

ECONOMIC VALIDATION

Analyzing the Economic Value of Proofpoint Enterprise DLP

Reduce Risky Behavior Around Data Usage by 76% and Achieve an ROI of 182%

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Economic Validation: Key Findings Summary

Validated Benefits of Proofpoint Enterprise DLP

76% reduction
in risky end-user behavior
around data leakage

58% more efficient
administrative tasks
around DLP efforts

182%
Return on investment
(ROI) over 3 years

- **Reduced risk:** Proofpoint customers report a dramatic reduction in the risk of data loss as well as a lowered impact in the event that data loss occurs.
- **Improved visibility and control over human workflows:** Organizations using Proofpoint Enterprise DLP have a much clearer and deeper insight into what employees are doing with data as well as better control over how that data can be used.
- **Higher return on investment:** We found that Proofpoint Enterprise DLP has a substantially higher ROI when compared to both licensing bundled solutions and DIY systems.

Introduction

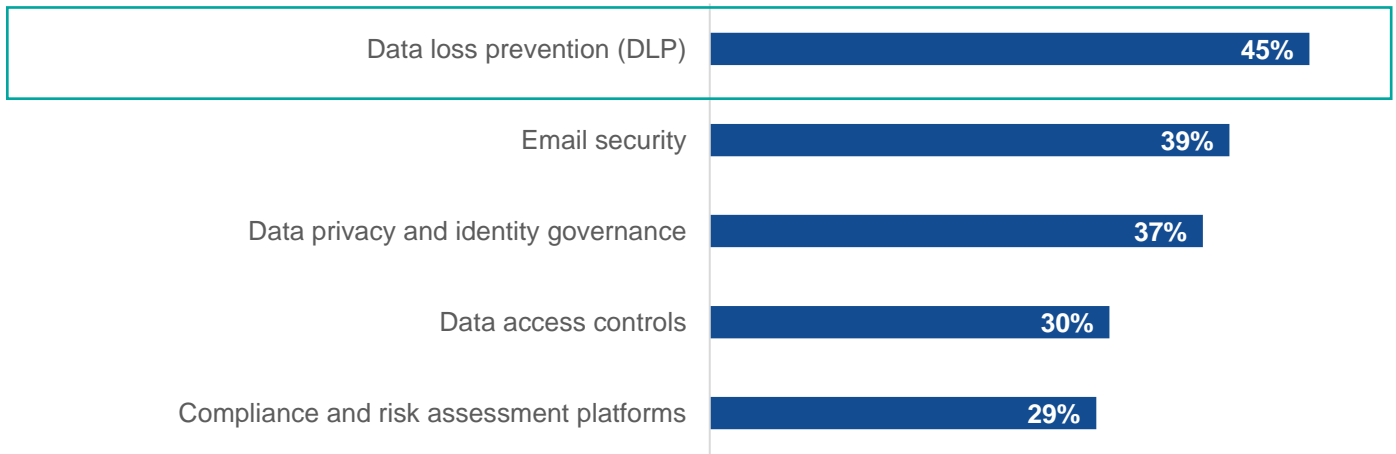
This Economic Validation from Enterprise Strategy Group focuses on the quantitative and qualitative benefits organizations can expect by using Proofpoint Enterprise DLP to protect against data loss stemming from their workforce. We interviewed customers who have adopted Proofpoint Enterprise DLP to understand their decision criteria and their experiences since deployment. We discussed their proof-of-concept experiences to understand their experiences with the capabilities of SSE-based offerings, products that were included as part of a larger licensing bundle, and various DIY solutions. We then analyzed the reasons they chose Proofpoint Enterprise DLP and found a consistent theme: Proofpoint Enterprise DLP is purpose built while the data loss prevention (DLP) capabilities for the SSE-based products seemed bolted-on and the “free” solutions required heavy investments to fill capability gaps. We found that Proofpoint Enterprise DLP provides a clear understanding of what is actually being done with data and how it can be protected.

Challenges

Organizations face significant challenges protecting their data. While external threats might seem like the largest area for concern, 95% of data loss events are caused by human error.¹ To remedy this, respondents to Enterprise Strategy Group research most often reported that their organizations plan to make the most significant investment in DLP over the next 12 months for privacy and protection (see Figure 1).²

Figure 1. Top 5 Privacy and Protection Technology Investments in 2025

In which of the following privacy and protection technologies does your organization plan to make the most significant investments over the next 12 months? (Percent of respondents, N=336, multiple responses accepted)



Source: Enterprise Strategy Group, now part of Omdia

However, understanding that DLP is an area that needs prioritization and investment is only part of the equation. Enterprise Strategy Group interviewed customers to understand what challenges are with DLP and found these to be consistent across most responses:

¹ Source: James Coker: “95% of Data Breaches Tied to Human Error in 2024,” Infosecurity-magazine.com, March 2025.

² Source: Enterprise Strategy Group Research Report, [2025 Technology Spending Intentions Survey](#), December 2024.

- **Increased attack surface and data risks.** With 70% of organizations saying that their attack surface has increased over the past two years³ and 60% of breaches involving a non-malicious human element,⁴ the task of protecting data is daunting. In addition to protecting against malicious attacks, organizations must understand the workflows of their employees and design systems to facilitate their needs while protecting intellectual and protected data.
- **Lack of visibility into human behavior.** Most organizations have little insight into workflows that involve data and are unable to enforce best practices to protect that data.
- **Attitude of “good enough” DLP.** Many organizations we interviewed for this analysis reported that their old data protection systems were selected because they were included in a bulk license for other products. They deployed these products and often had to supplement them with other products or workarounds to address shortcomings and found that these solutions quickly became costly while not offering high levels of DLP protection. They learned that these included—or “free”—solutions came at a very high cost in risk of data loss, technical debt, overall costs, and complexity.
- **Complexity of protecting data and workflows.** Designing a system that protects data while facilitating the needed workflows for that data is complex. Interviewees describing their “before-Proofpoint” systems shared stories where they used multiple products, each with its own capabilities and management interface, to piece together a DLP solution. The result was ineffective and inefficient.
- **Increasing cost of data loss.** The cost of data loss events increases each year, both in cost of event remediation and the overall reputational cost of data loss or breach.
- **Confusing requirements for compliance.** We found the level of expertise required to develop a framework for compliance with the myriad of governmental, organizational, or industry requirements around data protection is beyond the grasp of most organizations.
- **A deep gap between business and IT.** Data loss prevention is often seen as “just another system” that is owned by the IT and security teams. In reality, almost every part of an organization depends on its data being protected. Data loss prevention is a strategic asset that needs to be maximized, not a cost that needs to be minimized. Owners of DLP selection and implementation projects often face challenges gaining executive attention and securing sufficient budget. When financial decision-makers choose data loss prevention capabilities that are “free” or “already included in the license”, they unwittingly put their organizations at tremendous risk.

“Our free solution was valueless. We poured countless hours and dollars trying to give us a complete solution before we realized that Proofpoint Enterprise DLP was the answer.”

The need for a DLP system that enables employees to do their jobs while protecting company data is clear. However, many organizations find themselves constrained by solutions that are selected because of a perceived low cost or inclusion in a larger licensing package. Organizations need a better solution.

The Solution: Proofpoint Enterprise DLP

Proofpoint offers an enterprise-level DLP platform designed to protect sensitive data across email, cloud, and endpoint channels. It does this by providing insight into employee workflows and creates awareness that encourages the appropriate use of data while limiting activity that puts data at risk.

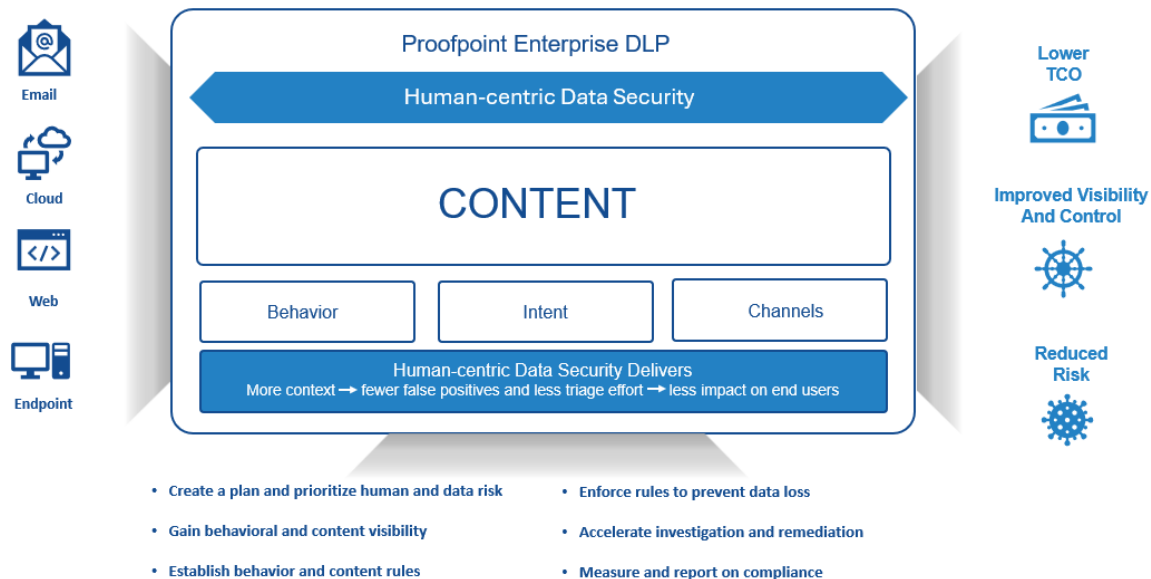
Proofpoint uses advanced data classification, content inspection, and user activity monitoring to identify and block unauthorized activity or exfiltration of critical information, such as personally identifiable information, financial details,

³ Source: Enterprise Strategy Group Research Report, [Cyber-risk Management Best Practices](#), November 2024.

⁴ Source: Report: [“2024 Data Breach Investigations Report,”](#) Verizon.com

or intellectual property. More importantly, Proofpoint takes a human-centric approach to information protection and identifies risky user behavior while encouraging workflows that follow company guidelines (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Proofpoint Enterprise DLP Platform



Source: Enterprise Strategy Group, now part of Omdia

Enterprise Strategy Group Economic Validation

Enterprise Strategy Group completed a quantitative economic analysis of Proofpoint Enterprise DLP to understand the impact the platform can have on an organization's ability to better meet IT and business goals while improving their ability to protect data and intellectual property. Our Economic Validation process is a proven method for understanding, validating, quantifying, and modeling the economic value propositions of a product or solution. The process leverages Enterprise Strategy Group's core competencies in market and industry analysis, forward-looking research, and technical/economic validation. We conducted in-depth interviews with end users to better understand and quantify how Proofpoint has affected their organizations, particularly in comparison with previously deployed and/or experienced solutions. In addition to having experience with Proofpoint, many of the customers interviewed had migrated from solutions that were included in larger licensing packages and were able to give detailed feedback on ongoing administration differences between the two solutions. The qualitative and quantitative findings were used as the basis for a simple economic model comparing the expected costs of Proofpoint against these solutions.

Proofpoint Economic Overview

Enterprise Strategy Group's economic analysis revealed that Proofpoint provides its customers with significant savings and benefits in the following categories:

- **Reduced risk.** Proofpoint customers reported a dramatic reduction in the risk of data loss as well as a lowered impact in the event that data loss occurs.
- **Improved visibility and control over human workflows.** Organizations using Proofpoint Enterprise DLP have a much clearer and deeper insight into what employees are doing with data as well as better control over how that data can be used.

- **Higher return on investment.** We found that Proofpoint has a substantially higher ROI when compared to both licensing bundled solutions and DIY systems.

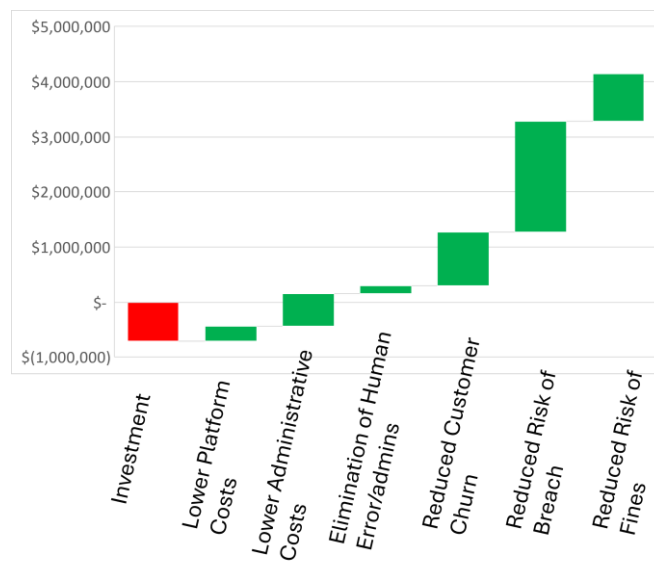
Reduced Risk

Businesses need to understand the risk that employee workflows and data activity has on their business. Risk can be measured through various methods, including:

- **Reduced risk of data loss.** Inappropriate data activity, both malicious and unintentional, can put an organization at risk. This risk is recognized through fines, reputational damage, competitive espionage, and the cost to recreate lost data. Proofpoint has shown to be able to drastically reduce data loss and provide contextual evidence to understand the transfer of data.
- **Reduced risk of breach.** When looking at the cost of a data breach, we took the initial number of \$4.88M per event,⁵ modified it to recognize the higher costs of North America and EMEA organizations that were the focus of our study, and recognized that our sample company of 7,000 users with \$1.26B of annual revenue will have exposure far higher than the 113,000 compromised records that were the high limit of the 2024 Ponemon study. We then calculated the cost of a breach to be \$11M, with an annual exposure of 11% for a breach. Based on our interviews, customers believed their risk of breach is 65% lower since adopting Proofpoint Enterprise DLP and the cost if a breach occurs to be 35% lower. This equates to **\$934,000 of alleviated annual risk** in our financial model. As seen in Figure 3, when including the indirect benefits of alleviated risk and fine exposure with the 182% direct ROI, organizations can achieve a 793% return on security investment (ROSI).

“Our cost of failure is high. We have multiple \$100M insurance policies. If we are down a single day we lose \$40M. Proofpoint Enterprise DLP has drastically reduced our likelihood of data loss or breach.”

Figure 3. ROSI, Including Direct and Indirect Benefits



Source: Enterprise Strategy Group, now part of Omdia

⁵ Source: Report: “Cost of a Data Breach Report 2024,” ibm.com.

- **Third-party connected applications.** We found that organizations that take advantage of partner integrations are more agile, able to expand revenue faster, and able to provide a more complete customer experience. However, exposing data and systems to partner ecosystems comes with risk. One interviewee explained, **“We have to assume the security posture of every one of our partner integrations. Proofpoint allows us to identify their risks and shield our systems from them. Because of this, we can be more aggressive about taking advantage of integrations with our partners.”** We believe that organizations that use Proofpoint Enterprise DLP are able to use more frequent and deeper partner integrations because Proofpoint is able to examine and protect those integrations.

Improved Visibility and Control Over Human Workflows

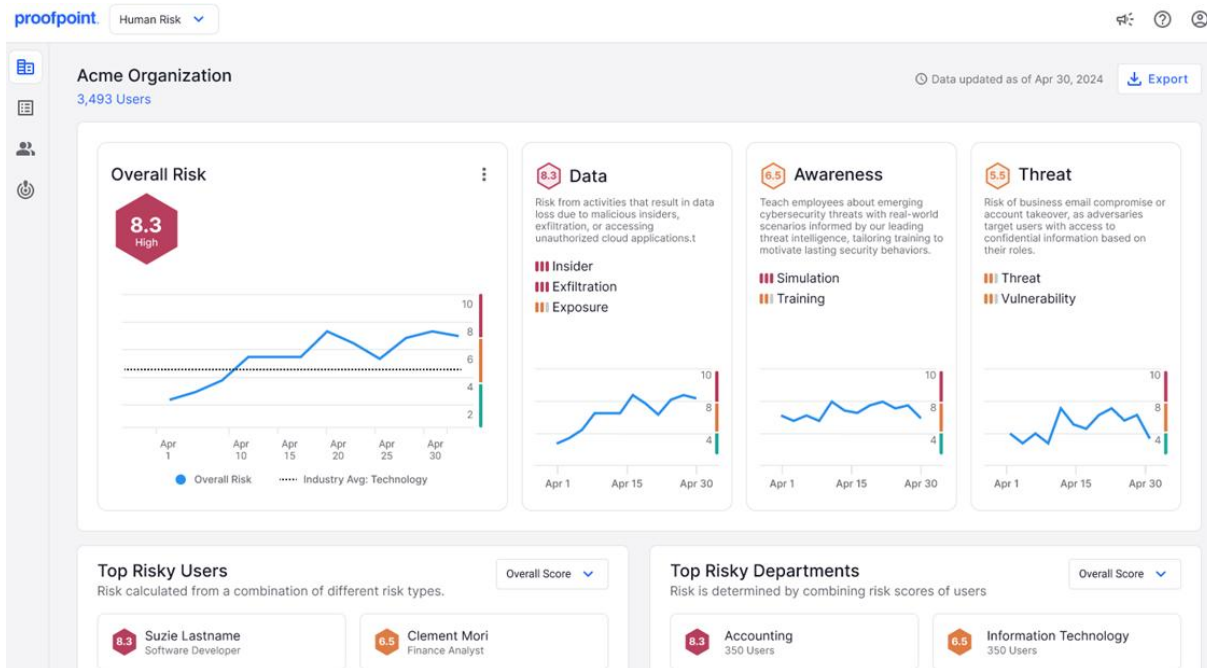
Organizations moving to Proofpoint Enterprise DLP gained a level of observability, visibility, and control over how data is being used that was not possible in the previous-state ecosystems we studied. This led to recognized benefits, including:

- **Better control over data leakage.** Organizations we interviewed shared stories about knowing their data was consistently being exfiltrated or, even worse, not even having an estimate of how much of their intellectual property was being sent out or taken against company policies. With Proofpoint Enterprise DLP, they are able to understand how it is being used and what users or groups are creating the most data loss and risk (see Figure 4). One customer shared, **“Since moving to Proofpoint, we can summarize groups of incidents multiple ways. We can look at trends by country, groups, users and understand changes over time much better than we could with our old solution.”**
- **Improved contextual visibility.** Understanding who is exfiltrating data is only part of the equation. To properly gauge appropriateness of data activity, context needs to be considered. Proofpoint Enterprise DLP gives attribution to incidents and helps security teams map data loss activities to user behavior. Proofpoint’s dashboard (see Figure 4) presents a high-level view of data movement and provides users with the ability to dig in and understand the context of that activity. This empowers everyone from executives looking for an overview down to the admin who is trying to understand when, what, and how data was shared in a specific instance.
- **Increased end-user compliance.** Customers shared stories about the flexibility that Proofpoint enables to educate users about the importance of using best practices around data activity. The ability to customize messages is something that was lacking in past solutions but is a strength of Proofpoint. One customer explained, **“Before, we couldn’t even customize the warning banners. The banners included were so generic, they were useless. We didn’t use them because we found our users were frustrated and ignoring them. With Proofpoint, we can give specific guidance on how to remain within policy.”**

“We were losing 2,000 GB of data per month. This equates to about 20,000 documents per month. And the GDPR violation costs can be \$5M per document.”

“Shifting to Proofpoint allows us to warn users instead of reacting like we used to do with our old solution. We saw a 76% reduction in risky behavior just by asking, ‘Do you really want to do this?’”

Figure 4. Understanding Data Loss Trends Across Users and Groups

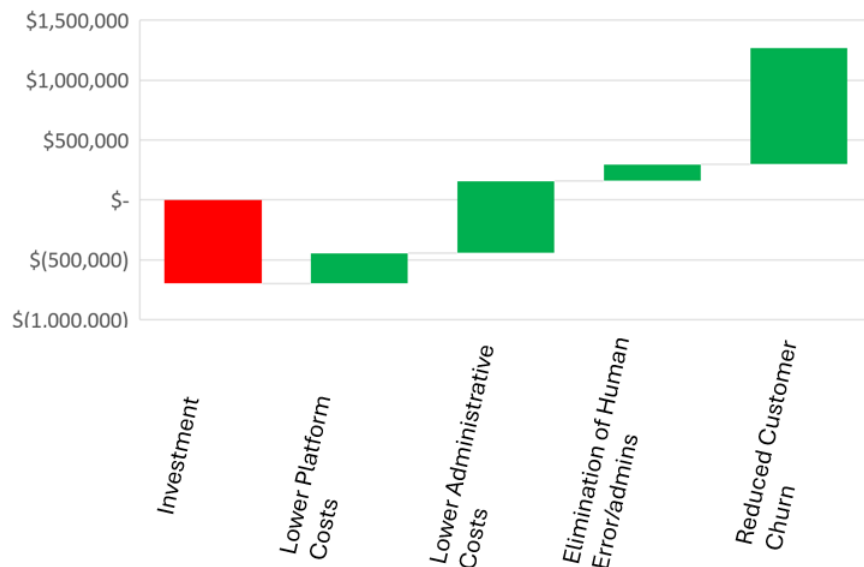


Source: Enterprise Strategy Group, now part of Omdia

Higher Return on Investment

Enterprise Strategy Group found that customers moving from license bundled solutions to Proofpoint Enterprise DLP can achieve an overall 3-year ROI benefit of 182% (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. Direct Benefit: 3-year ROI of 182%



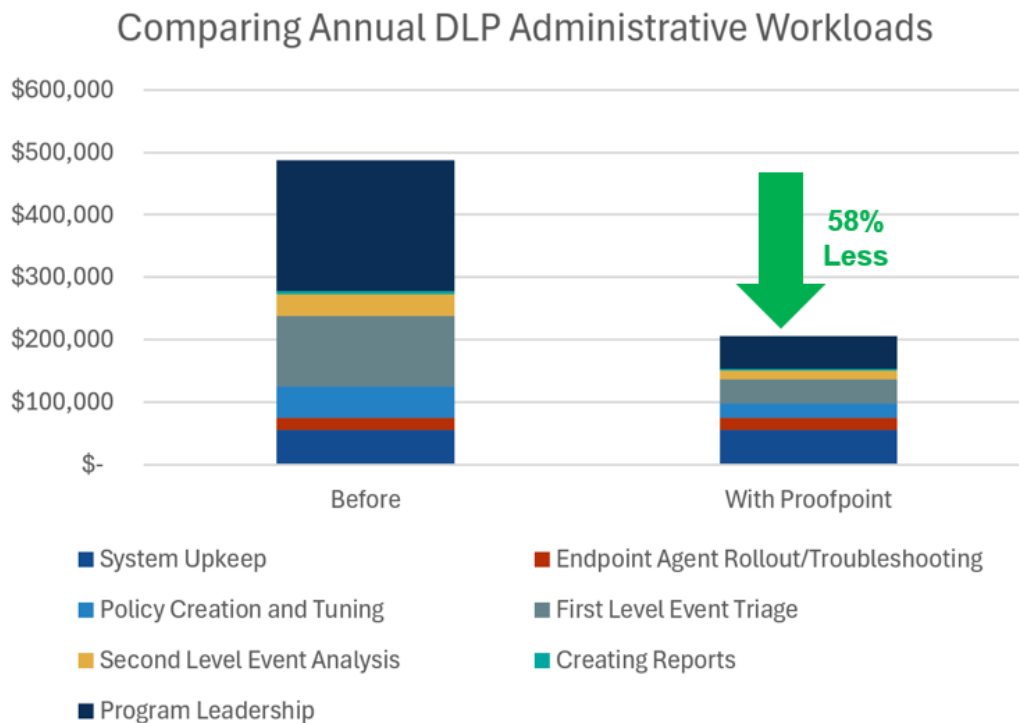
Source: Enterprise Strategy Group, now part of Omdia

To understand these cost benefits, our customer interviews examined the before and after costs of DLP efforts and found these categories to be consistent across most:

- Lower licensing costs.** Enterprise Strategy Group found Proofpoint’s licensing costs to be easy to understand and predict and received customer testimonials that the costs were inclusive with little outside spending other than professional services to plan and implement the initial deployment. In our financial model, we estimated this cost to be a \$51,400 one-time cost. When comparing Proofpoint to previous solutions, we relied on customer interviews to help us understand all of the supplemental tools and costs that were needed to get organizations’ “free” product up to what they considered an enterprise level. These included an average of four tools/applications that averaged \$325,000 a year. While we studied examples that were quite a bit higher for before-states, we excluded these outliers from our calculations to retain conservative estimates. Our financial model shows that customers moving to Proofpoint **saved an average of \$119,000 per year** on licensing/platform costs when compared to their previous solution.
- Streamlined administrative workflows.** Comparing “before” and “after” administrative tasks was a challenge because every situation we studied had a significant difference in DLP capabilities when comparing pre- and post-Proofpoint environments. Even with far more control, insights, and capabilities, we found the administrative workload **with Proofpoint to take 58% fewer hours**, equating to a **\$280,000 annual benefit** (see Figure 6). We also found that IT employees enjoyed working in Proofpoint more than they did in their previous environments. One customer shared, **“My people are happier working in Proofpoint. So much of the noise was eliminated, and they enjoy solving problems instead of having to grind through logs like they did in the past.”**

“Our admins have reduced their context switching by 50% since moving to Proofpoint.”

Figure 6. Comparing Administrative Workloads



Source: Enterprise Strategy Group, now part of Omdia

When asked what they did with those recovered hours, interviewees shared stories of being able to take on more strategic projects, which resulted in better alignment between IT capabilities and the needs of business leaders. This shift to proactive thinking also lowered their technical debt levels, with some interviewees estimating a 30% reduction in squandered IT spending specifically because of their move to Proofpoint Enterprise DLP.⁶

- **Removal of complexity.** Complexity is a word that came up consistently in customer interviews when talking about their systems before Proofpoint. Every participant reported a substantial reduction in complexity with Proofpoint. There are many areas where this complexity reduction spawns benefits; one of the most quantifiable is included in the improved administrative efficiency listed above. However, that calculation does not include the remediation of human-caused errors. Based on customer input, we calculate an 80% reduction in human-caused errors around DLP administration with Proofpoint and a 75% reduction in time to remediate those errors. This results in a **\$62,700 annual benefit**.
- **Improved workflows and reduced customer churn.** The customers we studied used different methods to quantify the impact of moving to Proofpoint Enterprise DLP. Some told stories of being able to explore deeper integrations with partners because they now have a higher level of visibility into the security posture of that partner. They explained, **“We assume the security posture of every one of our partners. Proofpoint allows us to identify their risks and shield our systems from them.”** The result was an increase in revenue and profitability. Others explained that their largest risk from data loss was the reputational damage that it causes. When asked how they measure reputation, some noted Net Promoter Score while others stated their customer churn rate was lowered because of Proofpoint.

“In the end, the thing that matters about protecting our data is how our customers perceive us. Reputational damage is the one risk that is toughest to overcome.”

We considered the different methods to calculate the impact in our financial model. First, looking at a 1% increase in overall revenue due to more and deeper partner integrations gives a potential \$12M revenue boost and a \$3.7M increase in annual profitability. When looking at reducing customer churn from 6.0% down to 5.9%, a 1.67% impact, there is revenue recovered of \$1.5M annually with \$453K of that being profit dollars. We used the more conservative number of reduced customer churn for our sample organization.

Enterprise Strategy Group Analysis

Enterprise Strategy Group leveraged the information collected through vendor-provided material, public and industry knowledge of economics and technologies, and the results of customer interviews to create a three-year TCO/ROI model that compares the costs and benefits of Proofpoint Enterprise DLP. Our interviews with customers who have recently made the transition, combined with experience and expertise in economic modeling and technical validation, helped to form the basis for our modeled scenario.

Our modeled organization contains 7,000 users supported by 3 DLP-type admins before Proofpoint and 1.25 FTEs after transitioning to Proofpoint. This company generates \$180,000 per employee, for a total of \$1.26B of revenue annually.

Understanding Our Sample Company

While the sample organization we used for our financial model is not an average of those we interviewed, it is guided by the content we were able to gain from our customer interviews. We explored their challenges with their previous environments and how Proofpoint changed the way they could better meet their goals. We applied our financial model to organizations of various sizes and types to ensure the projected benefits were reasonable, achievable, and conservative for most looking for a DLP solution. While your situation might be unique, we feel the benefits discussed in this paper should apply to most organizations.

⁶ Source: Enterprise Strategy Group Economic White Paper, [Does Your Organization Pay Long-term Costs for Short-term Decisions? Understanding Technical Debt](#), September 2022.

Our modeled company used to rely on a DLP solution that was packaged as part of a larger license and considered free, as there was no additional cost to use. However, we found an organization using this type of solution would spend \$325,000 per year in ancillary tool costs to try to bring the solution up to enterprise-level capability.

Conclusion

The importance of data to the success of a company seems to be growing year on year. However, the risk associated with data leakage is growing at an even higher rate. Enterprise Strategy Group analyzed how organizations protect their data usage and monitor the workflows of employees using data and found that most were lacking in capability, even though DLP is ranked as the top area of investment for privacy and protection.

We explored the cost of using DLP solutions that were considered free because they were included in larger licensing bundles and found they were lacking in capabilities and required additional tools and solutions to bring them up to enterprise level. Even then, the customers we interviewed told us that they couldn't get these solutions to do what was necessary to protect the flow of their data.

“The biggest win since moving to Proofpoint is the confidence in which data loss can be detected, controlled, and reported to our leaders.”

We examined what Proofpoint Enterprise DLP can do to help customers alleviate the pain associated with their business and IT challenges as well as the pull of capabilities that Proofpoint enables. We also analyzed scenarios where organizations relied on SSE products, products included in larger licensing bundles, and mixtures of DIY environments to understand the gaps in the understanding of how data is being used. We analyzed examples of data leakage due to insider threats, both malicious and unintentional, and found Proofpoint Enterprise DLP can dramatically reduce that leakage. We found that Proofpoint Enterprise DLP customers can realize an 182% ROI in direct benefits and a 793% ROSI when incorporating the value of alleviated risks and fines. We also found that organizations that adopt Proofpoint Enterprise DLP gain high levels of assurance of what data is being used and how their workforce uses that data.

Enterprise Strategy Group strongly recommends that any company that has challenges with data leakage or questions about data usage explore what Proofpoint Enterprise DLP can do for their operations.

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