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SEEING PAST THE BEND: HUMAN RESOURCE LEADERS AND INFORMATION GOVERNANCE

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Human Resource leaders are often dragged into solving urgent, short-term issues. This is called "triaging" and it comes with the territory. Yet HR leaders also have to look ahead. They need to be able to see around the bend and anticipate what's coming next.

As it happens, one of the biggest issues lurking on the horizon is the need for Information Governance. This white paper helps HR leaders understand what Information Governance is and why it matters. The paper likewise offers guidance on how best to deal with information management.

DATA, DATA EVERYWHERE

Information Governance can be an exciting prospect when you begin to see how it can connect a wide range of seemingly unrelated HR issues. Consider the following diverse topics that come across an HR leader's desk:

> **Social media:** Companies often want to take advantage of social media and simultaneously rein it in. Business leaders constantly ask HR, "What do you think our social media information policy should be?"

> **Shared services:** In organizations with multiple locations, leaders often want HR to create or improve upon shared services in order to lower costs and enhance service quality.

> **Dusty rows of file cabinets:** In many cases, expensive office real estate may be filled with rows of HR filing cabinets. Leaders frequently feel that paper is out of date and inefficient, but they also understand that it won't go away on its own. The effective management of this real estate then often falls to the HR department.

> **Difficulty of accessing information:** HR teams often seem to spend a painful amount of time looking for information that should, in reality, be immediately at their fingertips.

> **Privacy and data security concerns:** HR departments frequently hold a lot of sensitive data, and there are legal, moral and reputational reasons to ensure that private data stays private. Still, this type of insurance isn't easily implemented.

> **New HR technology:** In many instances, there is a constant stream of new HR technologies and an endless series of updates to existing software that create data challenges for HR leaders.

You may notice a common thread among these issues: they all deal with data and information. This insight—namely, that the HR function and its overall organization are smothered by a crazy quilt of information management problems—has naturally led to the creation of a new discipline known as Information Governance (IG). As suggested above, IG can address each of the issues listed and aims to help build the policies, processes and technologies that will provide an organization with solid control over all of its data.

> "IG ALLOWS BUSINESSES TO REALIZE THE TRUE VALUE OF THE DATA AND THEREFORE A HEALTHIER BOTTOM LINE."
>
> IGI BENCHMARK REPORT 2015

WHAT INFORMATION GOVERNANCE DOES

The goal of IG is, quite simply, to get information under control. The state of being "under control" is defined as having an organization that is on top of a variety of business elements. These include:

> Data quality: In an effective IG program data should always be correct and up-to-date.

> Single source of truth: When dealing with IG, all personnel should agree on which definition of a specific piece of data is correct. For example, finance may calculate a head count differently from HR, but there needs to be an agreement on the standard definition of such data. Otherwise, someone's job title may be labelled differently within different respective HR systems. In addition, there should also be a company-wide understanding as to which HR system is the appropriate system of record.

> Compliance: Appropriate data management complies with the relevant laws of all jurisdictions in which an organization operates, while also adhering to corporate values and policies.

> Discovery: Within an IG program, information may be subject to the legal requirement of discovery. In the event of a legal challenge, an organization may be required to produce certain documents, and the company information systems need to support these types of reviews.

> Auditability: IG processes should be in place so that a qualified third party can audit company data and assure it is correct.

> Search-ability: With an IG program, data should be easily accessible whenever and wherever it is needed.

> Disposal: At a certain point, some records can and should be destroyed. In such cases, an organization needs reliable IG programs for disposing of the correct documents at the correct time.

> Risk management: Data is the lifeblood of HR. An IG program should therefore always assess and mitigate risks such as hurricanes and other natural disasters.

When the goals of Information Governance are broken down this way, you may experience two disparate reactions. One is that there is nothing particularly difficult to understand when confronting IG. In fact, the process seems rather obvious. The second is that the list of issues inherent in building an IG framework and program is, nonetheless, quite long, and every single element is important yet potentially very complicated.

Still, Information Governance is an essential force and, with the appropriate help, its complexities can be easily and,thoroughly picked apart.

THE PROLIFERATION OF MEDIA

One vivid demonstration of the complexity of Information Governance is the proliferation of media. In previous years, businesses just had paper documents. Now organizations have paper documents, databases, word processing files, audio in multiple formats, video, photos, PDFs and data in social media. Companies therefore need comprehensive structures that will keep information "under control," irrespective of media format.

HOW INFORMATION GOVERNANCE GETS DATA UNDER CONTROL

Information Governance has many intricate details. However, you can start your IG plan by focusing on two overarching components:

> A governing council: Develop a group with the authority and breadth of expertise to make decisions on how information should be managed.

> Accountability and authority: Ensure that your organization is abundantly clear about who is responsible for different elements of data and who has the authority to access, change or dispose of such data. Ask questions such as: "Who has the authority to update an employee's address in the HRIS?"

An example of the composition of an IG council is shown in Figure 1. It is important to note that the council must have the support of top management, as the council makes vital decisions that affect the entire enterprise. These decisions can't happen without executive encouragement. It's likewise essential to consider the wide range of skills represented by the council. IG is a multifaceted topic and requires a variety of business perspectives to stay afloat.
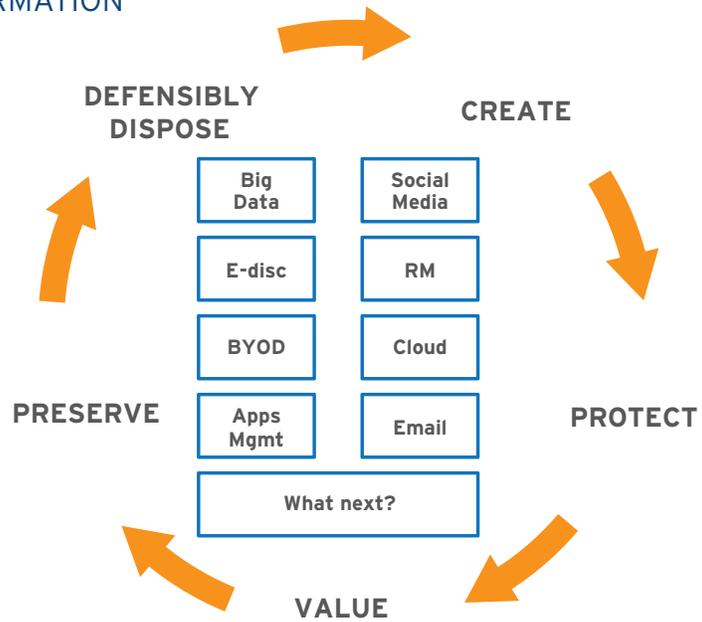
FIGURE 1: THE INFORMATION GOVERNANCE COUNCIL

With a council in development, accountability and authority can also be addressed. These twin components can best be understood in terms of the lifecycle of information (Figure 2). At each stage, it should be obvious as to who is responsible for data and who has the authority to access, change or delete the data. Once accountability is established, the "process owner" can ensure that relevant policies and processes are in place, garnering support from the council as needed.

SENIOR LEADERSHIP ADVOCATE

Data Officer/
Information
Officer

Human Resources   Lines of Business   Compliance/Audit   Security/Risk   Information Technology   Legal   RIM

COUNCIL MEMBERS

FIGURE 2: THE LIFECYCLE OF INFORMATION

There are, of course, further details that also need to be attended. There are legal questions, technology questions and process questions to consider. Yet, once you get these two main pillars in place (i.e., once you set up a council and apply a system of clear accountabilities), the stage is set to deal with these added details as they arise.

DEFENSIBLY DISPOSE

CREATE

Big Data	Social Media
E-disc	RM
BYOD	Cloud
Apps Mgmt	Email

What next?

PRESERVE

PROTECT

VALUE

WHAT PAYOFFS TO EXPECT

No matter how you choose to look at it, Information Governance costs money. This is especially true when considering the time executives need to devote to setting up policies and processes. Yet the payoff is substantial, particularly among these four main areas:

> Confidence in compliance and reduced risk: Good IG breeds confidence in that it ensures compliance with laws and policies, accurately addresses privacy issues and mitigates the risk of data disasters.

> Speed of access: IG provides staff and employees with the information they need, when they need it, without undue searching and with greater self-service.

> Reduced costs: IG ultimately reduces costs by eliminating unnecessary paper, streamlining processes and saving time by removing the need for checking or reconciling data across different sources.

> Leveraging business value: IG extracts the greatest possible value from any and all company information. A comprehensive IG program allows pieces of information to be used as strategic business assets.

Be sure not to overlook this last point. When it comes to IG, it's easy to get absorbed in legal and compliance issues. This is completely understandable, but omits the positive impact of IG.

Remember that even simple things, such as having easy access to employee profiles or having the ability to quickly locate relevant documents, can lead to better business decisions. Such positive outcomes may be difficult to measure, but they will likely be the source of much added value.

THE ROLE OF HR

One glimpse at the governing council structure shows that IG extends well beyond the HR department. Indeed, different parts of an organization will constantly contribute to and interact with information (Figure 3). Each group will also use information in different ways and therefore gauge value differently. As a result, IG works best when the information silos are broken down and considered as follows:

FIGURE 3: MANY DEPARTMENTS HAVE A STAKE IN INFORMATION GOVERNANCE

Yet, despite all of this, it's essential to note that HR probably handles more data than any other department. What's more, much of HR's information is usually highly sensitive. HR leaders therefore need to play a prominent role in building and establishing the governance council and implementing its policies. In addition, though Information Governance is an enterprise-wide issue, HR can still take action on its own to improve IG within HR. In many ways, HR represents a microcosm of the enterprise macrocosm. As a result, HR should be an integral part of enterprise-wide governance but should also take the lead in getting control of its own HR-specific data.

COMPLIANCE
How can we ensure we meet regulatory requirement?

LEGAL
How long should we hold onto the information to meet our legal requirements and for discovery?

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
Can we save cost by removing unnecessary files from servers?

INFORMATION PRIVACY & SECURITY
What are the risks to our customers' privacy for keeping the information?

BUSINESS UNIT (ORIGINATOR)
How long can we use the information for analysis?

HUMAN RESOURCES
Can we provide greater employee self-service?

WHAT YOU CAN DO TODAY

It's a good idea to get the ball rolling on IG, even if you haven't allocated time or money for a full-scale program. Here are examples of things you can do right now to get your IG plan off the ground:

> Complete small pilot tests on accountabilities. You can read a dozen white papers on IG, but you still won't get a solid feel for it until you try it for yourself. All the abstract concepts will spring to life when you deal with exclusive data within your own organization. We recommend starting small because even small data elements can involve messy IG challenges. One possible test case is job titles. Try mapping the process of how job titles are created, stored, archived and disposed of. Ask yourself: Where does the data exist in the system? Who owns the process? Who has the authority to make changes to the data? Who needs access to the information? How is it used? You can conduct a similar test case on pay scales, on performance appraisals or on assessments of job candidates. Whichever test case you choose, you will most likely walk away with a greater understanding of what IG really is and have a better sense of where it gets complicated and how good your current processes are.

> Explore paper reduction. Businesses can no longer afford to manage themselves at the slow speed of paper. Today, there are many areas in which HR can reduce paper by scanning and/or digitizing. Digitization, if done correctly, can save money and improve data control. Keep in mind, however, that the real issue at hand is not the physical act of scanning a document; the greater problem is the decision-making process surrounding what kind of metadata to capture so that documents can be found whenever they are needed. An experienced information management partner with imaging and workflow expertise can help you objectively evaluate your systems and recommend ways to streamline, such as scanning information to speed processing with greater automation. A third-party vendor can also help identify some informational "low-hanging fruit" that can allow for a quick payoff. Finally, a third-party partner can provide insight into how best to govern the transition from paper to digital documents.

CREATE REAL VALUE FOR ONE OR MORE BUSINESSES AND THEN HAVE THEM BE YOUR SPOKESPERSON.

> Connect to others with an interest in IG. Find out what other departments are doing, planning to do or hoping to do with regard to their IG programs. Make sure HR is plugged into any plans for an enterprise-wide IG initiative. You're bound to discover that managers across the organization have their own struggles with data, but it's also likely that you'll uncover a good deal of experience and expertise to draw from. The old saying, "if only we knew what we knew," holds true here; there will undoubtedly be personnel in your organization that can help your efforts around governance, but, since they are unlikely to be in one place, you will have to search to find the right people. little to no cost.

SEEING AHEAD

HR has always managed all types of information across all manner of formats: paper, documents on personal computers, data in an HRIS or data in other HR softwares... and the list goes on. Yet the volume and complexity of data has exploded to the point that businesses can no longer manage information in a piecemeal fashion.

As a result, the field of IG has come into prominence. HR departments and their leaders should take action now, both in terms of alignment with enterprise-level IG policies and in terms of getting their HR houses in order. For most HR leaders, this is a new area. The focus, therefore, should be on learning.

Get started by mapping key HR processes, identifying associated information assets, and establishing ownership of both the assets and the processes. Run some tests on digitization, explore IG test cases and build connections to other departments tackling similar problems.

Leaders are expected to teach themselves the latest strategies and prepare for what's coming. In today's business environment, IG is what's coming. Acquire as much knowledge as you can and start preparing now.

SIGNATURES ARE NOT THE BARRIER THEY ONCE WERE

Often it seems the only reason a piece of paper exists is that someone needs a signature that's written on it. Yet in fact, in most countries, electronic signatures are entirely valid. Generally, if you can eliminate the creation of a piece of paper, you can ensure that the management of information is less difficult and less costly. When handling documents in a particular country, you should seek legal advice on how to use e-signatures. However, the management lessons to be learned are that e-signatures should be acceptable for most of your needs and that choosing the e-signature route will reduce the paper burden.

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