

The new information agenda: do you have one?



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The lack of trusted information—information that is accurate, timely and relevant—is on the minds of CEOs and senior executives around the world. The cost and complexity of managing increasing volumes of data and content, combined with the need to provide trusted information to every user for every transaction, is driving CIOs to rethink their approach to information delivery. What is required is a paradigm shift from siloed organizational information fiefdoms to the design and deployment of an enterprisewide information infrastructure. Without it, companies will continue to struggle in reaching the ultimate goal of optimizing business through advanced use of information.

CIOs now have access to a new strategy, planning and implementation approach for turning trusted information from a vision into a reality: the information agenda. An information agenda serves as both strategy and tactical roadmap, bringing together the people, processes and technology necessary to transform increasing volumes of information into a strategic, trusted business asset.

This white paper defines the information agenda; describes key considerations and best practices in creating and implementing an information agenda; and sets forth how IBM can help you to deliver trusted information enterprisewide.

Highlights

Trusted information can be more than an internal asset—it can also be an important competitive advantage.

“Accurate, integrated and up-to-date information is vital for efficient operations management. We realized we could no longer afford to work with data that was siloed in different parts of the organization. We needed an IT infrastructure that enables collaboration and supports optimum performance at every link of our value chain.”

Dr. Anusorn Sangnimnuan, President of the Bangchak Petroleum Pcl.

The need for trusted information

As market pressures increase, organizations are looking for ways to harness information as a strategic asset. When treated as such, information becomes a significant competitive differentiator. All too often, however, this information is inconsistent, out of date, incomplete or simply not available when and where it is needed most. The effects of this information misalignment can be felt throughout the organization in rising costs, inefficiencies and missed opportunities. A lack of trusted information can result in even more dire consequences. New products or business models executed on the basis of faulty information can result in costly failures.

These challenges are not new, but the need to address the problem is more pressing than ever before. Equally important, the ability to overcome these challenges and make timely, trusted information available has never been better.

Highlights

Today's technologies make the creation and maintenance of trusted information more feasible and cost-effective than ever before.

The potential benefits of harnessing the power of trusted information range from protecting existing technology investments to new abilities to meet corporate and regulatory requirements.

Open standards (like XML and Web services) and flexible architectures (like Service Oriented Architecture, or SOA) have both matured and gained critical support in the industry to the point where they provide real value in the context of providing trusted information. Technologies such as master data management, information integration and data warehousing are available to deliver the capabilities required to deploy an enterprisewide, integrated software platform. Finally, market-leading companies have begun to deploy effective information agendas based on tried and proven best practices, helping them reduce risk, speed implementation and realize results faster.

Organizations that make the creation and delivery of trusted information a priority can be richly rewarded. The potential return on investments includes:

- *Extended protection for existing investments in applications, middleware, systems and skills*
- *Enhanced visibility, control and insight, enabling organizations to optimize their business processes more effectively*
- *Improved data governance and management of the availability, consistency, integrity and security of data in a manner that meets both regulatory and management requirements*
- *Extended efficiencies from using information as a set of trusted, reusable services in an SOA*
- *Enhanced ability to integrate and use unstructured data, such as e-mail, video and documents, and syndicated information from third parties.*

Highlights

The information agenda is a proven, effective method for creating, delivering and exploiting trusted information.

The information agenda integrates information strategy, governance, infrastructure and an implementation roadmap.

A new approach — the information agenda

The information agenda is the comprehensive, enterprisewide plan a CIO – working with line-of-business colleagues – creates and implements to achieve both short-term tactical and longer-term strategic changes. The goal is to transform the organization and unlock the business value of information across data and content silos. The information agenda enables organizations to deliver trusted information to optimize business performance.

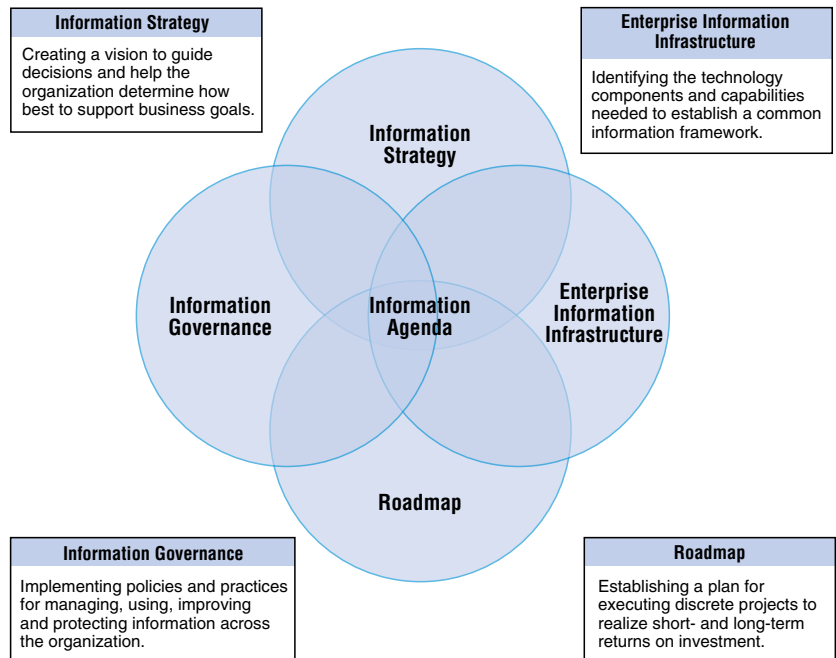


Figure 1. The framework of an effective information agenda.

The reason the information agenda (illustrated in Figure 1) has proven to be so effective for organizations looking to create and maintain trusted information is quite simple: the information agenda is built on a solid approach that integrates strategy, information governance and enterprise information infrastructure with a comprehensive implementation roadmap.

Highlights

As part of the information agenda, information strategy provides the overall vision and syncs the agenda with the organization's business strategy.

A crucial component of the information governance portion of the agenda is the establishment of a special committee responsible for defining the organization's information policies and practices.

Information strategy

Information strategy establishes the principles which will guide the organization's efforts to create and exploit trusted information. The information strategy provides an end-to-end vision for all components of the information agenda, and is driven by an organization's business strategy and operating framework. The information strategy should be revisited regularly to ensure it stays aligned with the organization's business strategy.

Information governance

Effective information governance can enhance the quality, availability and integrity of a company's information by fostering cross-organizational collaboration and policymaking. This requires the establishment of a specific corporate organization whose mission is to define the policies and practices for managing and protecting critical information assets over their lifecycle. The core objectives of information governance include:

- *Defining governance infrastructure and technology*
- *Establishing common and standard information domain definitions*
- *Defining ongoing governance processes*
- *Developing architecture practices and standards*
- *Monitoring and ongoing improvement of data quality*
- *Identifying and training key business sponsors, governors, stewards and executives of high-priority business areas*
- *Establishing the necessary organizational policies and cross-organizational oversight*
- *Training and enabling all affected staff.*

Highlights

Collaboration between CIO and line-of-business managers is especially important for the ultimate success of any organization's information agenda.

An enterprise-level information infrastructure provides a strong framework for the rest of the information agenda.

"Information management is critical for us and our customers. We see it as a real differentiator in the market place."

Chris Levan, Chief Information Officer, BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee

Although it is sometimes challenging for the CIO and line-of-business managers to work together to establish information governance standards, the importance of this component of the information agenda should not be underestimated. Robust information governance is necessary for an organization to comply with external regulations more quickly and more completely. Information governance can help unlock the financial advantages that are driven by improved data quality, management processes and accountability. Business performance can also be improved as a result of information governance – via common definitions and processes that drive effective strategy development, execution, tracking and management.

Enterprise information infrastructure

In order to manage information as a strategic asset over time, companies must commit to an enterprise-level information infrastructure. Anything less results in significant operational inefficiencies, unacceptable turnaround on projects and the continued proliferation of multiple copies of data and content. Within the context of an information agenda, an enterprise information infrastructure framework identifies the technology required to integrate current investments with future technologies, helping to optimize return on investment.

Highlights

There are a number of technology elements that can be leveraged to build an effective information infrastructure.

Information integration, master data management, dynamic warehousing and enterprise content and data management all play a role in the information infrastructure portion of the agenda.

Most enterprise information infrastructure frameworks include the following elements:

Information integration works to accelerate the delivery of trusted information by enabling effective integration of information management tools such as enterprise intelligence (data warehouse) solutions, enterprise resource planning (ERP) and customer relationship management (CRM) deployments, and infrastructure consolidations such as SAP.

Master data management (MDM) enables master data—such as customer, supplier, partner, product, materials and employee data—to be consolidated to provide an integrated, appropriate view of relevant, trusted information within any given business process.

Dynamic warehousing provides the next-generation data warehousing capabilities required to help organizations turn traditionally latent and historical data into relevant, real-time predictive analytics that enable timelier, more insightful business decisions.

Enterprise content management (ECM) provides content management, discovery and business process management to support content-based business transformation.

Highlights

The most robust information infrastructures take advantage of both technologic best practices and industry specific knowledge to tailor the infrastructure to an organization's specific needs.

Enterprise data management encompasses the data servers and data management tools that can support a wide variety of platforms in helping to reduce cost and enable rapid use of data.

Metadata management creates and manages an organization's metadata (information about information) and defines the meaning of data within the repository. Consistency, completeness and context of data are assured via service directories, data directories, content directories, translation, retrieval and navigation processes.

Industry models enable the CIO and the organization to leverage the accrued knowledge and best practices of the industry to implement information integration, master data management and next-generation data warehousing more rapidly and more successfully, with less risk.

"There is tremendous competition in the retail space. To keep our edge, we must continuously improve our processes and leverage our core capabilities in new ways. To do this, we need a solid foundation that provides accurate information wherever and whenever it's needed."

Ken Dschankilic, Enterprise Architect, Canadian Tire Corporation

Highlights

The roadmap portion of the information agenda pinpoints where an organization currently stands regarding trusted information, where the organization wants to be—and how to get there.

Roadmap

The information agenda includes the deployment roadmap for both the near and long term. For the roadmap to be most effective, the CIO needs to show where his or her organization stands now in terms of the maturity of its information use, and where it wants to go in the future. The information agenda roadmap:

- *Identifies and prioritizes projects that deliver a significant return on investment*
- *Identifies what data and content is important to the organization*
- *Identifies how and when the data should be made available*
- *Determines what capabilities are required to support and access relevant information*
- *Determines the management processes and governance practices that are required to sustain the information strategy over time.*

The information agenda at work

A large financial services corporation was looking to increase its profits by cross-selling more effectively to existing customers and reducing the cost of servicing its customer base.

The company's CIO and business executives used the approach outlined in this paper to develop their information agenda. As a result, the corporation was able to:

- *Quickly and more accurately pinpoint the information issues that were standing in the way of achieving profit goals, in particular information silos and redundant systems due to recent acquisitions*
- *Facilitate continuing cross-organization cooperation — via a steering committee established as part of the information agenda — to speed creation and implementation of new processes and technologies*
- *Better justify the cost of technology investments by clearly showing the connection to critical business goals.*

Highlights

IBM has developed an accelerated approach that can help an organization develop its own information agenda in a matter of weeks.

Enlisting an executive sponsor, such as the CEO or CFO, can significantly enhance the CIOs ability to obtain participation by line-of-business colleagues.

Turning vision into reality

Based on best practices honed from client engagements and our own information infrastructure transformation, IBM has defined an accelerated approach to developing an information agenda. Illustrated in Figure 2, this approach can be utilized to formulate an information agenda within a matter of weeks and define a set of distinct projects to implement for quick returns.

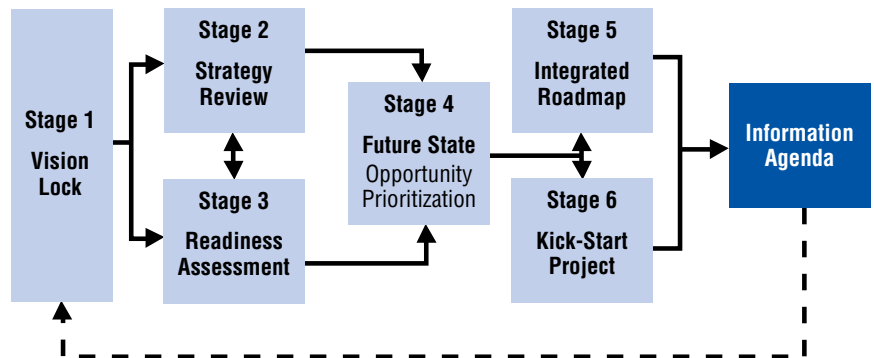


Figure 2. The IBM accelerated approach to an information agenda.

CIOs looking to develop and implement an effective, business-aligned information agenda for the delivery of trusted information are going to need the assistance of their line-of-business colleagues. It is important, therefore, that CIOs obtain an executive sponsor—such as the Board of Directors, the CEO or the CFO—who can position the information agenda as a strategic corporate initiative. This endorsement will help the CIO enlist line-of-business and other colleagues who are needed to participate in the development process, and whose support will be critical to the success of implementation.

Highlights

Stage one of the accelerated information agenda process establishes a shared set of expectations and guiding principles.

With strong executive sponsorship and a team of committed colleagues, CIOs can begin the accelerated path to an information agenda. With the process IBM has defined, formulation of an information agenda proceeds in five distinct stages:

Stage 1: Vision lock

The objective of this stage is to create an agreement with executive stakeholders regarding the need for an information agenda and commitment to the following guiding principles:

- *Trusted information is needed to make the decisions that deliver business strategy.*
- *Business functions should be responsible for defining the information needed to support their processes.*
- *Information should be efficiently provided as a shared service to all parts of the business.*
- *There should be one version of the truth for critical business information.*
- *Information should have one standard definition and presentation, unless compelling business differences dictate otherwise.*
- *Data quality and compliance using common standards should be built in at the source, with minimum intervention in the flow to the user.*
- *Information is a corporate asset. It should be freely shared within the business unless cost or legal/commercial sensitivity prevent it.*

“By having accurate information, in the context of each transaction, our fraud analysts can more quickly and efficiently identify the cases that require further investigation.”

Hagen Schaumkell, Director, Transaction Services, WestLB

Highlights

Stage two examines the business requirements and processes and identifies the trusted information those requirements and processes draw on.

Stage three defines the current state of the business and its information.

Stage four establishes the desired end state and the key projects required to get there.

Stage 2: Business strategy and drivers review

In this stage, participants will identify the current business, organizational and process models; define key customers; and determine the types of information needed to support these models and customers.

Stage 3: Baseline assessment for maturity and capabilities

The baseline assessment defines the current state of the people, processes and technology that make up the information agenda. The assessment includes:

- *Readiness assessment*
- *Information maturity assessment and supporting data*
- *Data governance maturity assessment and supporting data*
- *People, process and technology needed for existing and planned initiatives based on stage two objectives.*

Stage 4: Future state development, opportunity identification and prioritization

For this task, IT leadership works with business leaders to agree upon the desired future state of the information infrastructure and the key projects required to get there. This stage also includes prioritization of IT projects against corporate, line-of-business and IT objectives to identify the first project to address with the information agenda. This stage includes the following elements:

- *Target information maturity level*
- *Target data governance maturity level*
- *List of projects to accomplish target information and data governance maturity*
- *Identification of first area of focus – the kick-start project that can produce a “quick win” for the information agenda.*

Highlights

Stage five generates a gap analysis and a phased execution plan.

Step six selects a quick-start first project and creates the project's execution plan.

It is important to revisit the completed information agenda periodically, to be sure it remains in alignment with the organization's business strategy.

Stage 5: Integrated roadmap development and implementation planning

Building on the findings of the first four stages, this step delineates the gaps in the organization's current information state and creates a phased execution plan to transform the organization and move to the targeted information state.

Stage 6: Kick-start project

While an all-encompassing, long-range plan is essential for transforming an organization, it can also be daunting. That is why IBM recommends identifying a specific "first project" and incorporating its planning into the overall approach to defining an information agenda. Specifically, this stage of the process creates a detailed execution plan for that first project identified in stage four. The execution plan includes:

- *Agreement on key performance indicators to measure the success of first project*
- *Selection and acquisition of technology components required for the project*
- *Incorporation of the appropriate information policies and procedures based on the project requirements.*

The ultimate outcome of this process is the organization's information agenda. By bringing all of the components into a single framework, the information agenda helps enable a closed-loop process for regularly re-examining objectives, strategies and results to ensure that they remain aligned with the organization's business strategy. Given the current business and technology climate of rapid change, this step is particularly crucial to long-range success.

Highlights

IBM Information On Demand solutions are uniquely suited to aiding CIOs in addressing their organization's trusted information needs.

CIOs can enlist IBM's assistance in creating their own information agendas via special two- to three-day kick-start workshops.

IBM can help

From creating an information agenda to providing the technologies, products, services and expertise needed to execute your agenda, IBM can help CIOs succeed. IBM Information On Demand solutions have been specifically designed to address trusted information needs. Open-standards based and reflecting an investment of over US\$10 billion in the last three years, IBM Information On Demand solutions are among the industry's most comprehensive. They provide CIOs with an enterprisewide approach to deploying and managing an enterprisewide information infrastructure. In addition, CIOs gain the advantage of IBM's industry-specific accelerators and extensive knowledge of technology best practices that can provide organizations with a cost-efficient, tailored set of trusted information solutions.

Conclusion and next steps

CIOs who use an information agenda to enable their organizations to deliver trusted information using an orchestrated combination of people, proven processes and technology may greatly improve their organizations' ability to identify and manage risk, meet regulatory requirements, speed new products and services to market and enhance customer service.

CIOs ready to jumpstart their organizations' trusted information efforts should consider a hosted Information On Demand information agenda kick-start workshop. This workshop leverages IBM's extensive experience and Information On Demand best practices to guide CIOs and their business colleagues quickly through the process of building a cohesive information agenda, with an actionable set of projects to execute. A hosted two- to three-day workshop can result in faster execution and quicker realization of return on investment.

To learn more about the information agenda and IBM Information On Demand solutions, contact your IBM sales representative or IBM Business Partner, or visit:

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