White Paper

IT Spring – the Aftermath

In 2011 Rick Mans and I wrote about the 'democratization' of the user community in our IT Spring paper. The relentless consumerization and commoditization of IT gave business people more insight into what IT could do for them and more confidence to challenge bureaucratic and conservative IT Departments. More than ever – and rightly so – the business is now in the IT driving seat. But with great power comes great responsibility and, just as the Arab Spring has left countries challenged with creating a new form of government, the business is struggling with how to govern and manage information and IT. This paper gives insight into the responsibilities that the democratized business needs to fulfill in order to get the most value out of information and IT.

Mark Smalley, 7 January 2013

In the beginning there was IT…

IT users have had a rough ride. Ever since the introduction of IT sixties odd years ago, IT departments have been acting like divine beings, telling the users what was good for them. For the first twenty years or so, IT boffins were treated as incomprehensible but brilliant scientists who were treated with the same deference as doctors used to be. Yes doctor, no doctor. But then the inevitable happened and cracks started to appear. Projects failed to deliver. Costs rocketed. Functionality didn't function. IT fell from its pedestal and became a fallen angel, retreating into a "Just tell us what you want" position, with the implicit message "and then it's your fault when it goes wrong".

The users are revolting

Back to the users. There's something in the air. The younger generations of users have completely different and irreverent opinions about IT. "IT's just there to be used." Smartphones, iPads and apps are just expected to work within the corporate IT environment. "You don't dictate which pen I use to write a note, so why are you taking such an interest in my apps?" 'Bring your own IT' is quick becoming the norm. Not for 'public transport' train and bus applications of course. Back to the users. There's an undercurrent of discontent about the current IT regime and social media has made this painfully transparent. Even if a dictator's benevolent, he's still a dictator. Users want to be recognized as somebody who's in a relationship with an application, either out of their free volition or because their organizations require them to use it. And they want a say in the relationship. So give them the vote. And don't fiddle with the ballot boxes – they want transparency. Just like we had the Prague Spring in 1968 and the Arab Spring in 2011, 2012 well could see the IT Spring. Liberate the users! Topple the IT dictators! Banish them to Silicon Valley (where they'll probably try to govern in exile).

These two paragraphs were published in 2011 in IT Spring and set the scene for this paper.

With great power comes great responsibility

In 2011 Rick Mans and I wrote about the 'democratization' of the user community in our IT Spring[1] paper. The relentless consumerization and commoditization of IT gave business people more insight into what IT could do for them and more confidence to challenge bureaucratic and conservative IT Departments, with headlines such as "IT department 're-arranging the deckchairs on the Titanic' as execs bypass the CIO"[2] and "2013: The year IT may lose its seat at the table"[3]. More than ever – and rightly so – the business is now in the IT driving seat. But with great power comes great responsibility and, just as the Arab Spring has left countries challenged with creating a new form of government, the business is struggling with how to govern and manage the information and IT and extract the potential value.

While describing the current state of affairs as total anarchy would be grossly overstating the case, there is most certainly a degree of 'lawlessness' in the form of lack of formalized (let alone standardized) roles and responsibilities with respect to management of information and IT from a business perspective. Who owns the functionality? Who owns the data? Who is responsible for specifications and testing? Who deals with the IT Department and external providers? Who ensures effective use of information and systems? Who governs enterprise-wide investments in IT, e.g. Big Data? These things take time to settle and, while it would be contra-productive to try to formalize affairs while they are still in a state of flux, it is useful to have a high level view of the areas of responsibility so that they are recognized as such, and formalized *to an appropriate degree* when the time is ripe.

The next sections describe

- the business responsibilities with respect to management of information and IT from a business perspective and
- a framework with the processes and activities that are needed to fulfill these responsibilities.

[1] IT Spring, July 2011, Rick Mans & Mark Smalley
[2] TechRepublic, 30 May 2012, Steve Ranger
[3] InfoWorld, 4 January 2013, Galen Gruman

Business Information Management[4]

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.

At an operational level Business Information Management

- 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

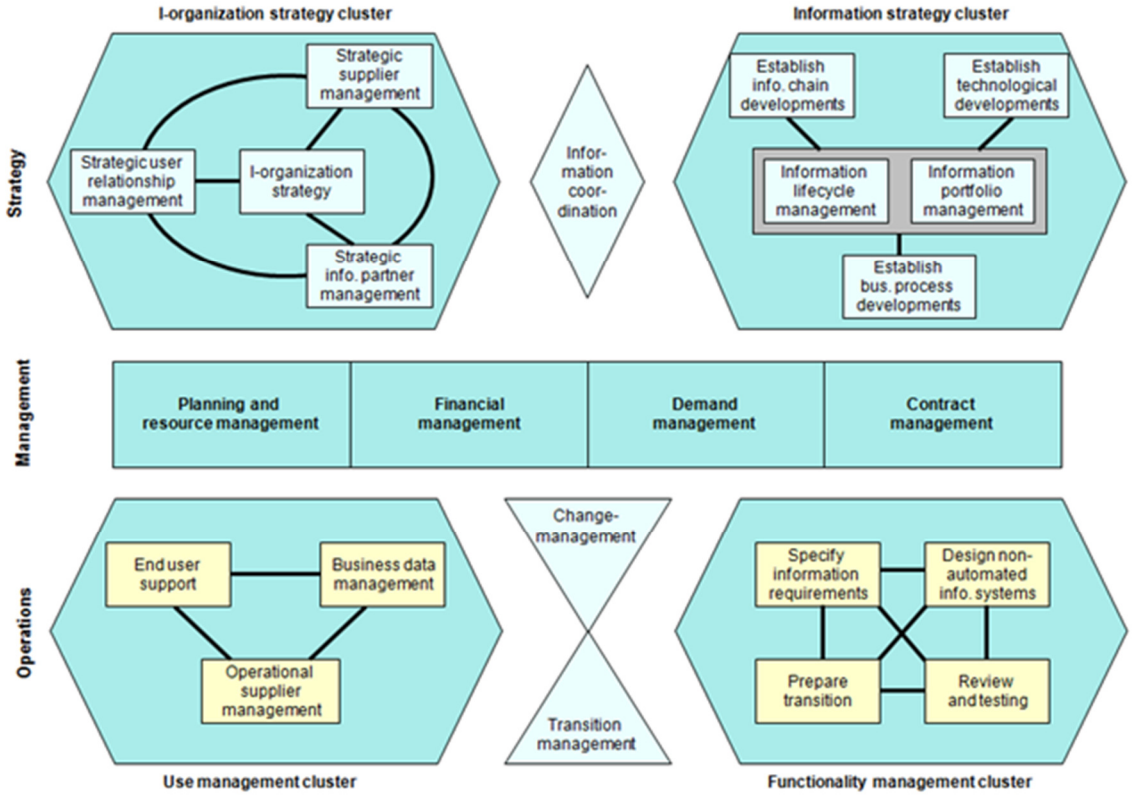
At a strategic level it

- 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

[4] Business Information Management, 17 November 2012, Mark Smalley

BiSL® Process Framework[5]

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



The Use management process cluster ensures that information and (non) automated information systems and used both effectively and efficiently. Functionality management ensures that the information systems comply with the changed information requirements. Information Strategy determines how information (technology) can contribute to the business strategy. The four management processes 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 on the next page.

[5] BiSL, A Framework for Business Information Management, ASL BiSL Foundation/Van Haren Publishing, April 2012

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[6] and its partners.

[6] www.aslbislfoundation.org

Author

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