PREVIEW

BiSL® Next - a framework for

Business Information Management

Improving business performance through better use of information and technology

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Note:

IT is too important to leave to IT

Times have changed. Information and related technology once was deployed primarily as operational resources that enabled enterprises to operate more efficiently. But now many – if not most – enterprises recognize the need to utilize them as strategic assets that are often part of their products and almost always determine their customers' experience, and in so doing, the enterprises' success.

These 'digital enterprises' are challenged by potentially conflicting IT demands: business continuity versus time-to-market versus competitive advantage. They need more resilient IT systems, quicker flow of work from development to production, and better product development. The kind of organization that can address these challenges is characterized by three things:

- Healthy balance of responsiveness to change, and highly disciplined operations
- Much closer collaboration between business and IT disciplines; demand-supply models based on service level agreements have been demonstrated to polarize attitudes within business and IT
- Strong digital business leadership – IT in a digital enterprise is too important to leave to IT.

Transformation to such a digital enterprise implies a change to the IT operating model. It entails a better use of IT for IT itself, in other words the automation of appropriate IT processes as observed in many DevOps environments. Better collaboration is also needed: between IT disciplines, with external IT service providers and between IT, business and customers. The need to actively include customers is paramount: increasingly, customers (and other stakeholders) have their own ways of engaging digitally with enterprises and unless there is a compelling reason to do otherwise, they will go for the easiest route or the most engaging experience. Within the enterprise, business and IT are merging, thus decentralization of IT to the lines of business is a major part of the transformation. It is also imperative that IT services are used better, both in the enterprise and by their customers, to realize value.

These changes justify a more holistic and inclusive approach to organizing IT. The IT function is no longer positioned as a segregated and subservient order-taker, but is embedded in the enterprise's various lines of digital business, co-working towards common goals. The enterprise's digital capabilities are determined by business need and associated value, which are closely aligned with the enterprise's mission. To benefit from IT's differentiating potential, much importance is placed on governance of IT and IT strategy, as well as the other domains of operation and improvement of IT systems and services. The inseparable nature of IT in digital business means that equal attention is paid to the business context in which information and technology are used, the required data, the services that provide the data, and finally the underlying technology such as applications and infrastructure. Constant alignment of these four perspectives – business, data, service and technology – with each other and with the enterprise's mission, needs, value and digital capabilities, ensures the best possible customer experience.

These twelve elements - four drivers, four domains and four perspectives - are the basis of the guidance in the Business Information Services Library (BiSL®). This framework of guiding principles, good practices, and practical templates is guidance for digitally engaged business leaders and those who collaborate with them. The BiSL® Next model illustrates the holistic nature of the drivers, domains and perspectives.
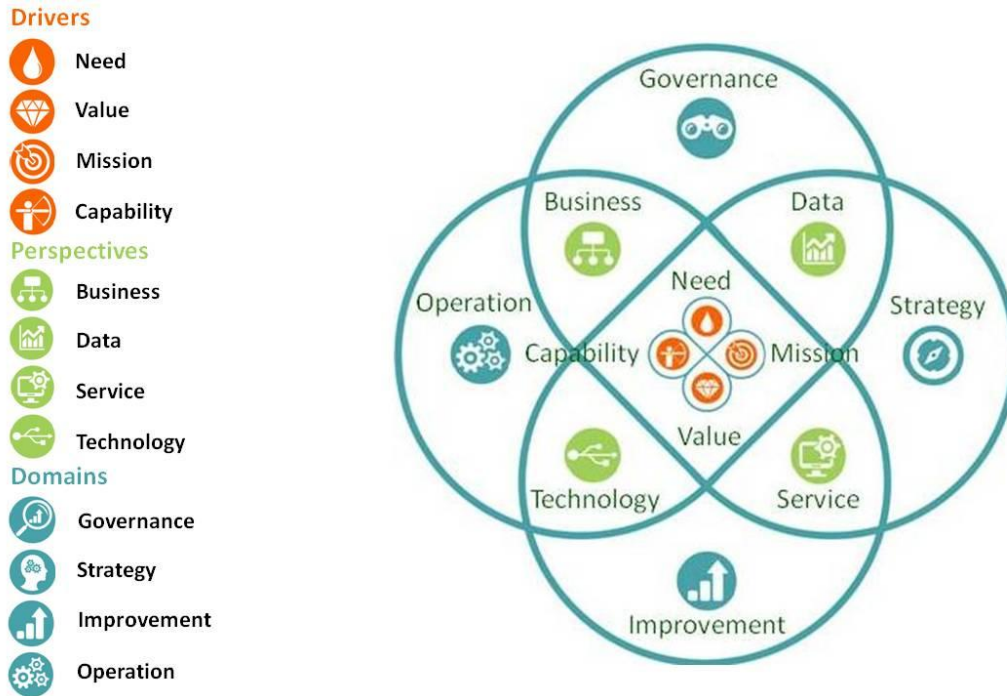

Figure: The BiSL® Next model

BiSL® Next is intended to be used as overarching guidance from a business perspective, in combination with the guidance in specific areas offered by other bodies of knowledge. It can be used both as guidance for digital transformation as well as for governing, managing and running a digital enterprise.

In the following part of this document, each of the twelve major components of the BiSL® Next model is described, starting with the four drivers that are the underlying principles, followed by the four perspectives that are constantly taken to ensure a balanced result, and finally the four domains of activities that are needed to achieve the desired results. Together, these four domains are referred to as Business Information Management (BIM).

The Drivers

The drivers are the core underlying principles and apply generically to each of the activity domains. The drivers comprise two sets of two linked components that complement one another and are also in tension.

The Need & Value Drivers

In Need, the business need for an information service is described, whereas Value describes the added value of the information service to the business need. Need and Value relate directly to each other because if something has no value, why would it be needed? And even when something is needed by a specific stakeholder, it is sometimes the question whether it delivers value. Value should be paramount: if a business information service is not valued, or value cannot be demonstrated, then it is highly likely it is not needed. An example is where the Need and Value elements help you to link the issues of practical use and necessary improvement. This is to ensure that an information service is working as it should, is completely understood and if it is not providing value then the focus should be on change for the better.

The Mission & Capability Drivers

The driver Mission describes the mission of the enterprise. The driver Capability will help you to determine the resources (time, money, business and IT people, etc.) that you will need to fulfill the Mission.

Mission and Capability are directly related because in order to fulfill the enterprise's Mission, many capabilities must be in place to drive success; and of course, if a Capability is not needed then it has no value in relation to the enterprise's Mission. The Mission should focus on output and outcome (benefits), allowing the key Capabilities to be identified and put in place to meet the information requirements. In the domain of BIM, we focus on the digital Mission of the enterprise and on the BIM Capabilities (and related resources) needed to realize the information services required for the enterprise's Mission.

The Mission element will provide guidance about formulating the enterprise Mission (in terms of Business, Data, Service and Technology perspective). BIM Capabilities will be needed to assure that the portfolio of business information services is governed, managed, changed and operated in a purposeful way.

The perspectives

The Business perspective

The Business perspective is constant throughout each domain, though of course governing and setting direction means that it is of particular importance in Governance and Strategy and becomes more of a feedback issue in Improvement and Operation.

The development of enterprise policies regarding capture, storage, retrieval, processing, archiving and destruction of information and data (within the dictates of the overarching enterprise policies on for example, privacy, security and any political regulations) is a key Business perspective.

Thinking about Strategy, the Business perspective requires that business information management translates the business policy model (describing what the business process should look like) into the information architecture and the architectural data model(s). This describes what information services should look like and shows the relations between the business processes and the supporting information services.

The Data perspective

Data is also a constant being the fundamental reason for the existence of commerce and government alike. Strategy is arguably the domain where the Data perspective is most important since Data are required to make adequate plans, otherwise both Improvement and Operation will compromise.

The enterprise of today depends on its information services to stay in business and deliver the functions and services of the business. In many parts of the public sector, such as in policy units, handling Data in one form or another is the primary business activity, undertaken by most staff for most of the time. BIM should be a key discipline in these units, with BiSL as the key good practice.

The Data perspective will focus on requirements for information services and their supporting technology as defined by the business of the enterprise. Strategic decisions about information integrity

and the value of digital assets in the information services must be seen as integral components of strategic decisions about the business of the entire enterprise, its products and services, and its overall functions and organization.

The Service perspective

Thinking about Service is rather hazy within the stratospheric levels of Governance and Strategy, though Improvement must clearly adopt this perspective to ensure that new or improved services are fit for purpose. Fail here, and Operation suffers causing a maelstrom of requests for change.

Governance in BIM is responsible for effective translation of the business policies and processes into information services, a principal focus for the stakeholder perspective on Services. Application management, Database management and IT infrastructure management deal with the further translation into applications, databases and infrastructure. A perspective on Strategy will be required to ensure that action is planned and executed to achieve business information service goals and not just IT goals. Probably the most important facet of the delivery of information services concerns automated applications. The set up and running of these applications thus defines to a large extent the quality of the support for the business processes. Within Improvement, inevitably the Services perspective will revolve about the axes of development of new or improved information services and the testing of the services. The development and connection of applications are described in the application architecture, which is primarily the responsibility of application management, but clearly under the direction of BIM.

From the Technology and Services perspectives, information services and systems are the combination of IT based business applications, data, human activities and information-handling procedures that utilize IT hardware and software to deliver electronically based information services to users within, and increasingly outside, the enterprise.

BIM clearly can (and should) influence developers and infrastructure specialists, because of specific requirements for information services. Even more influence should be exerted over data modeling. A question for the future is whether business information is now so dependent on IT that database design and administration should be in the business and not in the technology domain.

The stakeholder's perspective on Services will (or should) inevitably focus on issues such as quality of service, high availability through robust risk, security and resource management and data integrity. The Improvement of services will depend on these issues and others such as suitability and performance of suppliers and sourcing strategies as well as consideration of issues of the management of agile teams.

Although from the Services perspective, Governance and Strategy may not be obvious, information services will be operated in accordance with policies and strategic intent and the issues of service quality and fitness for purpose will be under the microscope in these domains.

The Technology perspective

Technology is at the heart of modern business. In the 21st century, IT is crucial to the majority of private and public sector enterprises to deliver and present their products and services to customers and to support the delivery of operational services. Everything is digital. However, the perspective is skewed to Governance and Strategy because once in place both Improvement and Operation can only deal with what they have; opportunities taking up technologies must enter the cycle of being assessed for the future.

The Technology perspective on Governance and Strategy used to be limited because technology is considered to focus on day to day Operation support. The technology perspective therefore focuses on execution of governing and strategic principles. However, it is a modern-day characteristic of the business world that the role of IT has changed from enabling business processes to transforming the business itself. It is crucial that enterprise decisions (Governance) about IT and the business information services are aligned to business strategy. This is of course even more valid where the enterprise has extensive plans for electronic service delivery or other innovative ways of achieving its aims. In the 21st century other than having to consider the needs of the disabled or the economically disadvantaged who might rely on paper based delivery or audio, most delivery *is* electronic. When thinking about technology, Strategy means thinking about tomorrow as well as the technology of today.

New ways of delivering services make the role of IT ever more central. IT has been critically important for many years in enabling business to gain efficiency and economy, and technology innovations now make a real difference to effectiveness. IT can transform the way business is done, though remember that Improvement to information services must be implemented in a fashion that fits in with accepted practices. There must be appropriate skills, the correct functionality must be defined and the budget identified. There is therefore an important relationship between the Operation domain and the Drivers that make resources available for implementing the changes.

The domains

The Governance domain

Governance within BiSL is the organizational capacity exercised by the board, executive management and IT management to control the formulation, implementation and management of information services and in this way ensure the required fusion of business and IT. Governance here means formal management oversight: how the enterprise is managed in terms of hierarchies, authority, roles and responsibilities. Ensuring proper governance of business information services is paramount. Managing information flows, structuring information and data dependencies and work methods must be coordinated between strategic suppliers, business partners and users of information and data in the ecosystem of information and data. The guidance therefore applies also to relationships with parties outside the enterprise, such as suppliers, and partners in the supply chain.

The Governance domain will discuss how enterprise policies (for example, Identity and Access, Quality, Risk, Security), will influence the Strategy, Improvement and Operation domains. Policies are specified and documented regulations (rules or sets of rules) that govern the supply of information services.

The Strategy domain

The information Strategy is the focus of this domain. In the enterprise ecosystem and in the enterprise itself, the business processes change more or less continuously. There are also market and technology changes (some opportunities, some risks) that affect the information services of the enterprise. Services must be future-proofed, where possible and where shortcomings in current services are identified there must be clear direction about what should be carried out to bring out improvements. Issues such as portfolio management and the information lifecycle will be considered.

The Improvement domain

How information services can be improved and the mechanism for doing so is the primary focus within this domain. The key to a successful design and delivery is understanding how IT-intensive service design should be managed. The Improvement domain is closely coupled with the Operation domain. In this respect, the key elements should be obvious, namely analysis and specification of the information needs of new services or agreed improvements to existing services, assembling of the data needed (and influencing technology decisions) and oversight of testing and deployment.

The Operation domain

The Operation domain focuses on the use of information services in the business. Ensuring optimal and continuous support of information services are included in this domain. The elements within the domain provide support for those using information services when carrying out their activities within the business processes, for the operational management of the Information services supplier and for providing and monitoring the operational services. The focus with these processes is the efficient use of operational services.