

White Paper

Business Information Management

Business Information Management refers to the activities that organizations perform in order to ensure that they are using information and IT in an appropriate manner. It includes the application of information technology but excludes responsibility for the supply of IT services, that are deemed to be provided by Application Management and IT Infrastructure Management working in unison with each other and with the Business. This white paper describes the organizational function of Business Information Management in terms of its positioning and responsibilities.

"Business information management is the means by which an organization efficiently plans, collects, organizes, uses, controls, disseminates and disposes of its information, and through which it ensures that the value of that information is identified and exploited to the fullest extent. It is a corporate responsibility that needs to be addressed and followed from the most senior levels of management to the front line worker. Organizations must be held and must hold their employees accountable to manage information appropriately and responsibly."

Mark Smalley, 17 November 2012



Assumptions

The positioning in this publication is based on the following assumptions:

- Public and private organizations use information both as a production factor and as part of the external services that they provide to partners, customers and citizens
- If information is that important, then it needs to be managed
- Managing information is a responsibility of the part of the business that owns and/or uses that information
- The term 'business' refers to the part of an organization that uses information and that is responsible for the application of IT (demand and consumption of IT), as opposed to the function that is responsible for the supply of IT services
- IT services cover
 - the creation, procurement and deployment of (use of) hardware, software, data and facilities that together form automated information systems,
 - o their operation, support, maintenance and renewal,
 - advising the business so that the business can take wellinformed decisions about critical IT domains in order to create an appropriate mix of value, costs and risks from a business perspective
- IT is used for input, processing, storage, transport and output of part
 of the information that the business uses, another part being
 supported by formal non-automated information systems while some
 of the business' information isn't formally recorded at all
- The business delegates IT supply, usually to a IT department and/or another part of the organization that fulfills the IT supply function and/or an external supplier of IT services and products (increasingly, multiple suppliers are used, that often need to be coordinated)
- The business determines the functional and 'non-functional' requirements of automated information systems
- The IT supply function is typically subdivided into infrastructure (IT infrastructure management) and applications, the latter often recognizing application development and application management as two separate functions (opinions vary as to whether application maintenance is part of application management or application development or whether application development focuses on delivering the first release of an application)



 Another cross section of the IT services that IT supply provides is standard versus custom. Where custom services (and in exceptional circumstances, devices) are designed and built to specifications provided by the business, with standard services and devices it's the responsibility of the business to evaluate the degree to which they fulfill the requirements and to balance the more favorable cost and speed of delivery of standard services and products against the effort needed to take non-automated measures to compensate shortcomings

In summary, the following organizations and functions are recognized

- External users of information as (part of) a service, e.g. tracking and tracing information for delivery of a parcel by FedEx
- Organization that provides services and products, e.g. the logistics information that FedEx uses to plan deployment of trucks, planes etc.
 - Business (users of information)
 - Internal IT supply (IT department)
- External IT supply

Definition

Business Information Management refers to the activities that organizations perform in order to ensure that they are using information in an appropriate manner. It includes the *application* of information technology but excludes responsibility for the supply of IT services, that are deemed to be provided by Application Management and IT Infrastructure Management working in unison with each other and with Business Information Management. It acts as the portfolio holder of information and IT for the business and represents business management as the customer for the IT provider(s). Business Information Management delegates responsibility (but retains accountability) for supply of IT services to internal and/or external IT service providers.

The ASL BiSL Foundation uses the word 'Business' to emphasize the non-technical nature of BIM but often Information Management (IM) is used with the same scope, such as in the definition that the definition that the Queensland Government uses [Ref: QLD] for the activities that are needed to manage information: "Information management is the means by which an organization efficiently plans, collects, organizes, uses, controls, disseminates and disposes of its information, and through which it ensures that the value of that information is identified and exploited to the fullest extent."



This positions information management on the demand side because it refers to "an organization" and "its information". From "its information" one could infer ownership of information but it could equally refer to use of another party's information.

Part of the AIIM (Association for Information and Image Management) definition [AIIM] reinforces the demand-side (business) responsibility: "Information management is a corporate responsibility that needs to be addressed and followed from the most senior levels of management to the front line worker. Organizations must be held and must hold their employees accountable to capture, manage, store, share, preserve and deliver information appropriately and responsibly."

Comparing these two, AIIM's "Capture, manage, store, share, preserve and deliver" differs from the Queensland Government's definition "plans, collects, organizes, uses, controls, disseminates and disposes". This part of the Queensland definition is more comprehensive and the two definitions can be combined to form a stronger definition:

"Business information management is the means by which an organization efficiently plans, collects, organizes, uses, controls, disseminates and disposes of its information, and through which it ensures that the value of that information is identified and exploited to the fullest extent. It is a corporate responsibility that needs to be addressed and followed from the most senior levels of management to the front line worker. Organizations must be held and must hold their employees accountable to manage information appropriately and responsibly."



Activities

The Business Information Management function performs activities at operational, managing and strategic levels.

At an operational level it

- Supports and guides users in using information and information systems effectively
- Ensures data quality
- Acts as contact for the IT supply function for operational support
- Specifies changes in functionality requirements to information systems and delegates realization of the automated part to the IT department
- Designs the non-automated part of information systems and transitions the changed information systems into use

At a managing level it

- Evaluates the quality of the information provisioning and determines which investments in improvements are made
- Contracts the IT department to supply appropriate IT services
- Plans and controls IM processes and projects including the utilization of (business) resources

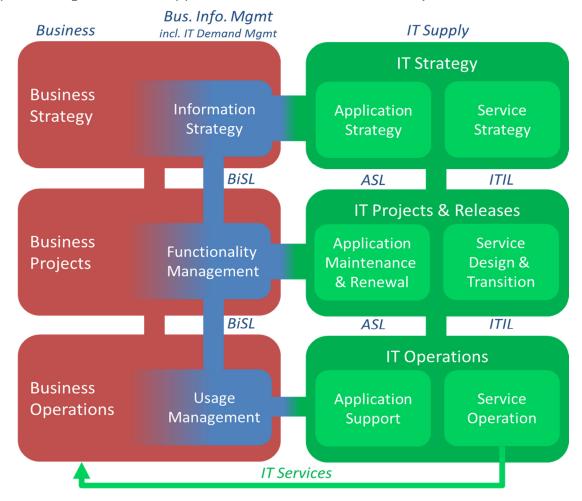
At a strategic level it

- Establishes what information provisioning will be needed to support the business in the future
- Stimulates optimal alignment of the various strategic plans for information and IT that are made in semi-autonomous parts of the organization
- Organizes the BIM function, including the relationships with the user organizations, suppliers and external parties that play a part in the information ecosystem of the organization



Positioning

In the illustration below, that is very loosely based on the nine-cell Amsterdam Information Model (AIM) framework, the BIM function (blue) is positioned as part of the business (red) and is customer of IT Supply (green). BIM is positioned as an integral part of the business and not as a separate entity with differing goals (this point is emphasized because of the pitfall of positioning BIM as a 'supplier' of services to the business).



BiSL, ASL and ITIL are mentioned in the illustration and refer to part of three process frameworks that can be used together to provide guidance for most of the activities that provide the business with the (automated) information that it needs. For the sake of simplicity, the ASL and BiSL processes for management and organizational strategy have been omitted, as has ITIL's Continual Service Improvement.



The meaning behind the illustration is described in the following sections.

Starting at the bottom left and then moving to the right, Business Operations refers to the part of the organization that fulfills and supports (e.g. HR) the primary function of the organization (i.e. the provision of the organization's products and services). Business Operations uses information in the fulfillment of this function, either as a production resource or as part of the services that the organization provides to its customers (or citizens, in the case of an organization in the public sector). Usage Management is responsible ensuring that information and (automated and non-automated) information systems and used both effectively and efficiently. Moving to the right from demand to supply, IT Operations fulfills the automated part of the information requirements to support Business Operations. IT Operations is broken down into Application Support (an ASL process cluster) and Service Operation (an ITIL service lifecycle stage) and the reader is referred to these frameworks for further details. For the scope of this publication, it suffices to say that these two functions work in unison to ensure that the automated part of the information system remains operational and that the users are supported in their use thereof.

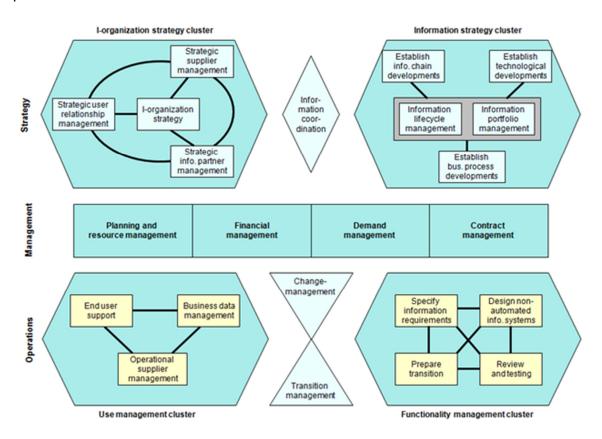
Moving up one level in the illustration to Business Projects, this function is tasked with changing Business Operations. This could be the introduction of new or changed products and services and/or the improvement of Business Operations in fulfilling their tasks. In both cases, this change often entails additions or changes to the information that is needed. The term 'functionality' is often used to denote the user-related characteristics of an information system and Functionality Management is responsible for ensuring the information systems comply with the changed information requirements. IT Projects and Releases, fulfilled by the application domain function Application Maintenance and Renewal and the infrastructure domain functions Service Design and Service Transition, is tasked with this responsibility.

The third and final part of this positioning of BIM starts with Business Strategy, in which the mission and vision of the organization is determined, together with the longer-term goals and resources. Information is one of these resources and Information Strategy is responsible for determining, in the closest collaboration with Business Strategy and IT Strategy, how information (technology) can contribute to the business strategy, sometimes to the degree of enabling the creation of new business models.



Framework

The Business Information Services Library [BiSL] is a framework that details BIM in terms of activities, results and relationships, and clusters them into 23 processes.



The clusters Use management, Functionality management and Information strategy were briefly described in the preceding paragraphs. The four management processes (the horizontal layer) address management of planned activities and resources, costs and benefits, quality of information and the BIM function, and contracts with IT supply. The I-organization strategy cluster describes how the whole BIM function is organized and, to a degree, governed. A more detailed description is given below.



Operational level:

- Use management: supports the users in daily use of the information provision, provides operational control of the IT supplier and monitors the operational data maintenance;
- Functionality management: designs and realizes changes in the information provision;
- Connecting processes: provides decision-making regarding changes in the information provision and carries these out in the user organization.

Tactical level:

• These processes control the management tasks of maintenance and renewal processes (and connecting processes) from the point of view of planning, costs, needs and contracts. They form the connection between tactical and operational processes.

Strategic level:

- Develop information strategy: translates developments in the business processes, the environment and the technology into the future information provision;
- Develop I-organization strategy: establishes communication, management and operating procedure for all parties involved in the decision-making process of information provision;
- Connecting processes: realizes coordination between all parties and all plans in the sub areas of the information provision.

The BiSL framework is supported by various publications, a training and certification scheme, provided by the not-for-profit ASL BiSL Foundation and its partners. See reference [BiSL] for more information.



References

[QLD] Queensland Government Information Management Policy Definitions, December 2009, version 1.0.1

http://www.qgcio.qld.gov.au/SiteCollectionDocuments/Architecture%20and%20Standards/QGEA%202.0/Information%20Management/Information%20Management%20Policy%20Framework.pdf

[AIIM]AIIM, What is Information Management

http://www.aiim.org/What-is-Information-Management

[AIM] Amsterdam Information Model

http://primavera.feb.uva.nl/PDFdocs/99-03.pdf

[BiSL] Business information Services Library

http://www.aslbislfoundation.org/en/bisl/publications/books/299-2012-bisl-een-framework-voor-business-informatiemanagement

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to Machteld Meijer (Maise) and René Sieders (The Lifecycle Company) for their insightful and constructive review comments.

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Mark Smalley is responsible for global promotion at the not-for-profit, vendor-independent ASL BiSL Foundation and is an independent IT Management Consultant. He is specialized in Application Lifecycle Management and IT Governance. Mark is a regular speaker at international conferences, where he has reached out to thousands of IT professionals.



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