



MetaGovernance®

Sustainable Information Governance:

Framing the new paradigm

An Information Governance Solutions whitepaper
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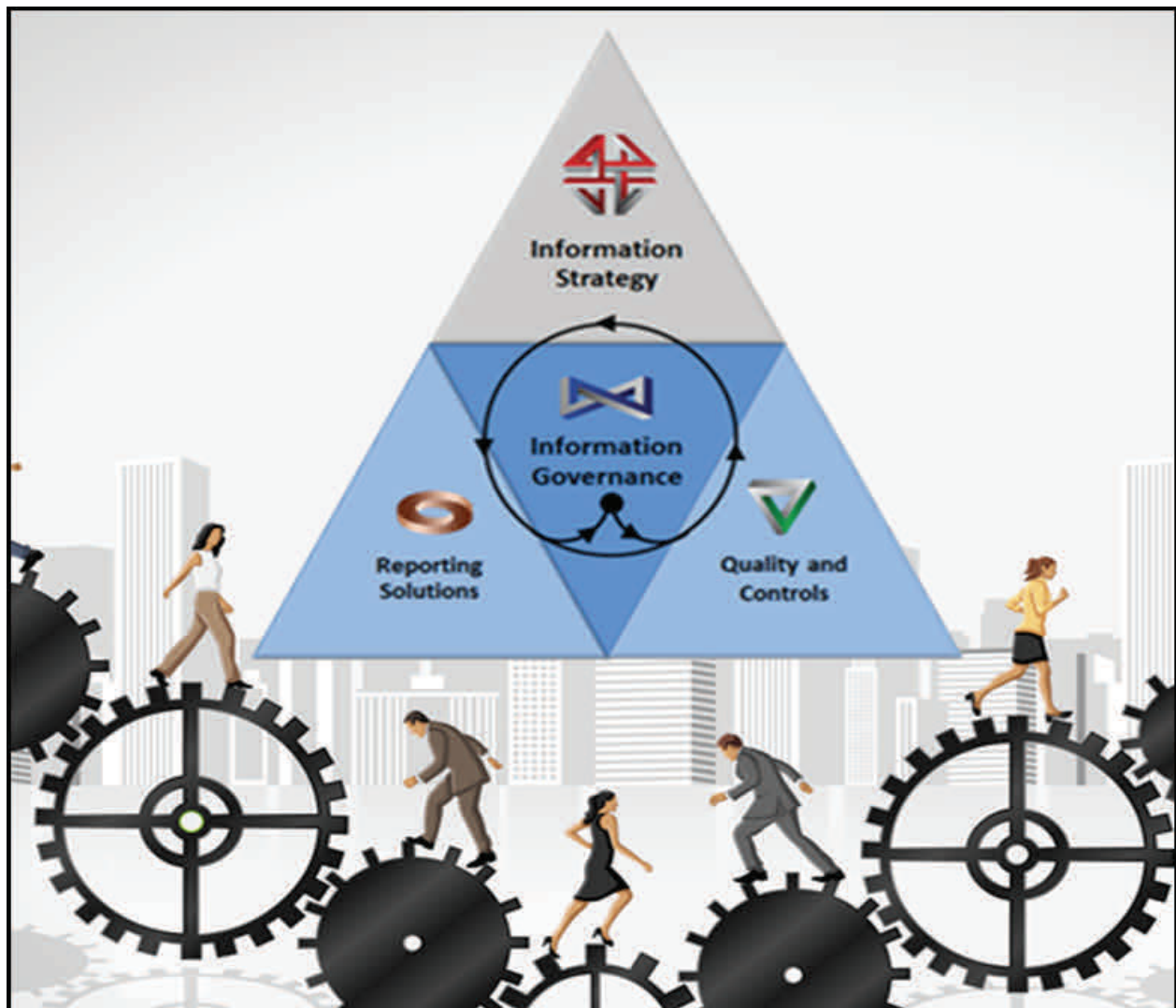
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Sustainable Information Governance

PREMISE

The umbrella of Information Governance continues to broaden its coverage. Previously siloed data and information management disciplines are now being considered as appropriate parts of its domain. However, the true potential of information governance will not be realized merely through expanding the *breadth* of its coverage. This potential will be realized when information governance becomes the centerpiece in a holistic approach to information management. With this new approach, information governance becomes linked with corporate strategy bringing sustainability and a new level of relevance to the discipline. Information governance transforms into a game changer for the organization.



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BACKGROUND

Information governance developed from the “recognition that multiple overlapping disciplines were needed to address today’s information management challenges in an increasingly regulated and litigated business environment.” As such, “information governance is a subset of corporate governance, and includes key concepts from records management, content management, IT and data governance, information security, data privacy, risk management, litigation readiness, regulatory compliance, long-term digital preservation, and business intelligence.” (Smallwood 2014, page 5) This definition adds significant breadth to the concept of information governance as combining a collection of previously isolated information management disciplines.

Information Governance can also trace its roots back to data governance, the discipline of managing the decision making processes related to an organization’s data. Bringing the breadth of scope implied in the term information governance along with the decision rights implicit in data governance provides for a comprehensive perspective that can go a long way to frame the process for managing the information assets of an organization.

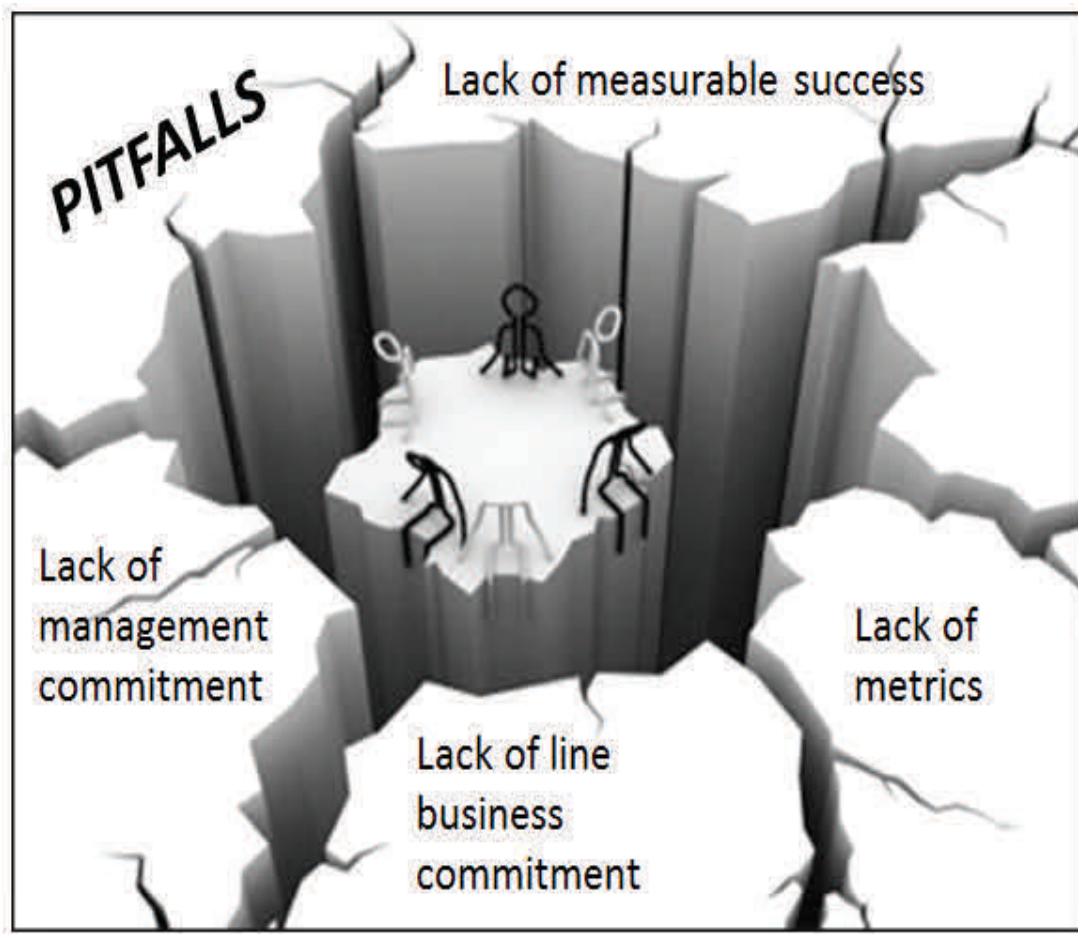


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BACKGROUND (continued)

However, expanded breadth and scope does not necessarily translate into higher levels of success within organizations. The pitfalls that have been spelled out by industry pundits are still looming in the path to successful implementations. The list of pitfalls regularly include (1) level of management commitment, (2) level of line business commitment, (3) lack of metrics, and (4) lack of demonstrated success. (Smith, 2009)

When information governance initiatives hit these obstacles, they often slowly fade away or are relegated to handling information and data housekeeping issues and cleanup operations for an organization.



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THE MISSING PIECES

According to the definition provided by the Association of Record Managers and Administrators, information governance is a “strategic framework composed of standards, processes, roles, and metrics that hold organizations and individuals responsible to create, organize, secure, maintain, use, and dispose of information in ways that align with and contribute to the organization’s goals.” (ARMA, 2012)

Do most programs measure up to this standard? Comparing the list of pitfalls to the definition provided by the Association would suggest that they don’t.

In particular, the following elements seem to be lacking:

1. Metrics that fully reveal the current state of the information architecture.
2. A strategic focus evolving out of information about the current state (item 1) and connecting to the overall plans and strategies of the organization.
3. Appropriate scaling so that tangible results can be delivered on a more frequent basis.
4. Consistent ability to deliver results once a strategy has been defined.
5. A proven methodology that incorporates elements 1 – 4 into a repeatable pattern that becomes sustainable for the organization.



Let’s look in more detail at this field-tested, technology-driven methodology that delivers holistic, sustainable information governance for an organization.

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APPROPRIATE SCALING

Information governance will invariably start with an assessment of the data and information landscape of the organization. This assessment needs to be scaled appropriately to effectively engage the appropriately sized team of business leaders, business subject matter experts, governance and technical specialists required to build momentum and drive to results. The concept of appropriate scaling borrows from “agile” software development methodologies in terms of (1) frequent collaborations (2) delivering measurable results on a subset of the whole (3) responding to changes based on discoveries made along the way.

Grouping of information into subject areas for an appropriately scaled domain, determining known copies and the “systems of record”, and ultimately assigning ownership are some of the initial activities that keep the team engaged for a period of what should not exceed four to six weeks, if the domain has been scoped appropriately. Using agile concepts, scope adjustments should be made on an ongoing basis to continue to drive toward completion of this phase in a set time period.



Starting at the information architecture level and drilling to the data architecture will provide important insights into who uses the data and where that use is appropriate in terms of data sources, access, etc.

At this point we can begin to implement some of the key elements of an information governance program. Decision rights and due diligence around security, access, and retention at both the logical information level and data level can be implemented.

But often for the governance professional and the organization as a whole, the question becomes, what more can we do with this information? Have we delivered on the full promise of information governance? Can we leverage the information so meticulously gathered to do more than set organizational procedures and assign decision rights?

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DATA QUALITY MEASURES

In order to extend information governance to the next level, the information and data architecture should now be linked to reconciliation controls that can measure the quality of an organization's key pieces of data, not as a one-off exercise, but on an ongoing basis. Ongoing testing of key control points in the data architecture will begin to reveal a picture of the quality of the information assets within the subject area domain.

Automated tools that do not require extensive IT resources in this domain become essential, given the typical constraints placed on IT resources. Using technology to leverage the information already gathered in the initial information governance phase simplifies the process. Feedback to stakeholders on the quality of the data on which they are relying provides a further level of meaningful business engagement to those parties that have been involved in the initial information governance process. Requiring follow up on issues that are raised with the data quality tools (incident management) makes the term "governance" a real and ongoing process rather than just a buzzword.

The question will then naturally arise, what should we do about our information problems, now that they are staring at us in RED and YELLOW on our reconciliations reports?

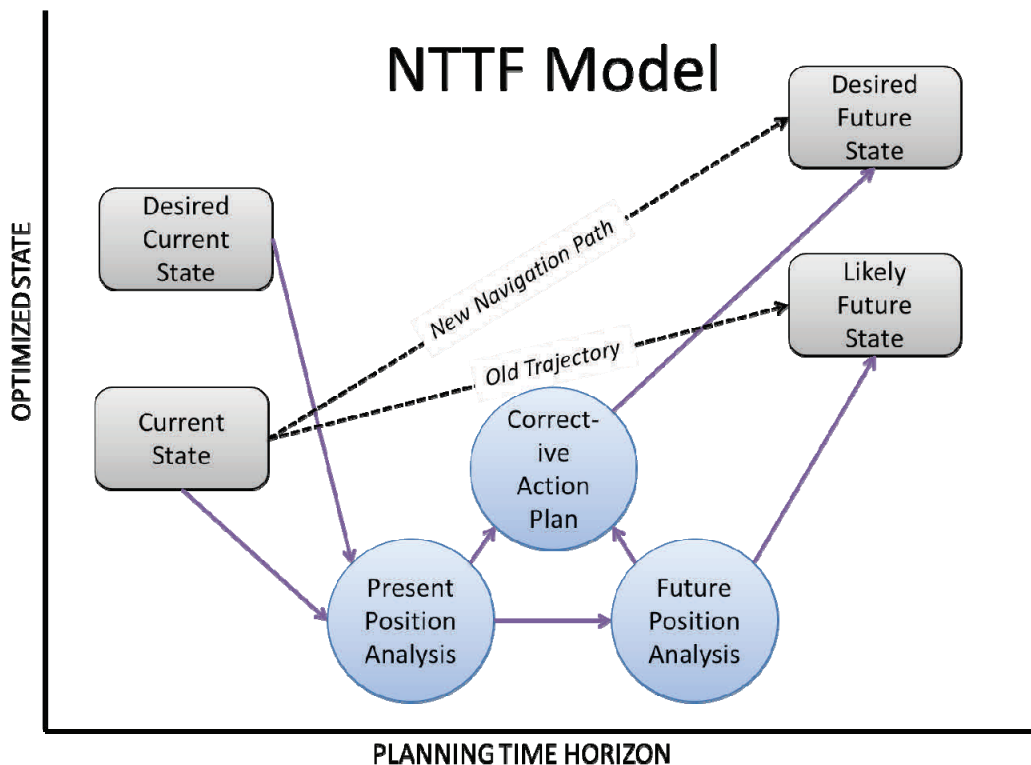


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INFORMATION STRATEGY

Developing a strategy requires methodology as well. The first prerequisite to envisioning a desired future state is to understand in detail the current state. The initial landscape defined during the information governance stage and the subsequent implementation of reconciliation controls provide the insight to know in detail the structure and quality of the current state.

The question then arises around defining a strategy. What is our desired future state? If we do nothing, what are the potential future costs of maintaining the current state? What is an ideal future state that fully addresses the organization's tactical needs and strategic direction? What are the options that we can implement within budget and manpower constraints? Navigation to the future (NTTF) modeling can provide a roadmap through this stage of the information governance process.



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REPORTING SOLUTIONS

The newly defined strategy will often define changes to the information architecture of the organization. These strategies will have been scaled to meet the inevitable cost and manpower constraints, and will have weighed the risk that reporting solutions often do not meet expectations. Even with those risks and constraints in mind, information governance initiatives often struggle with implementation of changes. Failed data warehouses, and significant cost overruns on master data management strategy implementation are well known in the industry. How can organizations reduce the risks and drive out the costs in building reporting solutions to address the known problems in the current state and successfully navigate to the planned future state?

Once again, a set of automated technologies, templates, and proven methodologies can mitigate these risks and reduce the costs. Since the solution has already been “scaled / right sized” based on the initial implementation of agile information governance, we will not have the risks of trying to “boil the ocean” that often hamper the implementation of reporting solutions.

Technology can then be employed that leverages the wealth of information already gathered during the information governance process. Logical definition of business attributes can be leveraged in defining a logical data model. Data source information can be leveraged to set up ETL modules. Knowledge of reports currently in use can be leveraged to define future reporting specifications. In addition, building out of the technical environment for a reporting solution using virtualization and cloud based technologies can significantly lower the upfront infrastructure costs.

With cost effective reporting solutions available, the possibilities of what can be achieved open up further. The barriers are reduced, the costs contained, the understanding of the current information architecture is leveraged, and ambitious future states can be envisioned with confidence that the organization can deliver on the vision.

“Successful reporting solutions must be incorporated into proven control and governance frameworks at the enterprise level.”

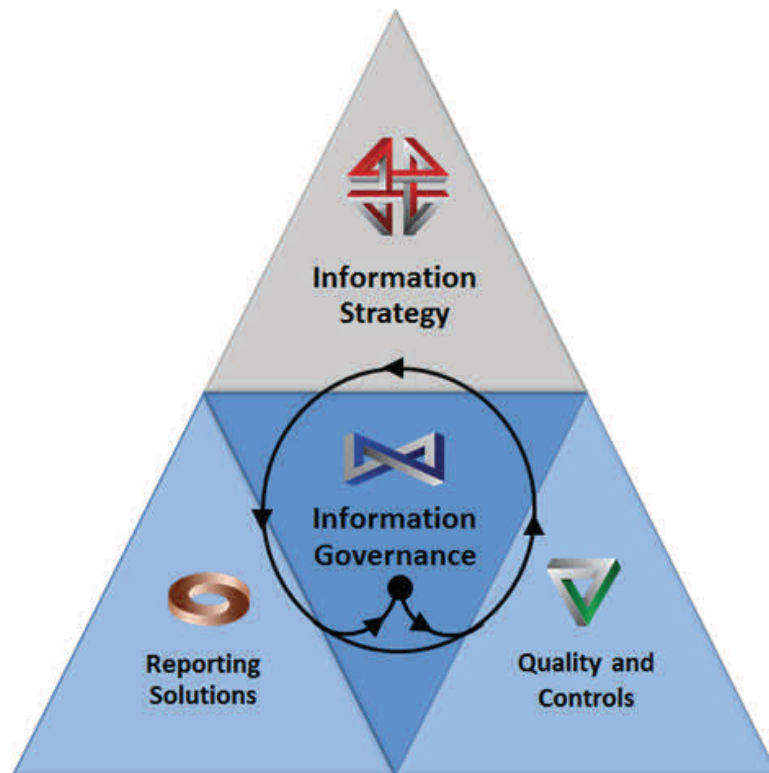
Steve Zagoudis, CEO, MetaGovernance

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HOLISTIC INFORMATION GOVERNANCE

But, we are not done yet. For a program to be truly successful, it needs to become sustainable over time. The new data and information architecture defined in the strategic planning process and implemented with the reporting solution described above needs to be plugged into the evolving information governance model. New controls need to be established to assure the reliability and gain trust for the accuracy of the new reporting environment and information architecture.

The cycle continues. New subject area domains are brought into scope based on the successful delivery from the prior cycle. Information Governance becomes holistic and sustainable. At this point, we can begin to glimpse a new paradigm for information governance.



NOTE: We have highlighted only some of the key differentiators of this methodology. Subsequent white papers will develop the concepts in more detail.

Holistic Information Governance

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Smith, Anne Maria. 2009. "Houston, We Have A Problem – Why Data Governance Programs Fail", EIMI Archives: Volume 3, Issue 7, July.

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