## CONTENTS OF THIS WHITE PAPER

# Fixing the "Everyone" Problem

Successful securities organizations excel at adapting to change, and Information Technology typically plays an important role in this agility. Data drives much of the securities business, and it has to be created, stored and shared at a rapid clip to keep pace with customers and competitors. Gartner, Inc. estimates that the volume of "unstructured" data (e.g., documents, spreadsheets, presentations, images, etc.) in an organization doubles every three months or so. There's so much of this unstructured information, in fact, that it accounts for more than 80% of all enterprise data in most organizations.

Even with regulations, industry best-practices and the purest of intentions, it seems nearly impossible to keep track of who has – and needs – access to all of this information, and who doesn't. And, as news articles continue to remind us, the unfortunate truth is that employees, contractors and consultants don't always do the right thing with their access privileges.

Even in the securities and financial industries, if you think your IT organization has data access permissions under control, you may want to dig a little deeper. Most IT organizations grant access readily, yet revoke it infrequently. So, don't assume that only the human resources group can see the human resources data, or that an employee who left the company last week had all her permissions revoked. The permissions to access the data on your file servers are very likely too permissive. This situation is not an oversight, nor the sign of a lax IT organization. It is just that the technology to solve this in a practical, manageable way did not exist until recently.

While there are many ways this situation comes to pass, built right into the operating system is a contributing factor that nearly every Windows Server Administrator knows about. And, while they know about it and there's nothing they did to cause it, they cannot fix it with conventional tools and techniques. We're talking about folder permissions for the "Everyone" group on Windows file systems.

### HOW THE "EVERYONE" PROBLEM HAPPENS

With all of the expertise and technology safeguards in place, how is it possible that a major risk to unstructured data on shared file systems cannot be easily reversed? Well it goes something like this. As an administrator, you—or maybe your predecessor—set up a couple of file systems or shared drives. Some of the folders on those file shares were left wide open, and you relied on data owners to define the access permissions. On other folders, you locked things down by assigning access permissions only to certain groups. Over time, though, even the locked-down folders opened up. That's because Windows Server is designed to facilitate access.

### ENTER "EVERYONE"

When a new folder is created, the Microsoft Windows default is to assign the "Everyone" group access permission to this folder, meaning that the folder is wide open to all users in the organization. That is not a problem as long as the folder creator goes back and reassigns the permissions or if you, as an administrator, become aware of the new folder in time and restrict access permissions. But, that's not a practical reality given the pace of information creation and the dynamic nature of projects and teams in most organizations. So, chances are very good that you won't know about this new folder. And, because they are not Windows experts, the users that create these folders know nothing about the "Everyone" group.

### THE REAL ISSUE

What's the result of "Everyone" access? Over time, sensitive data—including intellectual property, client information or other sensitive data—makes its way into folders just like this one. Not only is this valuable data, it is also critical to the business, so it is accessed…a lot. As part of your quarterly file clean-up, or in preparation for a data entitlement audit review, you'd love to get rid of the "Everyone" problem. But, you've spoken with everyone you know and there is no good way to do it.

### PAST "OPTIONS"

- Remove the "Everyone" group from the folders and wait for calls from angry users to pour in as they try to access the data they need. At least that will tell you who within "Everyone" is accessing this stuff!

OR

- Turn on Windows Server Auditing (which Microsoft warns against because of the performance impact), and comb through reams of logs to find out who among your user organization is accessing the data. There is another option, and most Windows Server administrators—no, you are not alone—take this unspoken option "3": do nothing and hope that access proceeds without incident. After all, nothing has happened yet, right?

The first two options are just not realistic. There would be business disruptions with either choice, not to mention weeks or months of work that no one has planned for, let-alone asked you to do. But you know that this situation should not persist, especially in an environment where securities and financial data is potentially at risk. And, of course, when it comes to audit time, this will all be highlighted.

## A NEW OPTION: THE VARONIS SOLUTION

There is a solution to the "Everyone" problem that has emerged and is gaining traction. It's a software solution based on "machine learning" that can take care of the problem not in weeks or months, but in mouse clicks. It's called Varonis® DatAdvantage® and it can quickly:

- List all of the folders in your file system with "Everyone" group access permission
- Show you the names of the users accessing those folders
- Let you reassign folder permissions to only the people who really need access

And, this can all be done in a "sandbox" environment where you can see the "what-if" implications of the reassignments. When you are ready to go live with your choices, you just click "commit" and the work is done. There is no disruption to the business, and no panicked or angry phone calls.

In addition to solving the historical problem, Varonis DatAdvantage also helps keep your environment cleaned-up in an ongoing way. If new folders are created with the "Everyone" group assignment, it lets you know so you can deal with it swiftly. And, fixing the "Everyone" problem is just one of the myriad of features you get out-of-the-box with Varonis DatAdvantage. Learn more at www.varonis.com

## ABOUT VARONIS

Today Varonis is the foremost innovator and solution provider of comprehensive, actionable data governance solutions. The company's installations span leading firms in financial services, healthcare, energy, manufacturing and technology worldwide. Based on patent-pending technology and a highly accurate analytics platform, Varonis solutions give organizations total visibility and control over their data, ensuring that only the right users have access to the right data at all times.

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