Data Responsibility @IBM

IBM believes organizations that collect, store, manage or process data have an obligation to handle it responsibly. That belief—embodied in our century-long commitment to trust and responsibility in all relationships—is why the world's largest enterprises trust IBM as a steward of their most valuable data. We take that trust seriously and earn it every day by following these responsible principles and practices:

1. Data Ownership and Privacy

OWNERSHIP: We believe that our clients' data is their own, and that government data policies should be fair and equitable and prioritize openness. Our client agreements are transparent; clients are not required to relinquish rights to their data—nor the insights derived from that data—to benefit from IBM's solutions and services.

PRIVACY: IBM is fully committed to protecting the privacy of our clients' data. While there is no single approach to privacy, IBM complies with the data privacy laws in all countries and territories in which we operate; we support global cooperation to strengthen privacy protections.

2. Data Flows and Access

FLOWS: We believe clients, not governments, should determine where their data is stored and how it is processed. IBM therefore supports digital trade agreements that enable and facilitate the cross-border flow of data and that limit data localization requirements.

ACCESS: IBM has not provided client data to any government agency under any surveillance program involving bulk collection of content or metadata. We do not provide access to client data stored outside the lawful jurisdiction of any government requesting such data, unless the request is made through internationally recognized legal channels such as mutual legal assistance treaties (MLATs). If we receive a request for enterprise client data that does not follow such processes, we will take appropriate steps to challenge the request through judicial action or other means.

3. Data Security and Trust

ENCRYPTION: IBM opposes any effort to weaken or limit the effectiveness of commercial encryption technologies that are essential to modern business. IBM does not put 'backdoors' in its products for any government agency, nor do we provide source code or encryption keys to any government agency for the purpose of accessing client data. We support the use of internationally accepted encryption standards and algorithms, rather than those mandated by individual governments.

CYBERSECURITY: IBM believes in public-private partnerships and voluntary, real-time sharing of actionable cyber threat information between government, business and academia to collaboratively prevent and mitigate cyber attacks.

4. AI and Data

We firmly believe that artificial intelligence cannot and will not replace human decision-making, judgment, intuition or ethical choices. Companies must be able to explain what went into their algorithm's recommendations. If they can't, then their systems shouldn't be on the market. IBM therefore supports transparency and data governance policies that will ensure people understand how an AI system came to a given conclusion or recommendation. As society debates the implications of AI systems, IBM opposes efforts to tax automation or penalize innovation.

5. Data Skills and New Collar Jobs

IBM is leading efforts to ensure workers worldwide are prepared for data-driven changes that are reshaping how work gets done, and that are driving productivity, economic growth and job creation. We are working with policymakers to modernize education systems to emphasize in-demand skills rather than specific academic degrees, preparing more workers for new collar jobs.

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