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The Whole Is Greater Than the Sum of Its Parts with IG

Enterprises wishing to run a well-oiled machine should consider implementing information governance.

Information governance (IG) programs establish value by eliminating duplication and discovering synergies, taking parts and assembling them into a useful whole. The benefits of an IG program improve operations and offer competitive advantages over less cooperative enterprises. IG extracts greater value from data, enhances compliance and improves security.

The term "information governance" has been much bandied about. A technologist might see it as data governance or content management, an attorney as e-discovery or defensible disposition and a records specialist as best records practices. Information governance is all of these things and more. In its most useful form, it is not a technology, policy, process or tactic: *Information governance is the integrative effectiveness varied stakeholders create when they cooperatively process information and share resources for the good of their organization*.

A single area of interest does not need governance; IT, legal, security, etc. can each manage their information on their own. Governance is about defining relationships. An enterprise requires IG to structure the way information (documents, system date, reports, Tweets, etc.) moves between departments. The power of IG lies in its ability to create harmony and efficiency between departments.

Information governance programs take a holistic view, considering the needs and resources of each stakeholder. IG roots out the redundancy of duplicated and conflicting technologies, processes and policies. It reveals gaps and vulnerabilities. The result is a synergy that makes everything more effective and productive than was possible with information separated among independent groups.

WHAT STANDS IN YOUR WAY?

There are many challenges to overcome in achieving IG success, including:

- **Technical Limitations:** Existing systems and networks might not have the capacity or capability to work with information from the array of stakeholders

- **Perceptual Limitations:** Non-technical stakeholders such as attorneys and records managers might not understand the technical limitations

- **Inconsistent Policies:** Different stakeholders might work under different rules

- **Uncommitted Leadership:** Without strong sponsorship from an organization's leader(s), the traditions of isolation and separate interests are likely to continue

- **Evolving Regulations:** Policy refreshment might not keep up with new rules, especially in the areas of privacy and security

- **Vocabulary:** Different groups often have different words for the same thing, or the same word could mean different things to different stakeholders

More On Vocabulary

The project team must be adept at communication, able to speak to each stakeholder in their own language. For example, the word "archive" means storage of large quantities of data to a technologist, long-term storage of a few records to a records manager and a reference library to an attorney. The team managing the IG implementation must know these differences in vocabulary and use them appropriately with each group, or create an IG glossary to facilitate communication.

Given these challenges, it is no wonder information governance requires commitment, resources and expertise. IG is an important goal with huge rewards. But no one said it was easy.

Fortunately, proven methods are flexible and scalable for implementing information governance. No two organizations' information needs are exactly the same so the applications will differ, but the methods can greatly benefit a broad variety of organizations.

BUILDING AN IG PROGRAM

1 STEP 1: PERFORM A CURRENT-STATE ASSESSMENT

- How big is the organization's universe?

- What works within the organization and what does not?

- What are the organization's communication channels and how well do they work together?

- What resources are available, including technical, monetary and human?

- What is the source of the motivation to change?

- What is the pain point or trigger event?

Create a data map and an inventory of systems. Your current-state assessment should identify whether there is a high-ranking IG champion in the organization and measure the commitment of the stakeholders. Are there any stonewallers who absolutely refuse attempts at change?

A current-state assessment can also include an organization's ability to address outside concerns. Is the entity competitive in the marketplace? Does it extract top value from its data? Is it compliant with regulations? Does it defend against intrusions and theft?

2 STEP 2: DEFINE THE DESIRED STATE

Use the following questions to help you determine the best possible outcome for the IG initiative:

- What would functional information governance look like in the organization?

- Who would participate and who would be left behind?

- Is there a cutoff date for implementation? If so, how much integration can be accomplished in a well-defined time period?

- How does IG contribute to enterprise objectives?

- A well-articulated "desired state" description is essential for many reasons, not least of which is to see whether there will be a positive return on investment. This description also lets you know when you have completed the initial stage of IG.

3 STEP THREE: CREATE A PROJECT PLAN

Having established these bookends, it is time for a project plan. The principles of project management are applicable to implementing information governance but must be utilized in a specific manner to meet the unique requirements of IG.

The IG leader should apply a project model to develop specific, sequential tactics that move the organization from conception to completion using realistic, step-by-step tactics to reach the goal.

PROJECT MODELS

The art of managing an IG project includes matching the right solution model to the organization. Five current process models are detailed below. Usually, all will come into play at some point or other, but one will prove most powerful for an organization's information governance needs and will guide the project.

Structure Model: In some organizations, the stakeholders in IG are islands unto themselves. The departments or groups that must work together for IG may have little to no historical contact, context or lines of communication and may not be motivated to cooperate. A governance structure is an effective model for cases like this.

An effective structure starts with an executive champion, someone influential who can offer both carrots and a big stick to constituents. An accountable power must compel reluctant departments to participate in IG, and that usually requires incentives and consequences.

The executive champion communicates the requirements of IG to the leader of each stakeholder group. These leaders form a high-level steering committee to find policies and strategies that will allow the groups they represent to work together for the benefit of the entire organization. Each stakeholder appoints a functional

Paths to Improved Information Governance

Improvement Model	Use this model when...	Solution
Structure	Groups work in isolation without a forum for cooperation	Clear line of accountability: a unified structure for leadership, policy, creation and implementation
Policy	Departments have different rules	Harmonized policies that serve and apply to all
Technology	Available technology is inappropriate for achieving organizational goals	Identify shared technology needs, then design and implement improvements
Process	Silos of groups and information restrict flow and add redundancy	Effective conduits for information, and work across departments and groups
Change Management	Groups lack a common language and a forum for sharing	Create change management tools, communication channels and a common language across departments

leader, and the group is tasked with identifying needs, finding synergies and implementing the program.

Policy Model: Sometimes there is a great deal of variance between stakeholder policies, or the policies restrict sharing and interoperability. In situations like these, IG emerges when the constituents hammer out policies that apply to and work for all groups.

For example, stakeholders might have different policies on backup information. Legal may keep everything forever. Records might diligently practice quick disposal of backup information. IT could practice hierarchical storage management for backup media. In all likelihood, there is a single policy that would meet operational, legal and regulatory needs, removing a major barrier to synergistic cooperation.

Technology Model: Sometimes the greatest gains can come from improved technology. Hardware and software developers offer profound and sometimes ingenious tools for automating the tasks of information management. IG leaders bear the responsibility of meticulously defining the inefficient situations that beg for automation. Definition in hand, they procure tools that will improve processes, reduce duplication and enable synergies. An added benefit is this is generally more cost-effective than individual departmental solutions.

This procurement requires expertise and understanding, but when a solution is optimally matched to a problematic situation,

superb consequences emerge. Part of information governance is the ability to understand the technological limitations that hinder each IG stakeholder. Identifying, balancing and synthesizing those needs reveal the qualities of a technology solution that will serve all well.

Process Model: Where a workable, hierarchical organizational structure is in place, the proper automation tools are assembled, policies are harmonized and the will to change is strong, the best way to effect IG is by optimizing processes so they all work together. The goal is synchronicity that reduces delays, translations and duplication.

It takes IG structure and policy to make interoperability and coordination long-term goals of an organization. An IG program does not create instant information exchange between disparate departmental systems. However, as departments evolve in a manner guided by a unified enterprise policy that accentuates information governance, improvements incrementally emerge.

Change Management Model: Acceptance and resistance to change vary widely among enterprises and between departmental groups. Some groups embrace new technology while others feel the effort to change outweighs the potential benefit or will bring about job loss. Sometimes individuals or whole groups may perceive a threat in sharing, cooperating and seeking synergies.

In calcified or resistant entities, change management could be the best lead tactic to charting an information governance

program. The form the change management takes is unique to each organization, but promoting the will to change and improve throughout each stakeholder/constituent is essential.

START SMALL WHEN YOU CAN'T GO BIG

Information governance is ideally an enterprise-wide program, but when that is not achievable a subset of stakeholders can still benefit. Advantages will accrue wherever two or more groups find synergies. Even a single department with contrasting internal groups can use the IG principles for major gains and could inspire the larger organization to seek the gains of IG.

At a major international pharmaceutical manufacturer, the legal, IT and records departments worked to establish a common approach to backing up information. This resulted in the defensible disposition of decades of legacy backup tapes. It also established a new policy that backup was for disaster recovery only: Every time a new backup tape was recorded, there was no need to keep the previous one. All the vital information was current, preserved and available.

That policy would not work for all organizations, but in this example it significantly reduced risk and cut many dollars from the storage budget. It also set the basis for cooperation and the means of communication to find other synergistic efficiencies. The leaders of the three groups had laid the foundation for a larger IG program.

PARTS BECOMING WHOLE

Start looking at the ways your enterprise defines the movement of information between departments and how individual departments are managing their information. Where can synergies happen? Where do relationships need to be defined? Where are there efficiencies waiting to happen? Utilizing the steps outlined here, you can begin creating the basis for an information governance program, whether you are going enterprise-wide or starting with just two departments. In either case, you will start with parts that form into a more cohesive whole. ILTA

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