



How Exela Pharma Sciences Remediated 100% of its R&D Data in the Cloud and On-Prem With Varonis



“There are things going on that I just don’t know about. Varonis helps me figure out what’s going on, who’s doing what, and take proactive action.”

HIGHLIGHTS

Challenges

- + Limiting the company's Microsoft 365 blast radius
- + Maintaining a least-privilege model
- + Data discovery and classification

Solution

The Varonis Data Security Platform:

- + Provides complete visibility and control over critical data
- + Repairs and maintains file system permissions
- + Makes data easily searchable
- + Discovers and locks down sensitive data automatically
- + Finds regulated data
- + Detects abnormal behavior in critical systems

Results

- + 100% of R&D data remediated
- + Minimized blast radius by removing access to data
- + Compliance with complex pharma industry regulations

CHALLENGES

Identifying and protecting proprietary data

Protecting proprietary R&D data is critical for pharmaceutical companies, and Exela Pharma Sciences is no exception.

John Kearney, IT Manager at Exela, had always placed a high priority on protecting the company's intellectual property, but he worried about what he might be missing.

"I knew there were permission and orphan issues. I just had no idea how many."

"You can check a folder, you can check a drive, you can check a system, but until you have something that really looks at the entirety of everything, you don't know."

In particular, he worried about exposure that may have occurred when Exela migrated to Microsoft 365.

"When we first rolled out Microsoft 365, we were learning. And for a time, it was the Wild West. Folks were putting files across Microsoft 365 in Teams, OneDrive, SharePoint, etc. And they could inadvertently do bad things."

John wanted to reduce Exela's blast radius by removing access to sensitive information from users where it wasn't needed. Like other companies in the space, the company is subject to complex regulations.

Exela needed to put privacy measures in place without overwhelming its lean IT team.

"We are a pharmaceutical manufacturer, so there's a lot of data that is proprietary. We are also in a highly-regulated industry. FDA, DEA, Department of Agriculture, Department of Defense. We answer to a lot of agencies."

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SOLUTION

Visibility into and control over R&D data

John and his team implemented Varonis to gain visibility and control over Exela's intellectual property. Exela chose to use Varonis to discover and lock down data and right-size user permissions within Microsoft 365 and on-prem.

Just as John suspected, the move to the cloud resulted in inadvertent overexposure. He found that some sensitive files had links anyone could access, not just authorized users and groups. By acting proactively, he was able to shut down that functionality and protect those files from a potential breach.

"The cloud makes it easy for employees to share data. With Varonis, we were able to go into Microsoft 365 and make sure sharing wasn't exposing sensitive information."

With this new visibility, John and his team used Varonis' automated remediation to intelligently repair broken file system permissions and lock down any exposed data.

Minimizing their blast radius

John and his team also used Varonis to minimize Exela's blast radius by identifying — and removing — access to sensitive information that wasn't being used.

"We've used Varonis to find those situations where we gave someone access to the R&D drive six months ago because they needed it. But we have a report that says they never opened the R&D drive. So we can take access away."

With this approach, the IT team doesn't have to play the unpopular role of "bad guy."

"I'm not saying, 'You can't have access.' I'm saying, 'I gave you access and you never used it.'"

Complying with complex pharma regulations

The Exela Pharma team also leveraged Varonis to find and classify sensitive data automatically for regulatory compliance purposes. The complex task was made easy with Varonis' vast library of expert-built, auto-updating policies.

Varonis further aids in the discovery of sensitive information, making sensitive and protected data easily searchable.

"If the FDA comes in and says, 'That batch of Pharma X that you made 10 years ago, what's this on page two?' Varonis helps me find those details through keyword searches."

Alerts for abnormal behavior

John and his team use Varonis to monitor and detect any abnormal behavior in critical systems. They also use Varonis to detect and help prevent DNS exfiltration attempts.

For example, John receives alerts whenever a staff member logs in from an unexpected location. So if an employee lives in Maine and they log in from England, John is alerted. If someone resets a password for an administrator account or for a member of the management team, he's alerted as well.

"I trust everyone on my team implicitly. So chances are, I already know about it. But if I don't, I can ask them about it."

These type of alerts are particularly important with a remote workforce where files are shared in the cloud.

"It's different than having a regular network on an in-house server. People can inadvertently do bad things."

RESULTS

100% of proprietary R&D data locked down

With Varonis, Exela discovered and locked down 100% of its proprietary R&D data on-prem and in the cloud.

“Not only did we find and fix these issues, we also made changes to prevent them from happening again.”

Today, John can monitor and secure all of Exela’s sensitive data in one place, whether that data is located on-prem or in the cloud.

“Varonis is a one-stop shop. It does it all and wraps it up in basic or detailed reports, depending on whom you’re presenting the information to. I don’t have to spend hours looking through six different sources to find out what’s going on in the network. It’s all right there.”

The control of data is so complete, if senior management should ask John what data a particular employee has access to, he can quickly pull up that information.

“I can show them in detail with an easy-to-read report. It makes it a lot easier.”

John is also confident Exela’s employees only have access to the information they actually need to perform their duties.

“With Varonis, folks don’t have access to things they’re not supposed to. And when they don’t have access, they can’t do damage.”



“Getting a Varonis demo is like getting your car checked before a long road trip. We all think we know where all the data is, but we don’t. There are just too many things going on.”





Protect your regulated data and intellectual property.

Discover and secure sensitive data in just a few clicks.

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