



MetaGovernance[®]

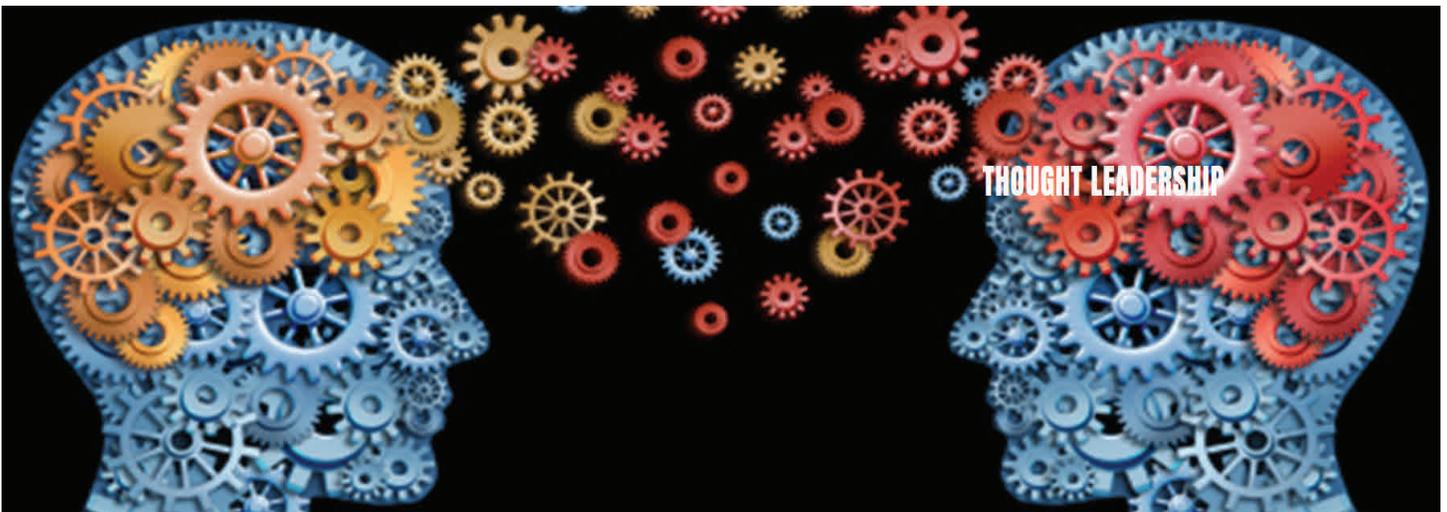
Defining Information Governance:

What's in a Name?

An Information Governance Solutions whitepaper

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Defining Information Governance

WHAT'S IN A NAME

There has been a great deal of confusion around the meaning of the term information governance. Even though the term has been around for a few years now, the confusion persists even today.

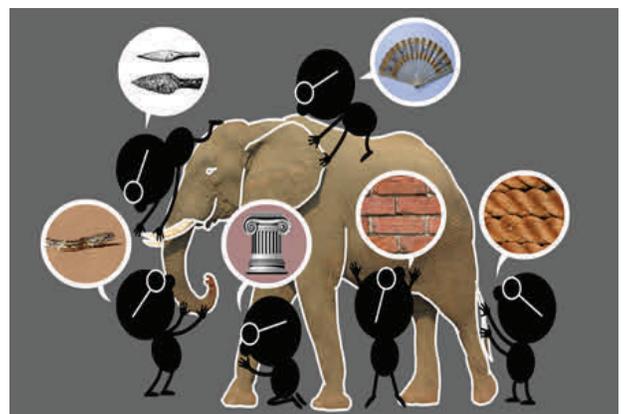
Professionals at the operational level in many diverse but related information management domains hear this term and sometimes think it is nothing more than a rebranding of what they have been practicing for years. Often, professional pundits adopt the label as part of their attempt to stay leading edge, but still deliver the same message they have been delivering for years. Software vendors muddy the waters even further by taking their existing toolset and rebranding it as “information governance software” without changing any functionality in their offering.



Is the term information governance merely a rebranding and regrouping that does not add any value? Is it similar to the story of the “The Emperor’s New Clothes”. Two con artists claim they can create beautiful clothes for the king, but only those who are truly worthy can see the clothes. In fact, there are no new clothes, but pride prevents anyone but a child from speaking out.

Or, is the term information governance more like the tale of “The Blind Men and the Elephant” where each blind person sees the elephant only through his own frame of reference. The person holding the leg interprets the elephant as a pillar, the person holding the ear senses a fan, the person with the trunk senses a snake, etc.

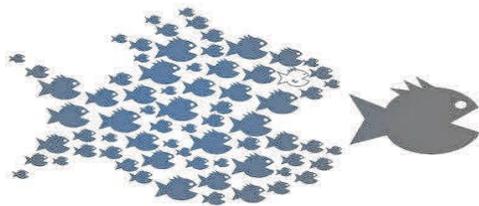
We will show that indeed the term creates a new context that adds value. That is to say, the clothes are real, there is an elephant that is more than just its individual parts, and that the various features of the clothing / elephant can be viewed as a whole in a logical and integrated manner.



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DATA GOVERNANCE

We will start by looking at the term information governance and how it relates to data governance. A number of pundits make the case that data governance is not information governance because data governance is, for the most part, an IT governance function. It may be true that *bad* data governance was centered in IT but good data governance is about assigning responsibility for managing corporate data assets. The owners and consumers of these data assets are the business. More evolved IT organizations view themselves as the enablers and partners in this process. The data governance process provides a map of how the traditional data sources are used in the organization.



So, is information governance merely “good” data governance with a new label, much like the emperor’s invisible wardrobe? The confusion lies in the fact that data governance typically deals with traditional discrete operational and financial units of information, often as contained in IT applications and IT managed data repositories,

hence the mis-interpretation cited earlier that data governance is an IT function. This limited interpretation exists despite the well-known fact that this type of data often resides in spreadsheets and ad-hoc data stores managed by the business.

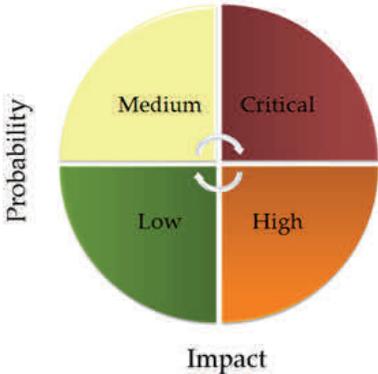
The real difference between data governance and information governance is the more limited scope of traditional data governance in that: (1) its focus is on only a portion of an organization’s data assets, i.e. the traditional discrete operational and financial units of information, (2) its focus is on only a portion of the risk profile for the organization’s information assets, and (3) its focus is on only part of the life-cycle management of information assets.

Let’s examine each of these points in more detail.

Defining Information Governance

RISKS (CONTINUED)

Each of these disciplines contains a classification process for applying requirements in a consistent manner. The business that has decision rights over a particular subject area domain should be the same for each of these disciplines and the business terms should be the same, but often they are not when these functions are managed separately. So, the combined information architecture / data architecture perspective actually can limit confusion, provide consistency, and eliminate duplicated effort.



LIFE-CYCLE MANAGEMENT



Data governance focuses on who can create and access data. Risk management disciplines focus on backing up, restoring, protecting, and deleting data. Inclusion of all types of data and all the risks associated with that data under a single governance umbrella based on the organization’s information architecture and business attributes would seem to complete the picture. But does it?

In order to manage the life cycle, we need to include the concept of effective use. Is the organization’s information architecture being leveraged, and is it being optimized? This is how the information architecture provides value to the bottom line of the organization

and becomes more than just a risk mitigation strategy. Leveraging the current state is about validating accuracy and then using the best source of data where multiple copies exist. Optimizing is about identifying the weak points in the overall information architecture and putting together a roadmap to address those weaknesses. (See our article on Sustainable Information Governance for more information on how this is accomplished.)

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CONTEXT, CONTENT, RISKS

When we leverage the information architecture perspective we can get a picture of the varying aspects of data governance, the additional disciplines represented by information governance and how these fit together. Taking the perspectives of content, context, and risk can provide a map of the overall domain. (White represents concepts typically in the data governance domain. Black represents concepts in the expanded information governance domain.)

