Information Governance
Tips from the Trenches
SHATTER SILOS

In the world of IG, silos and one-off projects simply will not work. Break down the walls between various departments that handle information. Demonstrate how a more coordinated effort to handle information adds value.

CONSIDER AN OUTSIDE EXPERT TO GET STARTED

IG efforts need to start somewhere. An outside consultant can spark IG adoption by assessing the situation at your organization and mapping out a preliminary plan.
USE OUTSIDE IG EXPERTISE
Using a consultant can help bring new perspectives on old problems and can jump start an IG project or program. If your IG efforts are stuck, consider bringing in outside help to get you started. Consultants are sometimes a way to effectively supplement your internal knowledge base.

CREATE A SENIOR IG ROLE
The lack of a person with the knowledge and authority to tie an organization’s IG program into an operational whole can lead to its failure. Elevate IG authority to the C-suite with the creation of an IG-specific role, like the CIGO.

AUTOMATE PROCESSES
The fewer burdens on end users, the more likely that your IG efforts will be supported and compliance achieved. Automate as many processes as possible to reduce workloads.

EMBRACE INNOVATIVE APPROACHES
Changing behavior is a major challenge when it comes to implementing an IG project or program. Develop innovative approaches to increase end-user awareness of the costs of their behavior. Alternatively, develop rewards systems to encourage compliance.

BE PROACTIVE
Responding to crises and having a reactive posture may advance IG in some respects, but it may also take your program in a direction you did not plan. In business, crises are often predictable, and it is essential they are avoided if possible. Look to your industry and learn from others’ experience. Use that knowledge to shift to a proactive posture.

EDUCATE ALL STAKEHOLDERS
All employees need to be on the same page. Drafting company-specific language and encouraging the awareness of “information intelligence” will help ensure compliance.

STRIKE THE RIGHT BALANCE
It is important to find the optimal level of granularity on IG policies and procedures. Simplify rules where possible but not to the extent that you lose valuable information. IG is about handling information better—something you will not achieve when important details are lost. Consider the impact of lost details when refining existing rules and drafting new ones.
**SHOWCASE IG’S VALUE**

Colleagues have competing priorities. Some may be too busy to join yet another committee, but coworkers can be convinced to take on new projects if they see the value in them. They are only too busy to take on projects that promise little or no return. Show stakeholders the value IG adds. If you do run into people who truly have too much on their plates at a given point, consider someone else from that person’s team. Do not let one person’s busy schedule thwart progress.

**BUILD WITH IG**

It is much harder to implement IG once a project commences. Consider IG at the beginning of every project to avoid hurdles down the road.

**TECHNOLOGY IS VERSATILE**

Technology adopted to address one problem can be leveraged for other purposes. This versatility can be helpful in selling your IG efforts. The true promise of IG is not just about minimizing costs and risks. It is also about maximizing the value of information.

**DO NOT LET DRIVERS BLINDLY STEER YOU**

Litigation, IT projects, and other IG drivers can help push IG efforts forward. But they can also compete with one another and take you in a direction you do not want to go. Use these drivers to further initiatives that you have thought through carefully. Use them to further your company’s objectives rather than letting them dictate where you end up.
IDENTIFY SHORT- AND LONG-RANGE GOALS

An effective IG program addresses both short-term and long-term IG issues. Make sure your IG program does not become so focused on immediate projects that you neglect long-term goals. At the same time, you should not get lost in long-range goals and fail to demonstrate immediate value. A strong IG program balances both approaches.

THE POWER OF COORDINATION

Most IG issues cannot be resolved without coordinating various information-related activities. Information is not any one functional area’s asset or problem. It is everyone’s. Start thinking about your organization’s information as belonging to the organization—not to any single department. IG solutions—those that maximize the value and minimize the risks and cost of information—can only be fully realized by coordinating how information is handled across functional areas.

DO NOT WAIT FOR RESOURCES

You may not always have the right resources and best tools to tackle a particular IG issue. Work with what you have to move IG forward. You can still make measurable improvements by implementing thorough processes with a strong team. Fewer resources at the moment may also serve as a blessing in disguise. You will be able to make a better case for the additional resources and right tools when the time comes.
FOCUS ON GARNERING SUPPORT

It is possible to develop a very effective, thorough approach to IG projects if you have enough support at your organization. When initiating an IG project, in addition to getting key stakeholders involved, build trust by demonstrating that you are a source of reliable and relevant information. Adopt a solutions-oriented, collaborative approach to encourage stakeholder buy-in.

DO YOUR DUE DILIGENCE

The easiest way to discourage stakeholders is by wasting their time. By doing your due diligence before presenting new IG initiatives, you will be able to relay information in a clear and concise way—something that will not go unnoticed.

COURT EXECUTIVES

The lack of executive sponsorship can stall an IG program. Initiate contact with potential executive sponsors for your efforts right away. If you do not find an existing supporter, show leadership that IG adds value.

DEMONSTRATE VALUE

Making the business case for IG is always important, but it is especially so when you do not have executive sponsorship. Identify short-term, small projects with measurable results to help build support.

BE PROACTIVE

You will not always have immediate, formal support for setting up an IG steering committee. Don’t let that deter you. Be proactive even if you do not have the right people on board just yet. Spend time building relationships with key players in the various facets of IG. Those relationships will form a solid foundation for an effective steering committee.
Operational Efficiency through Consistency

A strong argument for an enterprise-wide, global approach to IG is not just improved compliance, but also improved operational efficiency. Disparate approaches add friction to the business process.
**Metrics are Critical**

IG programs cannot be based on tradition, fear, or superstition. Like other areas of the business, data insight is essential. Create and track metrics to help you understand your goals and progress. Training metrics are a good place to start.

**Bringing Maturity to IG Facets**

For an IG program to succeed, key facets of IG must exist and be mature at your organization. If facets are missing or immature, train, hire, or seek outside guidance to address the deficiency.

**Understand What Everyone Wants**

Building support for a given project can take time, and various constituencies within a company may value different selling points of an initiative. Try to address the concerns of each constituency from their perspectives and give them time to prepare for changes. The hard, abrupt sell can sometimes face resistance and get stuck.
GET CREATIVE WITH FUNDING
You cannot get IG work done if you cannot pay for it. Consider assessing an IG “tax” to spread the cost of IG to those parts of the organization that are creating IG issues or reaping its benefits. Building the cost in upfront also ensures that the work will be funded and get done.

AUTOMATE, AUTOMATE, AUTOMATE
It can be difficult and costly to get end users to consistently apply IG policies and procedures. Explore technologies that can help you automate as many processes as possible.

MITIGATE FUTURE RISKS
Selling a program on future risk can be difficult if the threat seems distant—or altogether unlikely. To successfully make the case for IG, consider using mock scenarios to test your program’s strengths or demonstrate its weaknesses. Calculating the costs of inaction can also help. Use comparable industry examples to estimate the expenses your organization might incur.
AN IG COUNCIL IS JUST A START
A well-staffed IG steering committee with representations across the various facets of IG is essential to an effective, comprehensive program—but it is not enough. Consider C-suite involvement with IG. When there are competing priorities at a company, this level of involvement may be necessary to marshal resources toward much needed IG efforts.

EXPAND YOUR HORIZONS
Various functional areas of IG, or facets, become entrenched (or “siloed”) in their own perspectives with respect to how information is handled. To avoid a similar fate, try to think outside the box limited to your role with respect to IG. See how what you are doing fits within the larger picture and encourage other stakeholders to do so as well. Remember, shattering silos is easier said than done, which is why forming an IG steering committee is critical.

DO NOT FORGET THE VALUE SIDE
It is easy for different IG facets to become entrenched in a risk perspective. This limits their ability to realize the value side of IG. Be aware that the potential to become entrenched exists and ask yourself and your IG team if you have. Including people from both perspectives on IG steering committees and other teams is essential to ensuring you do not lose sight of the big picture. Successful IG programs consider both perspectives.
LOCATION MATTERS

Some departments have better relationships with relevant groups than others, so where IG actually sits in an organization is important. Consider shifting your reporting structure to optimize existing relationships and to facilitate the maximum effectiveness of an IG program.

TITLES MATTER

What you call a role can affect its perception. Consider changing the title for an IG role to reflect both its current and desired function. For example, end users are most likely to listen to IG directives coming from the C-suite.
**BE OPPORTUNISTIC**

Major shifts in IT environments, including the unstoppable move to the cloud, create fabulous opportunities to build IG into the business. Use technology rollouts and migrations as opportunities to review existing IG policies and practices and to implement new ones. Taking advantage of existing transitions like these can avoid working against your business process and instead work within it.

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**SELLING IG**

Tom effectively used “a combination of the cost of excess data, litigation outcomes that were not helped by the condition of our data, cognizance by senior leadership of the cause-and-effect relationship between excess data and cost and/or disorganized data and bad results,” to sell IG at his organization. You should do the same.

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**THE POWER OF C-SUITE BUY-IN**

Executive-level support for IG is one of the most effective ways to move projects forward. Such support is virtually essential for an IG program to succeed. Focus on selling executives on the merits of your IG efforts. You will still have to build support from the ground up, but any program—even those with buy-in at the ground level—will likely fail without executive sponsorship.

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**MEASURE METRICS**

Great IG policies and procedures are useless if people do not follow them. Invest in compliance monitoring capabilities. The results of the monitoring can be paired with rewards and penalties, as appropriate, to increase compliance.
**EFFECTIVENESS OF SIMPLE STRATEGIES**

IG is not about the proliferation of new rules and increasing their complexity. It is about governing information better. Sometimes the most effective IG strategy is simplifying and reducing existing rules. This makes end-user compliance easier.

**DO NOT FORGET “SOFT” BENEFITS**

The measurement of IG success should include soft benefits. While your IG program must include metrics and other “hard” measures of success, “soft” ones should also be considered. Customer satisfaction, for example, can be more important in selling stakeholders on the value of IG. Have both measures of success at your disposal when you present your case for any IG project or initiative.

**BE PREPARED AND OPPORTUNISTIC**

There are some natural drivers that can make the business case for IG (e.g., regulation, litigation, and investigations). Some of these drivers can sideswipe a company if it is unprepared. So look at your industry and learn from the experiences of similarly situated organizations. Do not be caught off guard.
Endnotes

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