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Coverage Initiation: GRAX unlocks hybrid cloud benefits for SaaS data

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The company began as a backup platform for Salesforce and is now leveraging its architecture to give its customers a historical view into their SaaS data. GRAX claims its service allows customers to take ownership of their data on Salesforce and maintain that data on their own infrastructure or on another cloud.

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Introduction

GRAX's primary goal is to enable its customers to take full ownership of the data they create in SaaS platforms, while capturing all the historical changes made to the data and keeping it accessible. The recent retirement of the Salesforce Data Recovery service, which occurred in July, has raised awareness of the need for third-party backup tools to fill this void. GRAX is looking to differentiate itself by going beyond backup and archiving by giving customers the ability to view historical data to extract valuable insights from their various data repositories.

451 TAKE

In our Voice of the Enterprise: Storage, Data Management and Disaster Recovery 2020 survey, 23% of respondents claimed that application compatibility was a weakness for cloud storage, and in conversations with end users, their organizations have had challenges protecting and managing data in SaaS platforms. For on-premises infrastructures, backup and archiving tools have long been dependable gateways for pushing customer data to public cloud environments, and GRAX is providing services to help its customers attain data mobility and accessibility benefits for their SaaS data. While backup and archive are key requirements for organizations, the ability to extract insights that lead to business value can help businesses optimize and ultimately transform. Given that many organizations are dealing with tight budgets, the opportunity to cover data protection while providing additional value for data insights could be attractive to potential customers. While GRAX should have ample opportunities to tap into Salesforce's customer base for its services, the company will eventually need to expand its services to additional SaaS platforms to extend to new markets.

Context

GRAX's goal is to provide customers with a platform to capture and record all the transactions fed into an organization's SaaS platform, with customers initially purchasing the service to provide backup and then later using GRAX to quickly access historical data to analyze trends and optimize business performance. Burlington, Massachusetts-based GRAX was founded in 2018 by Joe Gaska, who previously sold Ionia Corporation to LogMeIn in 2014.

The company currently has a headcount of 46 and so far has taken in \$12.8m in funding from Volition Capital, and it plans to raise a series B round either late this fall or early in the winter. CTO Morten Bagai joined the company in January and was most recently the CTO of the Salesforce Platform, after joining the company as Heroku's CTO. Another Heroku/Salesforce veteran, CRO Brad Gyger, also joined the company in February and was previously the VP of worldwide sales for Heroku.

The company's customer count is rapidly approaching the triple-digit mark, and GRAX claims its average deal size is in the low six figures. GRAX's early customers were Global 100 companies and smaller companies in a wide range of markets such as ServiceSource in the B2B digital sales space, Qiagen in life sciences and EnergyAustralia.

Products

GRAX's offerings currently provide protection only for Salesforce Sales Cloud, Service Cloud and Commerce Cloud, with support for additional SaaS platforms coming in the future. On the cloud storage front, GRAX supports AWS, Azure and Google Cloud. The vendor uses SSL/TLS to make sure that data transmissions are always encrypted between the Salesforce platform and a customer's cloud environment.

A large part of GRAX's value proposition is that it keeps data in its native format when it does backup and archive operations, which is important since it allows the Salesforce platform to access archived data without transforming it first. Another key benefit for storing in the native format is that it allows customers to maintain a digital chain of custody to preserve, recover and leverage all their historical CRM data. In contrast to other backup platforms that leverage snapshots and nightly backups, when customers choose to have higher levels of granularity, GRAX's platform can be configured to capture every data change and facilitate rollbacks to view data points at a specific point in time.

With the fall 2020 Quantum edition release, the platform now uses the Salesforce Bulk API to increase the speed of Salesforce data backups. GRAX also optimized the speed with which data is processed in the cloud provider by scaling runtime resources. The Quantum release also adds OAuth support to allow customers to control their data's Digital Chain of Custody, which allows CRM admins to maintain access management to verify access for authenticated users and revoke user access when necessary.

GRAX currently has four products in its lineup:

- **Backup & Restore:** Protects structured, unstructured, NoSQL data and metadata. It provides scheduled automated backups, which can be set in daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, semi-annual and annual levels.
- **Data Archive:** Archives data from Salesforce to reduce application data storage costs, and GRAX also notes that by reducing the data footprint, the archive can also help boost the performance of the Salesforce platform, which tends to slow down when repositories grow beyond 5TB in size. Data access is a key capability for the service, which allows customers to recover archived data into the production environment with one click. The service also allows archived data to be accessed via a customer's data lake or from inside the Salesforce platform itself.
- **Time Machine:** Captures every data change and allows customers to roll back deletions, additions, updates and merges. GRAX claims this service allows customers to have unlimited audit trails to ensure that they can meet regulatory requirements.
- **Data Hub:** Provides customers with a 360-degree view of their data by building global reports across all a customer's data silos to gain insights without forcing a data merge. GRAX claims Data Hub can help simplify multiple organizational selling by unifying entity data to allow all the members of an organization to get a complete view of their customers. The service can also be used to enhance governance and customer growth and retention opportunities.

Competition

In the backup space for Salesforce there are a number of players that have offerings including Druva, NetApp, Ownbackup, Spanning and CloudAllly. GRAX claims its differentiation against these rivals is its ability to go beyond backup to providing historical views to data while also giving customers the ability to store, process and leverage their SaaS data both inside Salesforce and outside areas, such as their own data lakes or in other clouds. The archive capabilities will also provide cost savings benefits of moving old data to public clouds, in addition to the performance benefit we mentioned previously.

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Given the essential nature of backup and the fact that Salesforce has retired its Salesforce Data Recovery service earlier this year, we expect more competition to emerge. We would note that other backup providers have had success selling SaaS backup for protecting platforms such as Office 365 such as Veeam, Acronis, Carbonite, Rubrik and Cohesity – and it would not be surprising if any of these players turned their attention to Salesforce and other SaaS opportunities in the future.

SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS

GRAX has an experienced staff who have had success building up startups. The vendors services provide data portability to allow customers to take advantage of hybrid cloud benefits.

WEAKNESSES

The vendor is still in the early stages of its development and needs to expand its market presence. The initial services are focused on Salesforce, with additional platform support planned in future releases.

OPPORTUNITIES

The vendor's platform goes above and beyond backup to deliver additional value for its customers. Tools and services to facilitate compliance and data insight are in high demand for organizations.

THREATS

The backup of SaaS platforms has been underserved so far, although larger players will be looking to take advantage of this opportunity in the future.