and its accelerated time-to-value, Reciprocity is transforming risk and compliance from a cost-center to a value-creator for businesses across the globe. The company is headquartered in San Francisco with global offices in Ljubljana, Slovenia and Argentina.

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