

ADVANCING FROM RIM TO IG – BEYOND YOUR PROJECT PLAN

*This is Chapter II of this article series. [Chapter I](#) was published in the Fall 2017 ICRM Newsletter

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All of us can agree - information is a vital business asset.

It enables decision-making; serves as evidence of business transactions; facilitates processes, operations, and other business activities; and supports regulatory compliance. Still, given these essential business functions, information governance (IG) advancement faces challenges on many fronts. In point of fact:

Resistance to change was identified by **84%** of the respondents to the *Cohasset Associates | ARMA International 2016 | 2017 Information Governance Benchmarking Survey* as a challenge to IG Program advancement.

Among the eight different IG advancement challenges offered for ranking to the nearly 1,000 business, services, industry, and public-sector survey respondents, this *culture-related* challenge ranked highest.

Clearly, culture matters!

In view of this *culture dynamic*, you paused your IG Program implementation to conduct additional due diligence. Following the guidance in [Chapter I](#), you studied your organization's culture and identified its type. Now, you respond to your organization's culture cues - leveraging the positives and managing the related disruptions.

Problematically, IG Program advancement has stalled again and while most implementations experience fits and starts, it's frustrating, nonetheless.

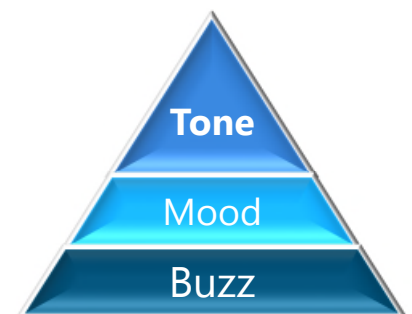
So, back to diagnostics – what has caused this delay – and what is your response?

TONE AT THE TOP

Your IG Program implementation plan includes the essential elements: short and long-term goals; tactics; dependencies and assumptions; resources and timelines. You have a sponsor, and an IG staff member.

And, you're closely managing the effect of culture - still, you can't sustain Program traction.

What about executive support – a key to IG Program success? Whom in your organization, at its c-level or even on its Board, is the IG Program champion? Without *tone at the top*, you can forget *mood in the middle* or *buzz at the bottom*.



These three phrases were coined in response to a series of major corporate accounting scandals. Tone at the top was emphasized in the 2002 Sarbanes–Oxley Act. Today, the phrases are used beyond accounting, across business settings.

While the phrases may read as cliché ... **DO NOT** discount them; the concepts they represent will prove instrumental in your IG Program implementation.

So, how do you engage *the Top* at your organization - and who represents *the Top*?

- First, pinpoint the c-level member most aligned with the premise of information governance. Is it the CIO, the Chief Compliance Officer, the Chief Legal Officer (General Counsel), or the CEO? Or, could it be the chair of a Board sub-committee?
- Next, identify the forum for your pitch; involve your Program sponsor to get both of you on the agenda of a meeting or session ordinarily convened by the c-level member you have selected.
- Re-purpose the business case you prepared to request approval to initiate the IG Program. Revise it – make it brief and persuasive. Use five slides and fifteen minutes or less.
- Make your pitch. Ask *the Top* you've identified to advocate for the organization's IG Program. The following can comprise your rationale:
 - IG supports the organization's strategic goals.
 - The investment necessary for IG improves business performance and governance.
 - Industry statistics correlate increased productivity to information-related efficiency.
 - Controlling the ever-increasing volume of information reduces business, reputation, and other risk.
- Finally, make the most of this opportunity - NEVER allow a crisis to go to waste.
 - Replay the cause and effect of an information-related mishap the organization recently experienced.
 - If good luck prevails, and your organization has not yet had to manage such a crisis, choose an example from the many in the news.

Fast forward and congratulations!

You have secured both the attention of the c-level AND its commitment to support information governance. *Tone* can manifest from the *Top* in many forms. Your organization's new c-level IG Program advocate, with your assistance, must:

- Formally and explicitly authorize and then announce every new, and revised, IG Program policy document.
- Designate a member of the senior leadership team as an IG Council appointee, rotated annually.
- Incorporate IG-related content with routine and organization-wide senior and executive communications to remind employees of crucial IG concepts:
 - Information is a business asset.
 - Information is evidence of the business transactions that facilitate goals and objectives.
 - IG is everyone's responsibility.
- Assure IG Program funding and staffing.
- Mandate IG training for all employees, especially new hires.
- Add to the organization's annual Ethics or Compliance Certification an IG-related question to which every employee must attest.
- Include IG-related responsibilities and metrics in compensation, performance, or bonus plans.

With the endorsement of an energetic and persistent IG ***Tone at the Top***, *mood in the middle* and *buzz at the bottom* will follow, and it will endure.

References:

Chapter I - Advancing from RIM to IG – Beyond your Project Plan

Cohasset Associates | ARMA International 2016 | 2017 Information Governance Benchmarking Survey [White Paper: Transforming Information Management](#)

Coming Next:

Chapter III will examine the functional and collaboration imperatives of the multiple disciplines that comprise an organization's comprehensive IG platform.

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About Karen S. Knight, CCEP

Ms. Knight is a Principal Consultant with *Cohasset Associates*. Her experience as a Chief Compliance Officer for over 20 years informs her consulting engagements. Ms. Knight's design of compliant and sustainable Information Governance Programs includes governance policies and standards, legal hold processes, retention schedules, training and education, and technology enablers. Mitigating the regulatory and legal risks of governing information, Ms. Knight integrates and aligns records management and information governance disciplines, addressing privacy, information security, ethics and compliance, contract and procurement, and data breach prevention. She is a white paper author and frequent speaker and workshop leader on these and many other information-related topics. Ms. Knight can be reached at karen.knight@cohasset.com.

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