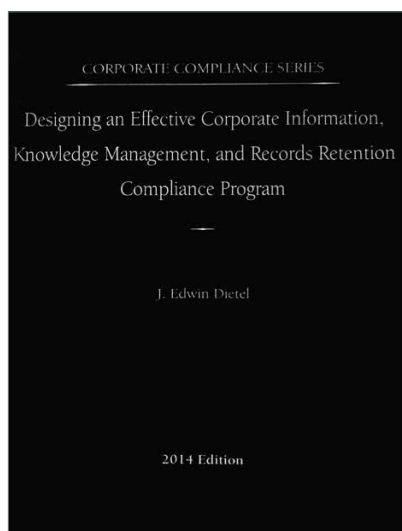


Weighty Tome Is Light on Comprehensive RM Best Practices

Sheila Taylor, IGP, CRM



Designing an Effective Corporate Information, Knowledge Management, and Records Retention Compliance Program is the third volume in Thomson Reuters' multi-volume Corporate Compliance Series, which is designed

to help organizations prevent and detect possible violations in law in such areas as intellectual property, securities, and antitrust.

The intended audience of this volume is attorneys practicing records management (RM) and professional corporate records managers. Specifically, one of the author's objectives is "to introduce basic records management fundamentals to those just starting in this field or those lawyers expanding their practice into this area."

The Fundamentals

Introductory information is presented on such topics as:

- The fundamentals of effective corporate RM (e.g., the records life cycle concept, the objectives of a corporate RM program)
- How to establish and maintain a corporate RM program (e.g., developing a records retention

Designing an Effective Corporate Information, Knowledge Management, and Records Retention Compliance Program

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schedule, marketing and selling a records retention compliance program)

- Steps in establishing an effective and *Sarbanes-Oxley*-compliant RM program
- Educating staff about RM (e.g., the theory of different learning

styles, implementing a RM hotline)

- Conducting records audits (e.g., 26 essential “quality” criteria that information in corporate records should satisfy, how to conduct an audit)

Coverage of the fundamental topics is not comprehensive. For example, the author does not address digital preservation in Chapter 7 “Considerations for Computer Files and Electronic Records.”

Some Misalignment

Some of the author’s recommendations do not align with RM best practices; he lumps the development of a corporate RM policy in with topics such as reports management, storage issues, and tickler systems in Chapter 5 “Other Issues Involving Corporate Records,” for example, rather than presenting it as an integral element in Chapter 3 “Establishing and Maintaining a Corporate RM Program.”

Also, the author recommends setting minimum retention periods and periodically reviewing records at the end of those periods to determine whether additional retention should apply.

It is also curious that the author defines a *record* as “information one has recorded in some medium because there is a chance of it being needed in the future and whose disposition

is determined by a corporate records schedule” and cites Doculabs’ 1998 definition of the term while making no reference to the widely accepted definition in the international RM standard, ISO 15489-1:2001 *Information and documentation – Records management – Part 1: General*.

The author’s interchangeable references to “corporate records program” and “corporate retention program” also cause some confusion since those terms are not synonymous.

Good Leadership Advice

Where this volume succeeds is in imparting considerable information about leadership to better prepare individuals to assume a leadership role in RM, one of the author’s objectives as stated in the Preface: “attorneys practicing record [sic] management and professional record [sic] managers need to be significantly more than merely cogs in the corporate wheel. They need to be effective leaders not only in their field, but also in the overall corporate organization.”

The author draws on the works of well-known authors such as Stephen Covey to address diverse leadership-related topics such as leadership styles (i.e., analytical, driver, amiable, and expressive), 16 competencies that distinguish extraordinary leaders (e.g., displaying high integrity

and honesty), how to motivate people, the importance of trust, and how to develop customer loyalty.

At 1,441 pages, this is a weighty tome (2.5 pounds). Almost 60% of the volume is text (10 chapters), while the final chapter (620 pages) is a collection of 20 forms and exhibits from a variety of sources. I question the utility of including materials that are freely available on the Internet, such as the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration’s 213-page General Records Schedules, and quickly outdated materials like the 279-page results of a 50-state survey of records retention requirements for selected record types such as insurance and bank operations.

Not Best Choice for RM Practices

Readers – whether lawyers or RM practitioners – seeking a more comprehensive and “how to” approach to RM program development and implementation would be better served by other publications. However, readers seeking a précis of leadership theory to help them prepare to lead RM will find this volume of interest. Whether their RM program budgets can afford the \$507 purchase price remains to be seen. **END**

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