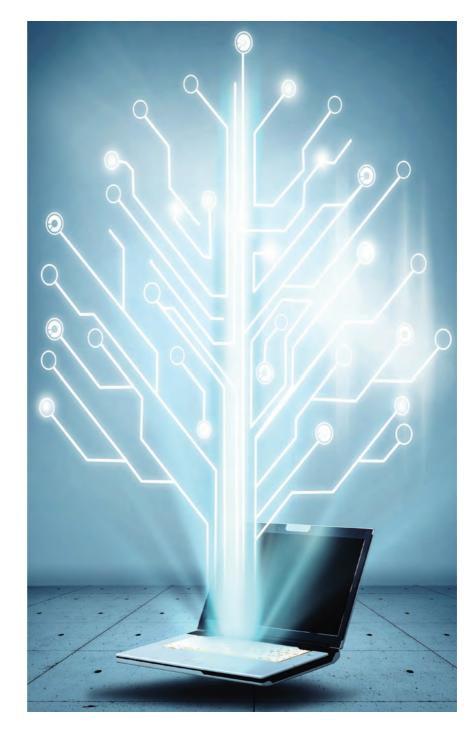# A Case for
Outsourcing IG Program Design and Implementation

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The age-old problem of not being able to "see the trees for the forest" is particularly applicable to organizations with so much unmanaged information that they can't find what they need when they need it. In many ways, organizations are like trees:

- Each is made up of various systems that perform essential functions in relation to the whole.
- Each is nourished by an essential ingredient – an organization's "lifeblood" is information in the same way a tree's is sap (i.e., water, minerals, and nutrients) – and each must have an unimpeded delivery system whose job is to keep the whole body healthy and thriving.
- Sap circulates through the vascular system of a tree in the same way information circulates through the value chain of an organization; in both cases, some is used readily, some is stored, and some is eventually released in various by-products.
- When any part of either a tree or an organization exhibits signs of poor health, it is unlikely that the problem is as localized as it may appear. Often there is dysfunction within the delivery system, and the unhealthy part is just a symptom of that widespread dysfunction.

Of course, an organization's information management (IM) system is a lot more complicated than the nutrient cycle of a tree. And it is in-

nately more flawed, as human beings are. That makes it more vulnerable to failure.

An organization with a poorly managed IM system is at risk, both functionally and legally, for diminished performance, low workforce morale, costly audits, costlier fines, and a damaged public image. Money and manpower spent to muddle through a dysfunctional system will be borrowed away from production, innovation, and meeting the challenges of the competition. In addition, corporate stakeholders as well as customers will be frustrated and distrustful when information can't be produced when needed.

Know When to Call a 'Doctor'

It will take more than an arborist to doctor a less-than-optimal IM system, but the basic process will be similar – checking the entire system thoroughly, analyzing the problems, prescribing a treatment plan, evaluating the treatment, following up with additional inspections and any needed treatments, and performing ongoing maintenance.

Just as keepers of the most illustrious gardens and abundant forests know when to seek outside expertise to keep their charges prosperous, so do the smartest business leaders. Those who comprehend the importance of complying with the growing body of complex laws and regulations, taking advantage of the torrent of changing technology and security, and using their information to promote business innovation and growth have made effective information governance (IG) a priority.

However, a missing link in many organizations – even those whose employees are the best of the best – is the person who can bring together all IG stakeholders – IM, IT, legal, risk/compliance, security, privacy, and business units – to collaborate in leveraging information assets across business processes and governing those assets in a way that promotes their ideal accessibility, security, storage, and compliance with legal,

regulatory, fiscal, historical, and other business requirements.

Outside Resources Often Needed

The task of designing and integrating an IG program can be an overwhelming one in any size organization, as it is more than a full-time job. Every employee already has a set of responsibilities and is a vital part of the organization's value chain, so there isn't time available to pull him or her off designated duties to give full attention to this task. And by way of the fact that employees already have full-time jobs, it's hardly possible they are thoroughly trained in IG or have the knowledge and skills required to accomplish this task on their own.

While an organization is embarking on this process, its employees will have some involvement, but they should be experiencing as few distractions from daily business tasks as possible. Their value is in their expertise and experience in handling those tasks, their knowledge about the organization and its culture, and their vested interest in its success.

Benefits of Outsourcing

When information storage starts to overtake work space, employees experience increased stress along with decreased morale – and productivity. Organizations with efficient IG strategies in place find that their workforce is more productive, more loyal, and less stressed out.

There are financial considerations in outsourcing, yes. But working with the right IG consultant can help control costs, streamline the budget with regulated, standardized expenses, and save big bucks – and a lot of hassles – on the other end.

Whether an organization is just starting up or has long had its roots planted in the ground, whether it is growing or downsizing, merging or divesting, relocating or staying put, succeeding or struggling, there are knowledgeable, dedicated IG professionals that can help provide

structure and function so the organization's information assets can be optimized for productivity, compliance, and greater business success going forward. Following are some of the benefits a consultant can bring to an organization.

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An Unbiased Perspective

Outsourced consultants approach their projects with the unbiased perspective that only an outsider can provide. Their interest is in creating and implementing the best possible system for the organization, and they are as expert in their business as organizations are in theirs. And throughout the process, they will remain wholly intent on their goals while the organizations maintain continuity in their daily business tasks.

State-of-the-Art Knowledge

Constant technology developments can both intrigue and overwhelm. Consultants who keep pace with these developments can help keep the organization's focus on the technologies best suited for the industry and business structure, control costs, and ensure a smoother implementation.

Expertise in Defining the Project

Using an outsourced IG professional to help determine project goals and objectives, define project success, and develop a high-level process baseline will allow employees to focus on their regular duties.

They can interview representatives from each functional area to review policies and observe current practices to determine what is working, what isn't working (e.g., identify areas in which information is slowing or preventing business processes), and areas of non-compliance in the information chain.

With the help of the organization's management team, an outsourced professional (i.e., consultant) will define IG program goals (e.g., improved service levels, increased productivity, and better quality of service) that will support organizational goals (e.g., increased profits, shareholder value, and global presence) and the objectives, or plan of attack, to meet the program goals.

A consultant also can help define how to measure the success of the plan. For example, the metrics for the IG program goal of service level improvements might include reduced:
- Number of client complaints
- Cost of operations
- Time to complete processing

If the objective to improve service levels includes the introduction of new technologies, another metric for measuring success might include whether the technology deployment is accomplished within the allotted time and budget.

IG processes also will likely change to accommodate new technologies. An outside consultant can help create a process baseline with details not only about tasks and processes, but also about how information moves between tasks and how it is handled, processed, tracked, logged, etc. This baseline will be used for subsequent examination of the system design to determine its success and where additional improvements might be needed.

A Partial To-Do List

Here are some of the other ways in which IG consultants can earn their keep:

Developing the team – They can help assemble and train the IG team, coordinate a plan to keep team members updated and informed, and create systems for tracking project goals.

Cleaning up policies and practices – They can interview representatives from each functional area to review policies and observe current practices to determine what is working, what isn't working (e.g., identify areas in which information is slowing or preventing business processes), and areas of non-compliance in the information chain.

Sharing current industry-specific technologies and implementation strategies – They can convey where new technologies can be a strategic advantage vs. where they can be impulsive or fractious, present cost-effective technology choices, and advise on the most efficient ways to integrate them.

Guiding electronic file decisions – They can lead the discussion and decision-making related to appropriate file types, standardized file naming and meta-tagging procedures, appropriate access points, file-sharing processes, and privacy and security options, levels, and procedures.

Prioritizing imaging projects – They can manage the prioritization of transferring paper to digital files based on retention and usage needs and organize and consolidate the storage of lower-priority files.

Dealing with unstructured information – They can generate policies and procedures for handling unstructured information, such as social media posts and e-mails, and present options for either analyzing and utilizing dark data for future projects or discarding it.

Implementing defensible destruction – They can help identify and categorize records that are part of corporate memory, ensure their secure storage, implement secure disposal of obsolete data, and keep audit-friendly records of such disposal.

Assisting with records storage decisions – They can recommend records for inactive storage based on their digitizing priority and/or their need for permanence based on compliance laws and specific corporate needs. They can also advise on the selection of storage facilities in regard to their location, security controls, and internal environmental controls.

Managing change – They can help build corporate confidence and trust in procedural changes; structure transitions to be as seamless as possible; plan, schedule, and carry out employee training, workshops, and follow-up; and plan strategies to help ensure employee adherence.

Planning for the future – They can help plan for system scalability and flexibility to allow for future business changes and growth, providing cost and budget advice.

The Business Case

The business case for outsourcing the implementation of the IG program should detail the current situation and the benefits of the new vision. Executive management and key stakeholders will want to know the why, what, how, when, and the who details of the implementation to decide whether to accept, revise, or decline the proposal.

Sell the Program

People tend to be creatures of habit and they may be intimidated by the rumors of systematic chang-

es to come. Some individuals or departments simply may not see the need for change, adopting the attitude of "If it ain't broke, why fix it?" It is of utmost importance to impart to staff the benefits of these changes to help them understand how a well-conceived, finely tuned IG program will streamline their jobs, eliminate or improve things that are hindering their work, and de-clutter their work environment. Most importantly, they need to know they will have a voice in identifying what needs to be improved, how to make the improvements, and whether the changes that are implemented are successful.

Stop the Information Overload

This article may seem like information overload for solving information overload. Actually, there's more. But here's the good news – engaging an IG consultant with the right expertise to focus on core activities, provide operational control, and reduce project cost will help the organization overcome its glut of TMI. **E**

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