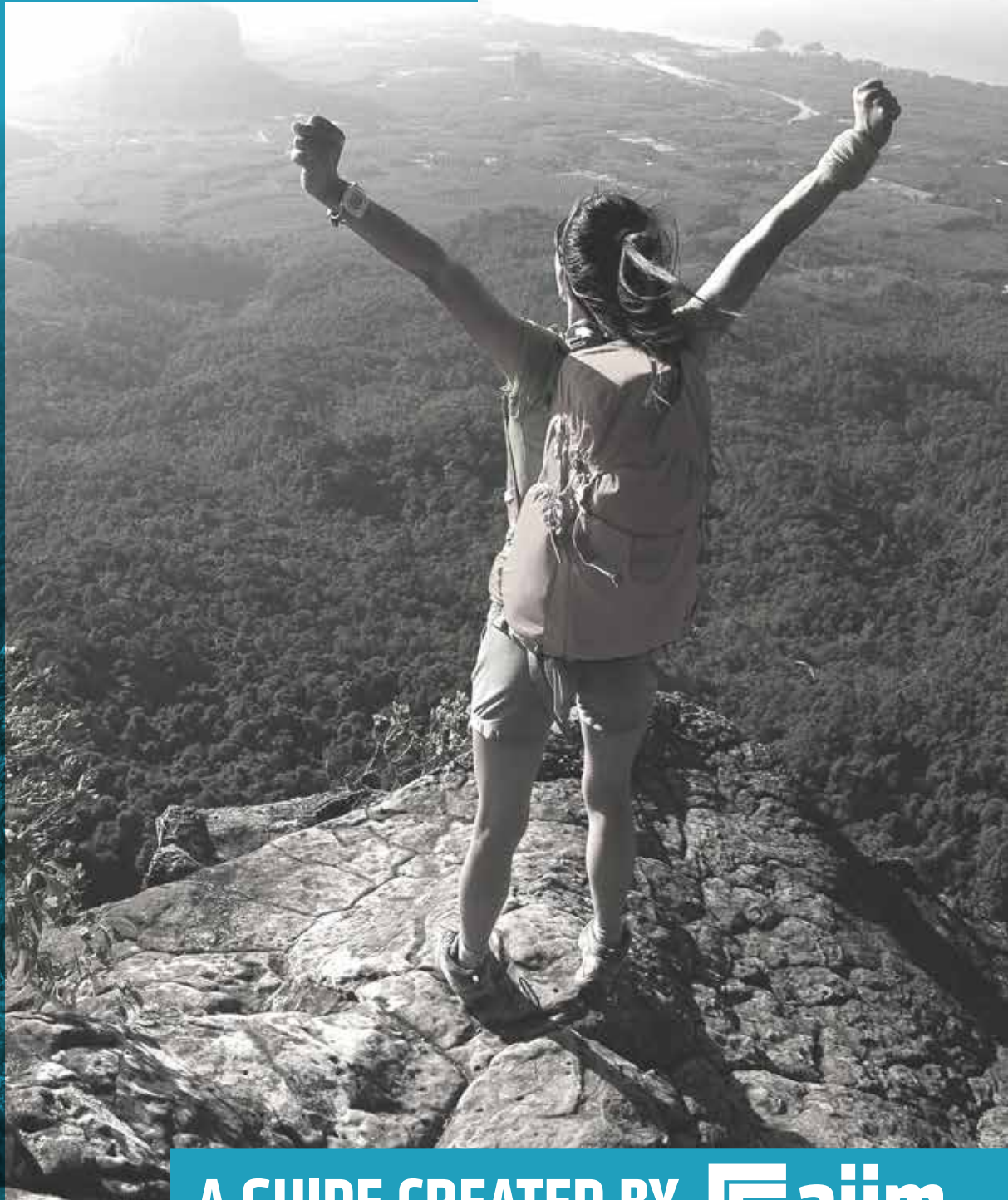# HOW TO ACHIEVE
RECORDS MANAGEMENT
BEST PRACTICES

HOW TO ACHIEVE RECORDS MANAGEMENT BEST PRACTICES

INTRODUCTION

The records management program is a management function within the organization that manages the information assets of the organization. An important perspective is that this is not a new area of management. There has always been the need to manage the organization's information, similar to the centralized control of human resources and the capital assets of the organization. The need to manage information was not generally appreciated in the past because we had paper-based office work, which was difficult to control, repercussions of not managing information properly were not significant, or widely recognized, and there were not the computer solutions available to allow us to manage our records.

Times have certainly changed!

With the need to manage information and records, and with more and more information being created by electronic means, there are computer solutions that can manage this information. These solutions fall under enterprise content management, electronic records management, and/or email management solutions. With these computer applications, we can address the business drivers identified as the four Cs – compliance, cost, collaboration, and (business) continuity.

HOW TO ENSURE INFORMATION GOVERNANCE

Organizations need to take a holistic approach to managing their records and information. Policies and processes must address information across the whole enterprise. As email and instant messaging have come into extensive use, we have seen additional policies to support their usage. In the past few years, as social business has become very popular in organizations, we are seeing policies that cover social media that may very well address the use of Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and other social media applications.

In recent years, we have seen technology applied as narrow solutions to achieve the four Cs. There have been isolated efforts to scan paper records, capture emails, create isolated collaboration forums, and manage functional collections of information. This has led to separate repositories of electronic information that hinders the sharing of records and information and their proper management.

There is the need to have a senior executive accountable for the proper management of information across the organization. This is beginning to be recognized. We are seeing higher-level positions in the records management profession, such as directors and vice presidents. Perhaps, shunning the term records management, we are seeing organizations setting up information management functions under the senior legal executive, compliance, and information and knowledge management. In many organizations, we are seeing the chief information/technology officer assume broader responsibility encompassing the management of the information, itself. Without accountability, we will not be successful in managing these assets of the organization.

Similar to the human resources and finance functions, organizations need to have information and records management professionals employed in a central function to carry out the responsibilities they need to be done. These professionals need to partner with the legal and IT staff to ensure that information is managed in a way to achieve compliance and ediscovery requirements. With social media becoming so prevalent in organizations, records management professionals must also team up with the communication professionals. Professionals are required to support policy development and maintenance, oversight of the information management systems, legal research, coordination of ediscovery, and disclosure demands and the development of standards, procedures and guidelines. There may very well be continued central physical records storage activities.
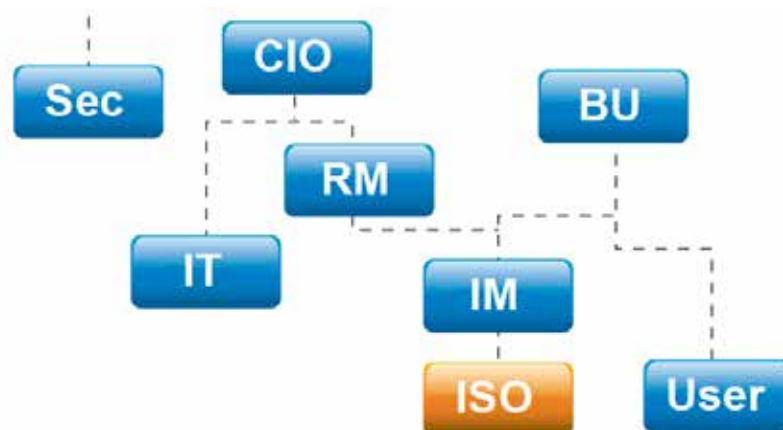

Figure 1. Organization Structure for Information Governance.

CONTROLLED VOCABULARY

For organizations to achieve the need to collaborate and share information, it is critical that they develop information management structures and terminology that everyone can understand and use.

This will promote a common understanding of the information holdings; lead to better information management; will support the retrieval of information from throughout the organization and from years previous; and provide a user-friendly means for employees to work with their information.

HOW TO CREATE A CLASSIFICATION SCHEME

The information and records classification scheme is a management control structure that represents a controlled vocabulary structure. Here, again, a classification scheme for information and records is not unique. We have comparable structures in human resources – the organization chart and finance – the chart of accounts. It is interesting, the organization chart and the chart of accounts have been around, and have been accepted for so long that we take them for granted and don't appreciate the benefits that they provide.

There are two highly recognized means of setting up an organization's classification scheme. One approach is to identify the primary functions of the organization. Some functions could be very large so you can create sub-functions.

Below the functions and sub-functions, you identify the activities and/or processes that support the functions. Once you have these established, you identify the record categories, often called records series, which are created and used by these activities and processes.

The second means of building your classification scheme is by identifying the organizational divisions, departments, and sections within the organization. Using this approach, many people just take their organizational chart and use that structure.

The functional approach is recommended because there is little change in the functions of the organization and we know that divisions, departments, and sections change all the time so that there is more maintenance involved with this approach.

Guidance on developing classification schemes is provided from a number of sources:

- ISO 15489; Information and documentation — Records management — Part 1: General (the international standard on records management)

- Victorian (Australia) Electronic Records Strategy (VERS) – developed by Public Record Office Victoria to provide leadership and direction in the management of digital records

- US Department of Defense (DoD) 5015.2-STD version 3 "Design Criteria Standard for Electronic Records Management Software Applications" 2007

- MoReq2010® Modular Requirements for Records Systems, Volume 1 Core Services & Plug-in Modules, Version 1.0

There are two major standards for taxonomies and controlled vocabulary design and maintenance: ISO 25964 or ANSI/NISO Z39.19 2005.

ISO 25964 (Information and documentation – Thesauri and interoperability with other vocabularies – available for purchase from national standards agencies and from www.iso.org) is an international standard published in two parts: Part 1, published in 2011, covers the construction and maintenance of thesauri for information retrieval. Part 2, published in 2012, covers guidance for managing interoperability between different vocabularies – for example, where information needs to be combined from systems using different taxonomies.

ISO 25964 is a major new development and replaces ISO 5964 (1985) and ISO 2788 (1986) which covered the construction of monolingual and multilingual thesauri, respectively. The older standards were very much focused on thesauri production in a print-dominated environment, typically in a library context. ISO 25964 is a radical re-casting of the standards to cater for standardization and interoperability in a complex digital environment where information needs to be exchanged and combined across multiple systems.

The second standard is ANSI/NISO Z39.19 2005 (Guidelines for the construction, format, and management of monolingual controlled vocabularies – available for free download from www.niso.org/standards/index.html). The National Information Standards Organization (NISO) is a non-profit US association accredited by the American National Standards Institute to support information management.

ANSI/NISO Z39.19 was first developed in 1974, at the same time as the first edition of ISO 2788. It is important to understand that it is a completely independent standard from the ISO standard. There is broad alignment through regular sharing of working documents between the national and international drafting committees, and national standards committees are represented on the international standards committee.

Like the organization chart and the chart of accounts, the classification scheme needs to be maintained and updates and improvements should be made as new concerns arise from employees, auditing staff and external sources. However, a systematic approach is required. I use the analogies of wanting to hire a person for an assistant position to my director, or vice president, or wanting to add a miscellaneous golf expense account to my function's budget. Clearly, if that assistant position or expense account have not been previously recognized and approved, there is very little likelihood that my wishes will be met. However, there are mechanisms in place to have such a position or account created if you can justify the logic and need for them. This is exactly what is needed with the records classification to manage our records.
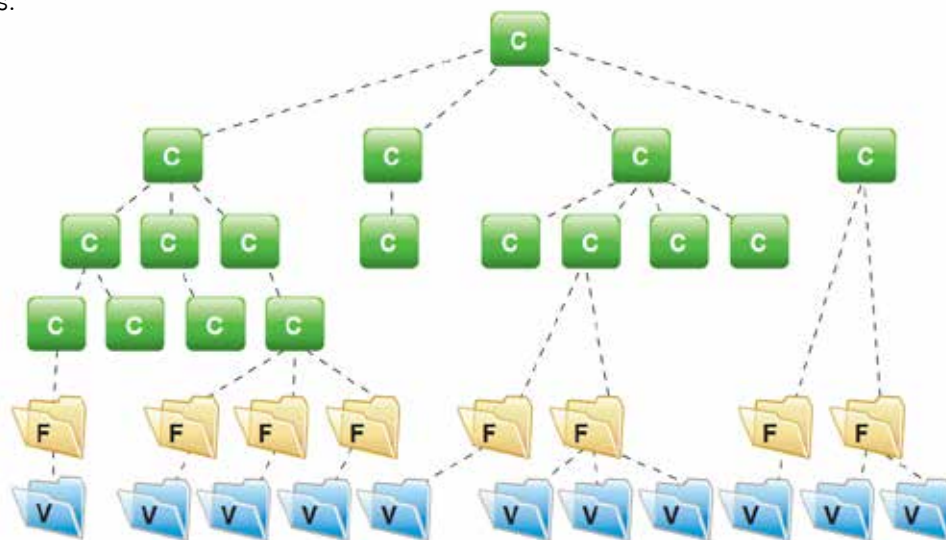

Figure 2. Records Classification Scheme

HOW TO DEVELOP A METADATA MODEL

For decades, we have been applying indexing terms to information and records so that we could manage and retrieve them. During this time, we were limited by the amount of information we could put on folder and box labels and even the old 4 X 6 inch cards. We did not have a means of searching on these indexing terms.

Currently, we talk about applying metadata and we have the computer applications that can capture this information and allow us to sort and search on this metadata (indexing terms). With the technology, we can apply an unlimited number of metadata to our information and records. It is important to appreciate that while we may want all of this descriptive information, we must limit the burden placed on the organization's staff. Therefore, it's key to identify what metadata can be captured from our computer systems and associated computer applications without the input of the users.

Organizations need to develop a metadata model that will be used throughout the organization. A metadata model is a collection of approved descriptive elements that will be used to manage and retrieve information and records throughout the organization. Currently, there are government entities and businesses who are doing exactly this.

Accessibility	Identifier
Addressee	Language
Aggregation	Location
Audience	Mandate
Contributor	Preservation
Coverage	Publisher
Creator	Relation
Date	Rights
Description	Source
Digital signature	Status
Disposal	Title
Format	Type

Figure 3. U.K. Government Metadata Model

Guidance on developing metadata models is also provided from the sources provided below:

- ISO 15489; Information and documentation — Records management — Part 1: General (the international standard on records management)

- Victorian (Australia) Electronic Records Strategy (VERS) – developed by Public Record Office Victoria to provide leadership and direction in the management of digital records

- US Department of Defense (DoD) 5015.2-STD version 3 "Design Criteria Standard for Electronic Records Management Software Applications" 2007

- MoReq2010® Modular Requirements for Records Systems, Volume 1 Core Services & Plug-in Modules Version 1.0.

There is also an international standard referred to as the Dublin Core. The Dublin Core is a metadata standard designed to describe all forms of information resources for the purposes of management and discovery.

The term "Dublin" comes from the Dublin Ohio where OCLC, a library consortium, hosted a 1995 workshop to develop a simple set of standardized metadata elements for information resource description. The metadata standard became independent of OCLC in 2008 and is managed by the Dublin Core Metadata Initiative (DCMI – www.dcmi.org).

At its base, Dublin Core comprises only 15 metadata elements, all of which are optional, and may be repeated (for example, the "Subject" element would be repeated for each facet in your taxonomy).

The simplicity of the standard was critical for its widespread adoption and its flexibility in application has resulted in its adoption as a basis for other metadata standards. It became an ISO standard in 2006 (ISO 15836). Work is ongoing to extend the metadata set for differing purposes, and provide guidance on the interpretation, usage, and encoding of metadata elements.

Adoption of a metadata standard like Dublin Core not only supports exchange of data across different systems, but it can also help in the large-scale migration of data across different generations of system.

A wonderful feature about computer applications is that they can force the application of metadata and only the approved terms (referred to as controlled vocabularies). Fields can be designed in the computer applications and drop down menus and check lists can be presented to only allow the provided terms to be used.

NEW WAYS OF WORKING

Employees need to appreciate the importance of information and records. This has always been important but with the current business drivers, identified above, it can no longer be ignored. A situation that demonstrates this lack of appreciation is when an employee leaves the organization, the employee's computer, and, perhaps, their laptop are simply reformatted and given to another employee. You wonder why the previous employee was paid at all. Didn't they create important information and records that needed to be retained and managed?

Information and records can no longer be considered just the by-products of office, and other work. Information and records are evidence that organizations are meeting their compliance requirements and achieving their own business and ethics standards. Information and records are created and used to support the strategic goals of the organization. Staff needs to understand why their work product, information and records, is needed and the value to themselves and their organizations of properly managing that work product.

I have observed office work for a long time and have recognized that it is generally carried out in a reactive mode. Office workers created their work and, then, simply dumped it on their C: drives or shared drives, or let emails get buried in their email inbox or sent folders - this results in their work product becoming lost or, at least, difficult to find. It is recognized that employees waste substantial time and effort looking for information and records they had previously created or received.

Employees should work in a proactive way. When they first create or receive information, they should do something with it quickly – either destroy it, if it has no value to the organization, or capture it in an ECM/ERM system repository where it will be properly managed and available for quick retrieval and use.

TECHNOLOGY

Computer applications exist that can help the organization manage its information and records. These records management solutions provide the following functionality:

- Capture and scanning management
- Classification/file plan management
- Retention and disposition management
- Access and library management
- Storage management
- Email, and other communication, management

These applications can manage both electronic and physical records. They provide powerful search capabilities to enable employees to find information previously captured, from other locations and divisions and across all information formats. Information and records that have no value to the organization are destroyed promptly, in the normal course of business.

Organizations have often found that they have a number of different records management solutions across their locations or divisions. This has resulted in different RM repositories that do not allow information to be shared. Organizations need to standardize on one ERM solution, often a suite of applications, and use it across their functions and locations. There is also now enterprise search functionality which will enable the retrieval of records and information from different systems and repositories.

HOW TO BRING ABOUT CHANGE MANAGEMENT

Employees must gain an appreciation for the importance of the information and records they create and use. Here, again, this is not something new. However, the consequences of failure can lead to jail time, substantial fines and sanctions against the organization, negative impact on the organization's reputation, lost revenues, and have an impact on the bottom financial line.

Senior management needs to communicate to staff, and demonstrate, the need to create, or change, the culture of good governance and compliance. Regular communications and education are important. Using ERM solutions to manage information and records will provide, both, a consistent process for handling information and records and the tools to monitor and enforce proper information management practices.

Employees certainly need to be educated on the adverse consequences of poor records management. At the same time, they need to be educated on the benefits that they will experience, themselves. Dealing with information and records in a structured way, working with the organization's classification scheme and control vocabularies, makes it easier for staff. If these instruments are well thought out, intuitive and clearly understood by the staff, individuals will not have to "reinvent the wheel," waste time and thought on how to describe and handle information and records. Recently, I was talking to a Partner at a law firm that was introducing an electronic document records management system (EDRM). His most potent comment was: "I just want to be able to find my records." Employees should concentrate on being creative and contributing to the success of the organization, instead of trying to decide what jargon they should apply and trying to decide where it should be stored.

There are real benefits to employees working in a proactive manner (as discussed above). I have observed frustration and anxiety experienced by staff looking and hunting for files on their C: drives, shared drives and email inboxes, especially when a boss, or other person, is standing over them demanding it immediately.

With the current business trends of big data, mobility, social media, and cloud computing, the management of electronic records is even more critical than ever!

Over the past decade, there has been a "perfect storm" of change driven by mobile, social, and cloud technologies. These changes were first evident in the consumer sector. In the course of a decade we went from an environment in which very few people used or cared about technology outside of the context of work to one in which technology is everywhere and virtually everyone has access to it. Ten years ago, the most innovative technology a person had was normally handed out by central IT casting when one took a job. Now, those cutting edge technologies are more likely to be at home. It was only a matter of time before these experiences started moving from the consumer sector to the enterprise. The "applification" and "consumerization" of the enterprise is revolutionizing the way we think about enterprise information and IT – and the kinds of skills we need within our organizations.

The paper notes that over the past few decades, the focus of enterprise IT across multiple technology transitions has been the construction of "Systems of Record" – essentially the initial digitization of paper-based records and processes. Initially, these Systems of Record created competitive advantage for those who implemented them before their competitors, but no longer. Per Moore, organizations are now focused on taking the next step. They are focused on applying the lessons of the consumer world, and building Systems of Engagement – systems to connect, engage, and automate relationships with their partners, their customers, and their employees.

Records created and managed through systems of record are not going away. These records and information can be characterized as relatively standard, slow to change, and consistent. Sound records management principles and practices will serve us well into the future managing of this content.

Records created and managed through systems of engagement have quite different characteristics – they are dynamic and can have little metadata associated with them to enable their easy management.

HOW TO MANAGE SOCIAL MEDIA

How you manage social media takes on a number of considerations. Understanding the organization's need for compliance, effectiveness, efficiency, and business continuity; records management professionals must be part of the communication strategy team to assist in the decision on whether particular applications should be used or not. A critical issue is whether the records and information is stored on the systems of the organization or the systems and repositories of 3rd-party, external service providers. If it is the latter, it is extremely difficult for the organization to manage the records and information. If the 3rd-party provider keeps everything for long periods of time, there goes our 3-year or 10-year retention policy.

From this, managing social media comes down to information governance in developing the appropriate policies and then training users on what information can be created and communicated with social media applications. As has been the practice with emails and instant messaging, it may come down to whether we can simply capture the content for access and monitoring purposes within the organization.

CONCLUSION

Information and records are key assets of the organization that need to be managed. This has never been so true than at this time as organizations need to respond to the current business trends of big data, mobility, cloud computing, and social media.

We covered a number of topics in this guide; including "How to" for information governance, creating a classification scheme, developing a metadata model, bringing about change management, and managing social media. We also discussed the critical topics of controlled vocabulary, new ways of working, and technology.

ABOUT AIIM

Here at AIIM, we believe that information is your most important asset and we want to teach you the skills to manage it. We've felt this way since 1943, back when this community was founded.

Sure, the technology has come a long way since then and the variety of information we're managing has changed a lot, but one tenet has remained constant. We've always focused on the intersection of people, processes, and information. We help organizations put information to work.

AIIM is a non-profit organization that provides independent research, training, and certification for information professionals. **Visit us at www.aiim.org**.

AIIM
1100 Wayne Avenue, Suite 1100
Silver Spring, MD 20910
301.587.8202
www.aiim.org

LOOKING FOR YOUR NEXT STEP?

Take your skills to the next level with AIIM's Electronic Records Management training course

CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE