

Information Management Strategy

All too often organisations have a fragmented approach to Information Management, data is duplicated in many places and users are expected to enter the same information many times. Developing an Information Management Strategy is the foundation stone that should be in place before considering cost justifying or implementing EDRMS.

Introduction

We live in a society where information is abundant. Having the ‘right’ information when it is required is essential if your organisation is to carry out its duties in an efficient and effective manner.

The aim of an Information Management Strategy – IMS is to support the work of your organisation by improving the management of the information and enabling a more effective and efficient exchange of information with external bodies.

1 Scope

The IMS document should address issues which the whole organisation has to tackle and to which individual departments and administrative services must contribute.

The specific information systems within departments should not be described in the strategy, as it is an organisation-wide document and covers common issues in the departments. All departments will need to work together and with appropriate partners to achieve the objectives. Recognising at the same time there are specific requirements for information systems, such as those required by individual departments, which will need to be satisfied as well.

2 Audience

The audience for the IMS is Director & Chief Executive, Members of the Directorate, Heads of Department, Senior Officers and staff with information management responsibilities. Strategic Partnerships, suppliers, other stakeholders and public agencies must be made aware of the principles, policies and intentions.

3 Method

The Strategy should ideally be built on existing work and reference to SOCITM (Society of Information Technology Managers) reports and Government guidelines. The IMS document should be produced by a team with officers drawn from each department.

The strategy should be then edited into a more concise form and a separate document was produced to aid communication.

Reasons for Change

4 Managing Information as an Asset

There is a growing movement within business and the public sector to treat information as a key shared asset in the same way as Property or Finance.

Consequently similar issues arise:

- What do we own?
- What condition is it in?
- How can we make best use of it?
- What might be surplus?
- How do we protect it?
- What happens if it is destroyed?

5 Business Focus

Information Management is not an end in itself and must support the business needs of the organisation.

6 Government

There are several major initiatives which the Government have instigated:-

- E-Government
- The drive to greater use of partnerships to deliver services and solve problems.
- Community Strategy and Local Strategic Partnerships.

There are also many different government standards which have to be complied with. Information management has important implications for the success or failure of each of these initiatives.

7 Legal Obligations

There has been a raft of new legislation and reports relevant to the public Sector in the last few years which has placed new obligations on them. There are regulations which require you to provide information within given timescales, to make information more accessible and to guard people's rights. In order to comply we must manage our information effectively, taking into account these new legal requirements. Below is a list of recent legislation which affects some or all organisations:

- FE Strategic Review
- Data Protection Act 1998
- Freedom Of information Act 2000
- Intellectual Property Rights (Copyright)
- Electronic Communications Act
- Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act
- The Electronic Commerce Directive
- Sarbanes Oxley Act
- International Financial Reporting Standards
- Basel II

8 External Inspection and Internal Audit Reviews

It is anticipated that increasing attention will be given to Information Management.

There were three key reviews that should be undertaken:

- Data Protection
- ISO17799 – Information Security
- BIP0008 – Code of Practice for Legal Admissibility of Information Stored Electronically

The outcomes will most likely result in action plans to be implemented.

9 Operational Considerations

There are many operational issues which good information management facilitates:

- Ability to find information easily
- Ability to share information easily both internally and externally
- Accountability, through legally admissible records
- Clear ownership of information
- Consistency of information used
- Corporate memory – what has happened in the past
- Decision making
- Educating people on what information we have
- Identify redundant processes and information
- Knowing what information we already have
- Knowing what our “customers” need
- Lack of space – vast quantities of paper records
- Meeting legal requirements and Government targets
- Partnership working
- Quality of information used
- Reduced costs through removing duplicate information
- Reduction in the risk of losing information and the consequential cost of replacing it
- Removing unnecessary work – less time searching and updating
- What information management training is required

10 Technology

The advances in technology open up new opportunities to manage our information better. Whilst this is likely to involve some initial investment, the potential benefits are more efficient working and/or reduced costs.

Objectives

11 Your Objectives

State your mission and core values these might be:

- Quality of services and a commitment to continuous improvement.
- Enhanced organisational effectiveness and efficiency
- Accessibility to services based on user and stakeholder needs.
- Fairness of treatment for users, customers, staff and the wider community. For instance in order to be fair, you have to have the right information at the right time.

Information Management Objectives

State what they are and when you intend to comply with them – for example

- Compliance with ISO17799 on Information Security by the end of 2005.
- Comply with the government electronic records management guidelines by the end of 2005.
- Compliance with the Freedom of Information Act by January 2005.
- Introduction of information management standards by December 2005.

Vision

Include a statement of your vision this might have something along the following lines:

To deliver accurate, relevant, timely and consistent information to those who need it, and have authorisation to access it, and to do this in a cost-effective manner.

Successful implementation of this strategy would enable the following features by 2005:

- The organisation will be respected by the public for its delivery of services, the majority of queries will be resolved at the first port of call and any follow up is handled efficiently and effectively. This will mean appropriate information available any time of the day or night, by staff in main sites, satellite offices or outreach centres. It will be through a variety of methods, face to face, call centre, web etc. but all relying on the same, consistent, accurate up to date information. The benefits of constant access to information will be cost justified for each system.
- This would be achieved by employees committed to excellent information management. They will be trained in the core capabilities of information management and understand their responsibilities and managers will set a good example to their staff. Information management is explicit in job descriptions and recruitment procedures require this topic to be explored.
- All information will be catalogued and cross referenced for easy access through the Intranet as the single point of entry.
- The organisation will be truly customer focussed and only collect and maintain information to support its objectives. There will be a culture of ruthlessly destroying old, out of date information, but of meticulously preserving information of merit e.g. trends. This means that gaps in information or new requirements will be easily identified and that there is a process in place to address this situation.
- No crisis would prove too difficult for this organisation, as business continuity and disaster recovery plans are embedded in operational life and tested regularly.
- This is an organisation, where performance management and reporting is effortless, with systems designed to collect the right information and pass it to management systems for collation and presentation.
- The culture of this organisation is to be open and share information unless there is a good reason not to do so.
- Employees know there is an IM strategy and how they personally are working towards the aims and objectives.

In summary, we need relevant, accurate timely information from a reputable source which is re-usable. To do this we must manage the lifecycle of information from creation or acquisition to destruction or permanent archive taking due account of its security, storage, distribution and presentation.

Principles

12 Define and Agreed Principles

Information will be captured once as close to the source as possible, and shared as many times as needed: reducing the duplication of keyed input, thus increasing consistency and lessening the cost of both input and maintenance.

Shared information will be registered and controlled: responsibilities for setting standards for data and maintenance of data will be defined and sources of data and relationships between data recorded.

Information will be managed in a secure fashion: ensuring the continuity of operations and minimising the possibility of damage to service provision by limiting the impact of security threats or incidents, whether internal, external, deliberate or accidental.

Information will be accurate and up to date: to support operations and the decision-making process.

Information must be readily accessible to those who need it for operational or business reasons: to enable staff to carry out their duties.

Information must be periodically reviewed: to ascertain current relevance and to determine archival procedures or complete removal. This ensures that old or out-of-date information is not stored unnecessarily or used in the wrong context.

The electronic transmission of information will be promoted where there is a clear business benefit in doing so: to improve efficiency and consistency of information presentation across the Institute.

13 Personal Data

Personal data will only be stored as long as it is done in a way compliant with the Data Protection Act 1998.

14 Funding

Each significant corporate initiative will require its own individual business case. This will be presented to the Directorate, Senior Management Team and Governing Body as appropriate. The case will include the details of the funding arrangements. Investment will be required to implement this strategy, particularly to carry out the information audit, put in place the relevant standards and train staff.

15 Return on Investment

The investment in managing information will not necessarily bring direct savings, but will enable us to:

- Act lawfully
- Meet our 2005 e-government targets
- Improve our responsiveness to requests for information
- Share and exchange information
- Make full use of our information assets

Failure to invest will mean we may be unable to achieve these aims and that if we do they will be more costly than working in a disciplined manner.

16 Training and Development

It will be essential to train people at all levels in the principles of information management, particularly with respect to filing structures, the control of documents and managing their lifecycle. Training will be required in the customer service aspects of delivering information and also on new and existing information management standards.

17 Ownership of Information

Information is a corporate asset. It is not something that “belongs” to an individual or a department. The overriding approach is that subject to permissions, information is accessible and is shared across the organisation between those people who have the right of access. The “ownership” theme will be developed through the Corporate Records Programme, which will identify records and their managers. Reports on progress will be made to the Management Board on a regular basis.

18 First Point of Access to Data

Typically, intranets are being seen as making an important contribution to both the management of information and making the information accessible. Management must commit to the concept of Intranet as the first point of access to Institute data. To be successful, voluntary consensus will not be enough. Progress will be reported to the Directorate on a regular basis

Responsibility and Accountability

You should create an Information Management Group (IMG) to bring together all aspects of information management and with the specific purpose of :

- Developing information strategies, policies, plans and procedures,
- Providing best practice and standards on information management
- Coordinating implementation of strategies
- Identifying the current information assets and analysing gaps
- Setting up an information guardianship programme
- Defining classification regimes
- Collating common themes from departmental business plans
- Providing methods and tools to manage business processes better
- Setting and monitoring information performance measures
- Identifying training needs
- Providing support to departments
- Operationally managing corporate aspects of information e.g. Data protection, foi and security

Other Aspect to Consider in your IM Strategy are:

- **Priority Areas**
 - Records Management
 - Standards
 - Security
- **Stakeholders and Their Requirements**
 - Partnerships
 - Information Requirements
- **Communication and Presentation**
- **Organisation**
 - Generating an information culture
 - Staff Development
 - Specialist Information Groups
- **Performance In Managing Information**
 - Developing the Action Plan
- **Risk**
- **Educational and Awareness Programmes**

Summary

Corporate Information Management has not been a core tenet of most organisations. This position is rapidly changing as organisations are confronted with compliance and regulatory demands and/or e-government targets all demanding more effective and efficient access to information. The result is organisations have been jolted into reviewing their information practices realising they are suffering

from information paralysis as information bases continue to grow unchecked resulting in information overload and poor quality of data. Morgan Stanley being fined \$10 million for failing to keep e-mails relevant to case brought against them is just one of many high profile examples of poor information management.

Organisations are acknowledging they need to put in place corporate information management policies and practices. Information Managers are being appointed at senior levels in the organisation and not reporting through IT but to the corporate head. Records Management has become a core competence and not a basement function and applied across the organisation. This is supported by the wide adoption across Europe of the European Commission's MoReq – "Model requirement for the management of electronic records" in defining an organisation's Information and Content Management system requirements. Information Management is becoming acknowledged as a core part of an organisation's business strategy.

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