

T H E

# WeeklyTAKE

THE SAFETY DANCE: DATA PRIVACY AND THE AGILE WORKFORCE  
W/ CHANDRA DHANDAPANI AND SHANNON CLARK [01.25.2021]

## **Spencer Levy**

I'm Spencer Levy, and this is The Weekly Take. From business to banking to baseball, in email and entertainment, in retail, in real estate, of course, in just about everything we do, data makes the world go round. On this episode, we're joined by two of CBRE's data experts for a conversation about this essential and valuable modern commodity.

## **Shannon Clark**

I like to think of the amount of data we have is all those clothes that are stored in your attic door, you know, in your basement. And if you don't know what data you have, it's very hard to take advantage of it. And so putting in place a really good data governance program is a really important part of harnessing your data.

## **Spencer Levy**

That's Shannon Clark in Chicago as global director for Data Protection and Privacy. Shannon is a leader for CBRE's Global Privacy Office.

## **Chandra Dhandapani**

Every one of us have to stay super vigilant. And by the way, it's not just at work at your home computers as well. Stay vigilant. Think before you click.

## **Spencer Levy**

And that's Chandra Dhandapani in Dallas. As CBRE's chief administrative officer, Chandra is responsible for digital and technology and people while covering an array of practices across the company. With International Data Privacy Day upon us this week, we'll talk about collecting and safeguarding data in an interconnected world. We'll talk technology and trust, the Internet of Things and the role humans play and new challenges that have emerged as we use our many devices to share data in an evolving workplace and more. We'll even discuss some of our favorite movies and how data helps me cook a mean smoked brisket in the comfort of my home. Coming up, a revealing conversation about data privacy. That's right. Now on The Weekly Take.

Welcome to The Weekly Take. We're joined by Chandra Dhandapani, the chief administrative officer at CBRE. Chandra, welcome.

## **Chandra Dhandapani**

Thank you, Spencer. I'm glad to be here.

## **Spencer Levy**

Glad to have you. Chandra. And Shannon Clarke, the global director of Data Protection and privacy at CBRE. Shannon, welcome.

## **Shannon Clark**

Thank you, Spencer. Good to be here.

## **Spencer Levy**

So, Shannon, let me start with you. We're here in celebration of International Data Privacy Day. Why is that day important and what does CBRE do to help support it?

T H E

# WeeklyTAKE

## **Shannon Clark**

So International Data Privacy Day occurs every year on January 28, and it commemorates the day that an international treaty was signed, really the first treaty protecting the individual right to privacy. And it's a day that is intended to raise awareness about privacy and promote privacy and data protection best practices. We celebrate it at CBRE as a way to remind our employees about the importance of data privacy, our data privacy culture at CBRE, what our standards are and really promote that it's an opportunity to create a competitive advantage for CBRE and be an ethical and trusted data steward for our clients and our employees.

## **Spencer Levy**

Great. Thank you, Shannon. Chandra, anything you'd like to add to that?

## **Chandra Dhandapani**

I think Shannon covered it well. The important thing for us is keep data privacy front and center every day. And this day reminds us to be especially vigilant about not just data that we use at work, but also our own data in our personal lives.

## **Spencer Levy**

Chandra, from your perspective, how has it become Data's day? Why is data so important today?

## **Chandra Dhandapani**

You know, Spencer, we now refer to data as the new oil. I like to think about it as the new crude oil. You know, in Big Data, we talk about three Vs We used to talk about that several years ago. And those are volume, velocity and variety of data. If you just think about how much volume, how fast data drives and everything is getting digitized, it just gives us a tremendous opportunity to really understand what's happening in the world around us. I'm a huge fan of data and what it can do and driving insights for our clients and for our professionals. And as you know, Spencer, our industry is still relatively opaque when it comes to data. And so we believe data is a huge competitive advantage for us and something that we value a lot.

## **Spencer Levy**

Shannon, do you agree?

## **Shannon Clark**

I do. If you look at the trends in how much data has been collected and stored over the last even five years, it's grown beyond exponentially. It's just incredible. And there's just more avenues to gather and collect data. I don't think we could imagine being so connected to the Internet with our watches, data trackers and health trackers and thermostats and things and so there is a proliferation of data and it's Chandra mentioned it's really a tool to track trends, understand effectiveness of processes, what's driving behavior, what drives performance, and it's really a tool to enable better decision making. I think a lot of times, especially in our industry, there was experience and a broker would take that experience and make a decision, offer some advice. And now they take that experience, plus a lot of data and combine the two. They can offer our clients a better way to make a decision.

## **Spencer Levy**

Chandra, let's talk about how we've evolved and how important data is, but how we're just

T H E

# WeeklyTAKE

scratching the surface on the use of that data, because I heard a statistic that there's more data created every day that exists in the entire Library of Congress. Are we just scratching the surface of its potential?

## **Chandra Dhandapani**

We are, Spencer. And if you think about it, you know, I like to use the phrase data data everywhere, not a drop to drink. The point is, there's so much data and, you know, sometimes people struggle so much to figure out how to collect all that data, how to connect the dots through data, and how to really harness value from data. It takes talent. It takes you know, we have a lot of computing power around us these days. But imagine, Spence, that it's easy to tell a story and we can all make up explanations of why data says certain things. But when you really understand the data, when you really find a way to harness it and use that as a connector to understand the real story and make sense of it, it is just so powerful. When I first bought my very first computer, when I came to this country about 20 plus years ago, it was so heavy I couldn't lift it out of the box. And now my phone is my computer. I can do so much. So there's so much computing power around us. And I actually think the best is yet to come in terms of all of us really harnessing the power of data around us.

## **Shannon Clark**

Just following on to what Chandra saying we have so much data, we're just scratching the surface. And part of what our evolution is or what people have to evolve and learn to do is also to govern the data that they do have. I like to think of the amount of data we have is all those clothes that are stored in your attic or, you know, in your basement. And if you don't know what data you have, it's very hard to take advantage of it. And so putting in place a really good data governance program is a really important part of harnessing your data.

## **Spencer Levy**

Data governance. What does that mean, Shannon?

## **Shannon Clark**

Data governance is managing your data, so it's understanding what data is in your inventory and what can be and needs to be and should be discarded because it's no longer needed for a business purpose or for a legal retention purpose and really understanding how long data should be retained, how it should be protected, ensuring that you don't have loss and putting through proper security around it is the way that I use the term data governance.

## **Chandra Dhandapani**

And if you think about it in simple terms, Spencer, the way I think about it is how do we store the data? Who has access to it and is it controlled on a need to know basis, for example? You know, I don't want you to have access to my financial information. Right. And so very similar in the companies we have to respect data governance rules on what access to data, who has that access, when do you use it and how long do you keep it.

## **Spencer Levy**

Let's talk about that use case for a moment. Shannon you actually opened the door to this, talking about how our transactional professionals are using the data more, better. Just give us an example or two of how it's being used and where do you think it's going?

## **Shannon Clark**

One of the ways that is our retail analytics group. So they the group gets d-identified

T H E

# WeeklyTAKE

personal data, which might identify, for example, with a shopping center. Where is their customer base coming from? In one instance that I know of, the team was surprised to learn that the geographic base of the customers was much broader than they expected. That also changed the demographics of the customer base. They were more family oriented. They had more pets. And so that really impacted how the CBRE brokerage team marketed vacant space at the property. They recommended a lot more family friendly, pet friendly type of amenities in the shopping center, and they were able to dramatically improve the vacancy rate at this shopping center just by understanding where the customer base was coming from. And that's just one example of how we're using data to drive decision making, not only from a strategic point of view, but in terms of which tenants you're going to accept as a tenant in your shopping center.

### **Spencer Levy**

Well, I have a funny story about that. So we were evaluating a shopping center in northern New Jersey. And everybody that's in northern New Jersey once say, aha, a lot of our shoppers are 'aha' coming from Manhattan. So they put three mile rings, five mile rings and mile rings around it. And then they got the little app on their phone and actually saw where their shoppers were coming from. You know how they were coming from Manhattan? Nobody. Now, that's the bad news here is the good news, because they knew exactly where their shoppers were coming from. The shoppers were coming from a higher wealth demographic than they had thought, and they were actually devaluing their center by trying to pick up a piece of Manhattan. So data isn't your enemy, it's your friend. If used appropriately. Would you agree with that, Chandra?

### **Chandra Dhandapani**

Absolutely. That's a great example. Spencer, I'll give you another example. You know, when we talk about data, we do property valuations. Right? And in coming up with the valuation of a property. And Spencer, I know you're very familiar with this, that is so much information on value that appraisers rely on. And the more easy access they have to be able to gather information, put all those inputs together to come up with the right appraisal for a property. Right. I think it just better for our clients. It's better for us in providing that service. So I think data is tremendously our friend and it doesn't lie, it helps you get to the truth much faster.

### **Spencer Levy**

Well, it certainly doesn't lie. But there is an old expression. There is facts, there's lies, and then there's statistics. So I think there are limits to the use of data and how it's applied. Would you agree with that, Shannon?

### **Shannon Clark**

Absolutely. There's a growing field of data analytics and data science, and there is a lot of debate and discussion on how data is measured and tracked. And the people who are inputting the data and creating the algorithms and the formulas can have their own unconscious biases. And so you could get data that skewed one way or the other. I think when we're looking at areas of data where maybe there's less likelihood to be that kind of bias. So one of the ways I know that Seabury is using data is with respect to smart technologies. And that's just looking at performance of the air conditioning unit and tracking that over time to try to predict when that air conditioning unit should be maintained or replaced. Those kinds of situation, there's probably two or more accurate data, less prone to bias.

### **Chandra Dhandapani**

T H E

# WeeklyTAKE

Shannon mentioned something very important. Shannon, you mentioned that when people input data. Right. One of the things that I'm a big proponent of is when I look at data. Dashboards, for example, I want to get it directly from systems of record not massaged by humans along the way who have their own versions of what story that data should tell. And you brought up a great example of, you know, using various IoT devices or other machines that generate their own data. It's easier and faster to get to the truth. Otherwise, you know, I have having spent a lot of years studying statistics, I can tell you I can create my own version of the truth based on which subsets of data you look at. So good point, Spencer and Shannon. But I think there's ways in which data can get you to the truth faster without human intervention.

### **Spencer Levy**

When you said IoT, I believe it's good for the Internet of Things. And I like our listeners to know that that the acronym was, but it does also lead to a great segway to what the title of today's episode is, it's not data, it's data privacy and the IoT issue, the Internet of Things does bring up issues as it relates to privacy, not just for the functioning of the air conditioning system, but when you come and go from the building, is it under your desk? Is it at the doorway? So, Chandra, in your own words, where is the Internet of Things today and how does privacy fit into that?

### **Chandra Dhandapani**

You know, Spencer, like everything right when done right to get a lot of good, it could also be harmful when not done right. So, for example, you know, one of the things that we all should be conscious of is I'm sitting in my home right now. I have so many devices connected to the Internet. And if I'm not careful, I am transmitting a lot of information. Internet of things simply means that, you know, there are devices that are connected to the Internet that give you information based on what the device is, whether it's my nest or it's, you know, my iPhone or my iPad as consumers and people everywhere, we have to be thoughtful and careful on how you manage your data and protect your data privacy, because there's a lot of good that can come with it. For example, you know, as you know, your location, knowing, letting people know where you are sometimes is very helpful. Other times not so much. So it's up to us to manage what kind of data we allow to be transmitted on our behalf through these devices with its IoT or others.

### **Spencer Levy**

Well, Chandra, you be happy to know I have the Internet of Things in my own home as well. And because I try to be a good host, I try to shut off as many as possible. So I have bandwidth. But there's one thing I will not shut off for anybody, and that is the smoker in the back of my house where I have a brisket cooking right now. I can actually control it from my phone. But, you know, you guys are great, but I'm not killing the brisket over this episode.

### **Chandra Dhandapani**

But, you know, Spencer, if I hack into it...

### **Spencer Levy**

It is that good.

### **Spencer Levy**

But let's get to privacy now, because this is Data Privacy Day. First of all, Shannon, what is data privacy and why is it important?

T H E

# WeeklyTAKE

## **Shannon Clark**

So data privacy is the area of laws and regulations that's been growing globally that tries to strike a balance between the individual right to privacy and business's ability to collect and use data. So the GDPR most people have heard of, that's the EU's general data protection regulation. That's sort of the gold standard for data privacy laws. It gives individuals a certain set of rights and it also places limits and obligations on how businesses and the way in which businesses can collect, use and store data. And it and it really does try to just strike a fair balance. So, as Chandra mentioned, that when you do buy these IoT devices, that there are some laws that give individuals right to say what sort of data is being collected, how is it being used, how is it being shared? Where is it being stored? How long is it being stored? It's a way for an individual to inform themselves about what sort of data am I giving away by using this device and to just strike that balance between innovation and the ability to use data commercially and the right to privacy of individuals.

## **Spencer Levy**

Chandra as the chief administrative officer of a Fortune 100 company with offices all over the world, there are different laws we need to deal with, from the GDPR to potential changes in the laws in California and individual states in the United States. But we're one company. How do we deal with all these different laws on data privacy?

## **Chandra Dhandapani**

You know, Spencer, fundamentally most laws on data privacy, right? Make sure that we protect data that we need to protect, manage access to that data the way we're supposed to manage access to. And, you know, which is why we have fabulous people like, you know, Shannon and her team leading this effort. And we have great cybersecurity team at the company and several people focused on this. But fundamentally, it's really making sure that we know what data we have. How do we handle that data and what kind of rights do we have on how we use that data and make sure that we adhere to that, beyond those fundamentals that are nuances by different regulations and different countries. But the most important thing is for us to have a keen awareness of data privacy. And, you know, data privacy experts talk about the golden rule of data privacy. Right. Make sure that you treat others data the way it should be treated and don't take it for granted. And so I think so much of it is fundamental to what we have to do and what's the right thing to do. And then, of course, there are nuances by different countries. By the way, Spencer, when we choose technology suppliers, our cloud providers, etc., we pay close attention to how good are they in adhering to these policies and do they have a presence globally. So while we have, you know, a global presence and lots of nuances, we have our own teams internally and we rely on some great partners, including the best tech companies in the world, Microsoft and Amazon and others, who also pay a lot of attention to making sure that these laws are followed.

## **Spencer Levy**

Well, I certainly believe that we are trying to follow them the best we can using great partners, having great internal teams. But I think it's also fair to say there's a lot of bad actors out there and not in our company, but in the world that are trying to get at our data. As a matter of fact, I went to a presentation about two years ago with a big bank. And I know you come out of the banking world, Chandra, and they said that 95 percent of the inbound email traffic is malicious. Is the problem that bad, Chandra?

## **Chandra Dhandapani**

Yes, absolutely. We filter out more than 95 percent of incoming emails that come into our

T H E

# WeeklyTAKE

company. And Spencer, I'm sure you know this and you remember this. The campaign we have within CBRE is think before you click. Even though we filtered out over 95 percent of the email, we have a great email filtration system. We train our teams on making sure that they are thoughtful. And we have these phishing campaigns. We try to catch people to see. We send them very clever links to see if they click on it, to train them and make them aware. It's a problem and it's not going to go away anytime soon. And therefore, every one of us have to stay super vigilant. And by the way, it's not just at work at your home computers as well. Stay vigilant. Think before you click.

### **Spencer Levy**

That brings up maybe the single most important new issue or newish issue that's come up in the last year is this whole work from home thing. I'm talking to you on my work computer. I have my personal phone here. I have my personal iPad right there. I have my Amazon echo in the next room. And yes, I have my smoker in the other room, too, but we've already gone there. So, Shannon, let's talk about the new challenges we have today, given that most of us are not sitting in an office that is, I guess, more protectable.

### **Shannon Clark**

That's right. And especially with we don't have the office printer to print a document that we want to review on paper. And so I think it's been really important, as Chandra mentioned, to train all of our employees in the privacy office We like to say stop, think and then act and really think about how are you protecting the data? We always say never go on to a public Wi-Fi without being on a VPN is one of the things that's really, really easy to do to ensure that your connection is protected. And if you don't need to download a document from a structure to an unstructured format without getting too techie about it, don't do it. So I think our department has been really great about enabling different platforms that allow us to share data with in a very secure environment so that we can reduce the risk footprint from working from home. But it's really about being aware of what the risks are and what you can do to minimize those risks.

### **Spencer Levy**

Chandra, does your individual advice change in the work from home environment versus the office environment, or do we just have to be more vigilant?

### **Chandra Dhandapani**

So it's actually both Spencer. So in the individual work from home environment, when you use your CBRE computer, your laptop, we now have Always-On VPN, it automatically connects you to VPN. However, if you are using your home computer, if you want to connect your ACBL email, we use Two-Factor authentication, as you all know. So we as a company take a number of precautions to make sure that you can work successfully from home. And as individuals, though, think about all the apps you have on your phone that are transmitting information about your usage, about where you are. And it's up to every one of us to stay vigilant in protecting our own data at home and play your part in protecting the data that we have at work. So it's up to every one of us, Spencer. And as a company, we do a lot of things to make it easy for our employees to be able to work from home. But I would say never let your guard down when it comes to data privacy.

### **Spencer Levy**

OK, so let's take out our crystal balls here for just a moment. We all we all like the movies. I'll ask you in a minute what your favorite movie is, but I will tell you there are some utopian movies, we start with Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, though actually it's a little bit more

T H E

# WeeklyTAKE

disturbing when you actually think about what happened in that movie. But nevertheless, living in a chocolate factory isn't so bad, but living in the world of artificial intelligence and all thinking computers and the Terminator and how from 2001 A Space Odyssey, they're little, little, little scary. So how do you see the future, Chandra? Are we looking at Charlie and the Chocolate Factory or are we looking at how from 2001, A Space Odyssey?

## **Chandra Dhandapani**

You know, Spencer, none of us can claim to predict the future. I certainly can't. But what I will say is I think across the board, individuals around the world are getting much more smarter about data privacy and the need for it. Regulators are getting more focused on this concept of data privacy. You see that through GDPR and the other laws that are coming out. So I actually think things will evolve just like it has in the past. Spencer, where there'll be a ton of development for the good in terms of data privacy laws and regulations, and they will be equal amount of development on the bad actor side. So I actually think this battle between good and evil and staying vigilant on data privacy is going to continue to play out. And by the way, one of my favorite movies is The Minority Report, where you can actually predict a crime before it happens.

## **Spencer Levy**

I loved that movie, The Minority Report. And for those people who haven't seen The Minority Report starring Tom Cruise about a future cop who prevents crime through people who can see the future and technology. So Shannon, number one, what is your favorite movie and how do you see the future?

## **Shannon Clark**

So starting with my favorite movie, it's Cinema Paradiso, which is an Italian film which I just started watching again. And it's very heartwarming. Cinema Paradiso is great if you if you haven't watched it. I agree with Chandra. I think data can really be used for good and for less good purposes. And I'm hopeful that as more people become privacy aware, there are stronger laws protecting individual privacy, that we're really heading in a good direction in terms of the use of technology and how data is being used. But I think it's also good to be aware that it's not just technology that is the threat and the way that technology is evolving. But if you look at a lot of these laws, there is an area called sensitive personal data in the EU. You cannot collect this data. It's prohibited to collect it unless you fit into these exceptions and all of those categories. A special category data were really what the Nazis used during the Holocaust to imprison people. Those were all the categories. I was wondering once, you know, why is membership in a trade union a special category deserving of protection? And I was watching a documentary on the rise of fascism in Europe in the 20s and 30s, and that was one of the things that could have sent you to a concentration camp. So we like to talk about the ways that technology is impacting our privacy and how we have to be careful about it.

## **Spencer Levy**

Let's let the listeners know that Cinema Paradiso won the 1990 Oscar for best foreign language film. So very uplifting film and ranked number 50 is best films on IMDB. And of course, if it says it on the Internet, it's got to be right.

## **Chandra Dhandapani**

And see Spencer, how good that was to have access to that data in an instant.

## **Spencer Levy**

T H E

# WeeklyTAKE

Are you suggesting I didn't have that at the tip of my tongue, but no, you're right. I didn't have that one until I looked it up. So let's talk now about an issue that I think we deal with on a daily basis, which is the fact that commercial real estate is a business where there are a lot of our transactional professionals who are concerned about technology. They're also concerned about sharing their data not just for malicious uses, for competitive reasons. And otherwise, I deal with this issue almost every day. And so what do we say to them for the brokers that are listening? How do we say get comfortable sharing your data because you and we will be better for it. Chandra, what's your point of view?

## **Chandra Dhandapani**

As I've looked into this and as we think about the data that we have as a company, we have collected detailed information on over two million properties, so many attributes about those properties. And so as a company, we have more data than any one individual broker may have in any part of the world. And so I think the best path for us forward is to blend the best of the data that the company can provide and the data that our brokers can contribute to the institution while continuing to maintain their individual advantage, one of the things that we are talking to brokers about, they won recognition when they contribute data to the company and they want to make sure that they don't lose out by contributing data. So those are all real things that we are working with our brokerage teams on. And this whole concept of broker operating platform and, you know, how do we help our brokers win that data as a differentiator is a huge priority for us as a company. And I think they're making some really good progress. It's not something that's been done before, Spencer, as you know, in our industry. But I feel very optimistic that with the amount of data, the investments we made in data and the way we are problem-solving this with our brokers, we will be in a much better place not too far from today.

## **Spencer Levy**

Shannon, same question to you. What do you say to our brokers who are concerned not only about sharing data for privacy reasons, but is this computer going to somehow disrupt the brokerage business? What's your point of view, Shannon?

## **Shannon Clark**

I think our D&T organization, we have a chief data officer which Chandra has led has really put us in a position of transforming CBRE as a company to take advantage and leverage our data. And like the saying goes, I think we're stronger together than separately. So when we can pool our resources and leverage the global platform that we have that benefit every broker individually. So contributing to that strong base of knowledge is really important. And for all the brokers out there, really, if we pool this data together, we are stronger together.

## **Chandra Dhandapani**

If I can chime in, I get asked this question a lot and I have a valid point of view on this. I do not believe technology is going to displace our brokers. That's because technology cannot recreate the creativity and the entrepreneurial nature of what our brokers bring to the table. Technology can make your lives easier. You don't have to do some of the repetitive tasks. You don't have to work as hard at collecting information. But I think judgment, creativity and the strategic thinking that our brokers bring to our clients is not going to be automated away.

## **Spencer Levy**

Well, I agree. And not only do I bet on data, but I'm betting on humans for exactly the same

T H E

# WeeklyTAKE

reason, Chandra. So we've come to the end of our podcast. And since we've covered everything from movies to the best device to smoke a brisket and a lot of other topics, Shannon, what are the final thoughts you'd like to give about data privacy to the listeners on The Weekly Take?

## **Shannon Clark**

Data privacy is not going away. It's part of the way that we are required to do business. Now, if we want to remain globally competitive, we have got to become privacy compliant and earn a reputation as being a world class data store and world class ethical data steward, so get to know data privacy law, how it impacts your life and what you can do to protect it and in your own personal life, understand which companies out there are really positioning themselves as the most privacy respectful option in the marketplace. Because as those businesses get more and more business and market share, other companies will follow suit.

## **Spencer Levy**

Thank you, Shannon and Chandra final thoughts from you on data, data privacy or any of the other topics we touched upon?

## **Chandra Dhandapani**

Spencer, trust is so important in any relationship, including business relationships. Our clients trust us with some of their most important assets, and that includes their data. And we work hard to earn and retain that trust. So my final thoughts are at CBRE, we take data privacy seriously because we absolutely value and want to retain the trust that our clients place in us and it's the right thing to do.

## **Spencer Levy**

On behalf of The Weekly Take, I want to thank two friends of mine, Chandra Dhandapani, the chief administrative officer of CBRE, for joining the show. Chandra, thanks for coming out.

## **Chandra Dhandapani**

Thank you, Spencer.

## **Spencer Levy**

And Shannon Clark, the global director of data protection and privacy for CBRE. Shannon, thank you.

## **Shannon Clark**

Thank you. Spencer.

## **Spencer Levy**

We hope you found these insights around International Data Privacy Day to be as informative as we did. For more on our show, check out [CBRE/com.TheWeeklyTake](https://www.cbre.com/TheWeeklyTake). We'd also love your feedback. So if you found us on Apple podcast, Spotify or another platform, please subscribe rate and review us wherever you listen. Once again, thanks for joining us. Until next time. I'm Spencer Levy. Be smart. Be safe. Be well.