



The economic benefits in business information chaos prevention

B Kirby White

To deal with chaos in business information management, the IT industry has come up with document and knowledge management systems designed to collect this information. They are complex and designed by information management experts who have complete faith in these systems but no control over how they will be used.

For those who use these systems well, it works. For others it may be a complete waste of time and nobody really knows for sure what is collected and what is lost forever.

This paper is not arguing against these systems but it is arguing that it is time to look at preventing the chaos through information organization and to look at what it will mean for protecting the information assets for another time.

What if it were possible to demonstrate that just by organizing information in a manner suggested here the outcomes would be about:

- better use of staff time and more productivity
- less time searching for materials and other information
- a reduction in duplication and creation of paper
- better organization impacting on storage needs
- a focus for activities in supervision and control
- archive strategies that occur in the conduct of work
- access to training for employees as they work
- better links to resources, policy and compliance.

Each of these outcomes has an economic benefit and in their absence the business is losing huge amounts of money.



Add to that, the impact on management of the business of the absence of order and control and the power of business information to operate as the focus for twenty first century management practices.

In looking at strategies for the eradication of chaos in business information management, it is important to outline how that eradication can occur. This involves establishing a number of information management principles that have been ignored:

- There is no value to any organization in its information being located in folders in the name of people, departments, places or in 'my documents'.
- There is no value in information being located anywhere and everywhere and being tagged with metadata critical to being able to find it again.
- There is immense value in information being located (rather than labelled) according to the needs of the organization and its particular functions and to reflect its core and non-core business activities.

Best practice in information management and the eradication of chaos

Organized information based on the functions of the organization is always going to be

- a blueprint for projects and processes
- secure and able to be supervised and monitored



- economically sound with benefits in productivity and use of time
- an index to the work of the organization
- the foundation for activities in retention and disposal
- permanent and not affected by organizational changes

These descriptions do not apply to current business information management practices even where document and knowledge management systems are in place.

Business information and the electronic office

Structuring business information on the business computer network as a strategy makes available to the department or agency a place for management to:

- locate policy and compliance information
- provide a focus for delivering training
- locate information about access to all resources
- collect business knowledge as work is done
- provide a focus for links to all other relevant knowledge

Structured information management through an organized computer network is the foundation of the electronic office. Employees who trust the structure to provide security of information are less likely to use paper copies to provide security. Without the structured approach to computer networks the electronic office is just a myth.



About this article

Business Information Organization is a strategy for managing information in any business. BIO is the structure that supports Ten Steps to Best Business.

This strategy is presented in the books, Sleepers: the world's best-kept business secret, Kirby White. Melbourne, Ten Steps Business Publications, 2007. and Business Information Organization: 21st century best practice, Kirby White. Melbourne, Ten Steps Business Publications, 2008.

The author has been an information management consultant over 18 years working in government, business and education. Kirby White is a former national president Australian Library and Information Association.

Details of the strategy and information about the book and other materials are available from Ten Steps Business Publications at <http://www.tensteps.com.au>.