

The IBM logo, consisting of the letters 'IBM' in a bold, sans-serif font, with each letter formed by eight horizontal stripes of varying lengths.

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But there is an even greater and perhaps more embarrassing challenge: announcing that the monkey on your back is – Geek alert! – online backgammon.

Like all obsessions, it began innocently enough. Six months ago, there was nothing in my past to suggest that I would develop a weakness for backgammon. I had played the game only twice in my life. And lost.

The problem originated with a well-intentioned Christmas gift of a backgammon board from houseguest. My husband, who used to gamble on backgammon matches as a teenager, taught me to play, and I found there was something enticingly authentic about the game. Unlike chess, a game of skill and prodigious memorization, backgammon depends in large part on skill, but the final outcome is up to the triumph or treachery of the dice.

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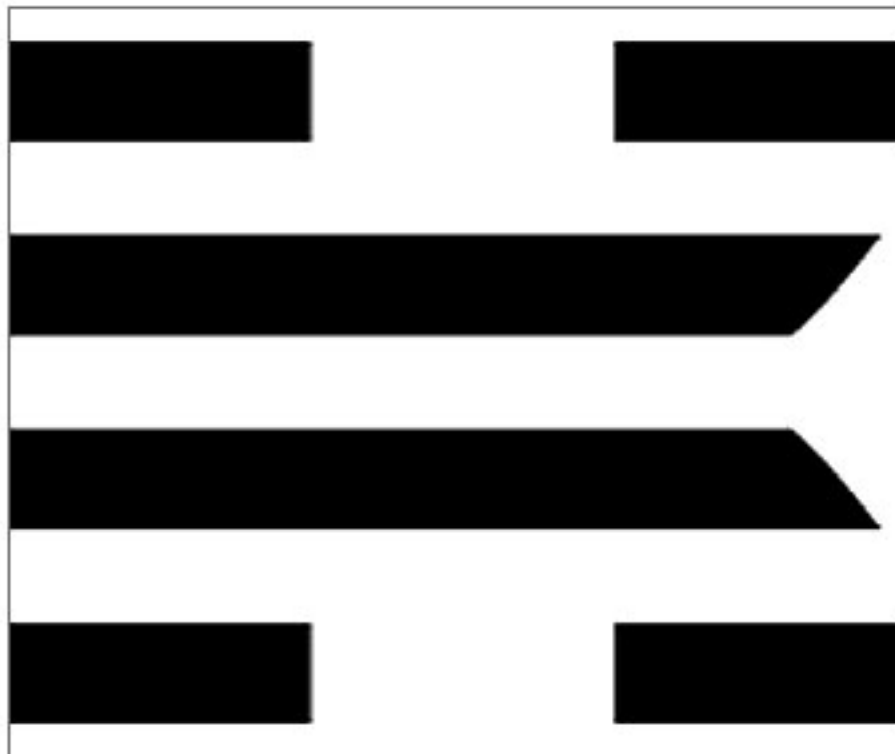


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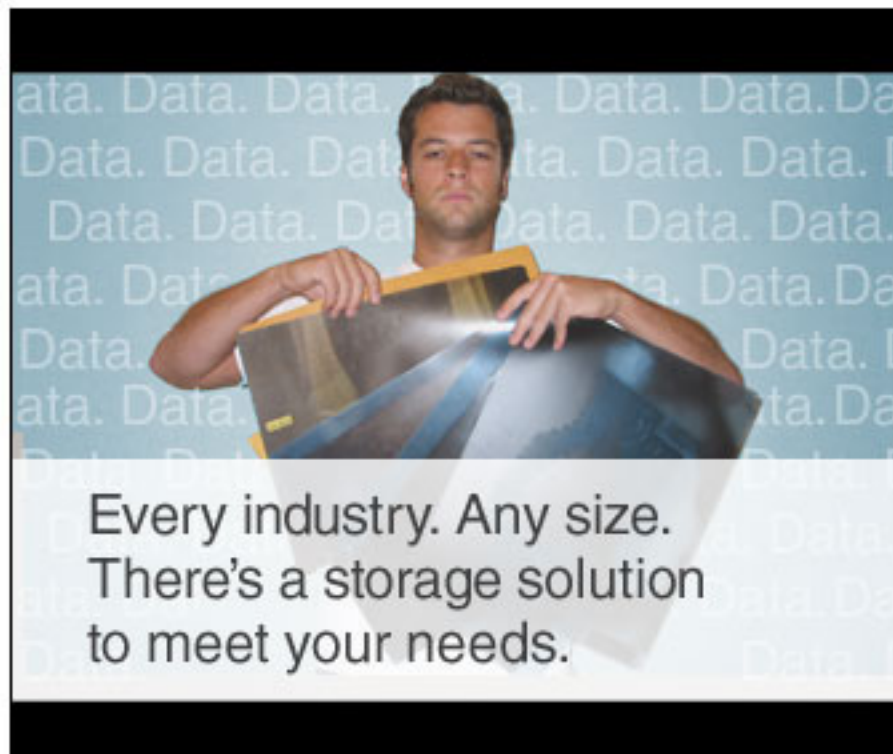


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