

Information Risk Management: Valuing, Protecting and Leveraging Business Information

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Executive summary

Every organisation faces a range of threats including information risks. From healthcare providers to multinational companies, all organisations are seeking to deliver value, vision and objectives in the face of threats and risks.

Risk, just like death and taxes, exists as an inescapable part of everyday life. Most people view risk in purely pessimistic terms. But there are two sides to risk: positive and negative. Organisations that continue to improve and succeed have learnt to take consider threats and take intelligent risks, as 'without risk there is no reward'.

Information is a key asset for any organisation but is itself loaded with potential risk, threat and opportunity. The potential for loss, destruction or theft of key business information can lead to significant damage to even the largest global organisation. By contrast, the protection of key information, such as new designs, can allow an organisation to innovate and take positive risks to increase business.

The economic uncertainty of recent times has created enormous risks for organisations. Specifically, organisations are facing severe budget cuts and are seeking ways to deliver more for less, rationalise processes and weed out inefficiencies to cut costs and boost productivity. A major asset or potential overhead for organisations relates to how information is managed and valued. The value of information relates directly to an organisation's approach to information risk management. Indeed, the approach to this type of risk is the defining strategy for all organisations.

The strategic, operational and financial risks arising from myriad information management programmes are significant and often poorly managed. In these straitened times how can organisations adapt to an array of information risks that could impact on them, ultimately leading to a firm's demise? Should firms risk cuts now to survive over the longer term?

Information risk does not yet have a high profile. This is evident in many organisations where a major problem is that staff are continually drowning in data, yet starved of information. This presents both a cost and a major risk to the organisation. The challenge over the next five years for information professionals will be how to embed information risk management into organisational culture.

The integrated information risk management framework has been developed following extensive consultation across the United Kingdom public and private sectors. It is a flexible tool that provides a complete toolkit for organisations to scan, assess and develop risks into business intelligence. By introducing the strategic information risk management processes defined within this framework, the value of information can be protected and even raised whilst reducing threats and vulnerabilities.

This report focuses on how to integrate an information risk management approach with corporate information and knowledge strategies to reduce costs and deliver value. It draws on leading practices adopted by a variety of public and private sector organisations and includes comparative analysis of best practices.

This publication shows information professionals how to develop risk strategies that integrate planning and policy making to manage and mitigate risks arising from legal compliance, technology projects and change initiatives.

This report provides an overview of key concepts and techniques for improving the management of information risks. It also shows how to integrate information risk planning into policy and performance management.

Chapter 1 introduces key concepts, principles and issues relating to IRM.

Chapter 2 of this book looks at the IRM improvement techniques. This chapter brings together the key processes, techniques and information products required to deliver improved IRM.

Chapter 3 explores the first improvement technique, information scanning. This reviews improvements to information gathering and processing for better business intelligence.

Chapter 4 focuses on the information assessment improvement technique, which takes the products of the scanning process and builds them into a corporate development process.

Chapter 5 begins with an overview of the information and intelligence development process. It shows how to use key improvement tools to deliver improvements and monitor performance.

Chapter 6 reviews methods for information risk management improvement capitalisation and the value of information assets.

Chapter 7 considers corporate governance and performance management for information professionals adopting improvements in IRM.

Chapter 8 looks at the integrated IRM framework within organisations and the future issues for information professionals working in this sphere.

Part Two focuses on five case studies of organisations, both public and private, which have undertaken IRM initiatives. The case studies provide key learnings and examples of best practice to help readers adapt and introduce new practices into their organisations.

A recession is a great time to begin to think differently. A new approach to information risk management can underpin a range of improvement initiatives and free organisations from threats and reduce vulnerabilities during challenging economic circumstances.

The appendices in Part Three provide useful tools and templates for implementing information risk management in your organisation.