

Chapter 1

Fundamentally Speaking

In This Chapter

- ▶ Defining the terms
 - ▶ Understanding the effect of records and information
 - ▶ Evaluating the role of the records manager
 - ▶ Managing expectations
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 - ▶ Developing a marketing plan
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Congratulations! You're taking the first and necessary step to getting your records and information management house in order. Regardless of whether you've already ventured into the world of overflowing file cabinets, paper cuts, and maxed out computer storage space — it's okay. Just sit back, relax, and we'll take the trip together.

These days, almost every organization needs to develop and implement a records and information management program. From the corner bagel vendor to the multinational conglomerate, and every sized business in between, they all receive and send information. Putting this type of program in place helps you manage your records and information so that you meet your business needs and comply with laws and regulations.

A records and information management program has many components. Before developing and implementing your program, familiarize yourself with the pieces of the puzzle, as well as the jargon associated with the various pieces. This chapter goes over some common terms and also discusses some of the most important program elements.

The Inside Scoop — Terms and Terminologies

Understanding records and information management jargon may sound elementary, but knowing how the terms are actually used is important. These terms have differences and similarities, and some may sound off-puttingly foreign or (misleadingly) self-explanatory. For example, all records constitute information, but not all information is a record.

What is information?

In layman's terms, *business information* is the total volume of — but not limited to — all paper and electronic documents, spreadsheets, recorded telephone conversations, databases, and tacit or *gray matter* knowledge produced by an organization. “Information” is an all-encompassing term and everything else is a subset of information. Most organizations have three categories of information:

- ✓ Records
- ✓ Business value
- ✓ Nonvalue

For the record

A *record* is information created or received by an organization that provides proof of its legal status and business transactions, regardless of whether it's in paper or electronic format. A record can be considered the memory of the organization. Records make up only a small percentage of the information population of a company; however, they're very important to the continuing operation of a business.

In all likelihood, any information you have that serves as evidence of your company's transactions, history, and legal responsibilities, as well as status, is a record. This includes information such as contracts, employee files, invoices, tax returns, and articles of incorporation. Records are *media neutral*, which means that the format doesn't dictate whether something is a record. The records may exist in paper, electronic, or microfiche formats — it's the content that matters!



As important as all records are to your organization, *vital records* are the most important. Vital records are needed to resume your company's operations in the event of a disaster. Vital records are either organizational or operational:

- ✓ **Organizational vital records:** Includes articles of incorporation or Board of Directors minutes and bylaws. Vital records of this nature help an organization reestablish its legal status and existence.
- ✓ **Operational vital records:** Needed to resume critical business functions and ensure that your revenue stream stays intact. In most cases, you can't resume operations if you're unable to pay your employees, provide your products or services, or collect on accounts receivable.

Chapter 4 provides step-by-step instructions on how to identify and protect vital records — stay tuned!

Business value

Business value information refers to information that's important to a company but doesn't meet the criteria of a record. Think of business value information as referential material — spreadsheets, reports, and presentations — that assist in decision-making, but have a finite purpose and life (such as a sales spreadsheet that you create to show the boss). This type of information has business value but isn't evidence of your organization's business or legal transactions, and also usually has a limited lifespan.

Nonvalue

If something isn't a record, and has no business value — what is it then? Some call it *nonvalue information* (or clutter), which is simply information that has lost its company value. For many organizations, nonvalue content residing in storage boxes, file cabinets, hard drives, network drives, and removable devices (flash drives) comprises the largest population of information they retain — scary huh? Examples of nonvalue information might include old let's-go-to-lunch e-mails, pictures of your toga party, an ancient presentation, and even records that have exceeded their assigned retention period.

The information life cycle

All business information has a *life cycle*. The premise of the life cycle is that records and information become either less important over time or are accessed less frequently as they age (or both). Most records and information begin to lose value after approximately 90 days. For example, an invoice must be accessible during a 30-day period for processing purposes. After the invoice is paid, you may need to access it during the next two months to resolve any payment disputes or inquiries.



Although all records age, not all lose their importance to an organization over time. Records such as deeds, articles of incorporation, and Board of Directors meeting minutes retain their importance and should be kept permanently.

Figure 1-1 makes clear the distinct phases in the life of records and information.

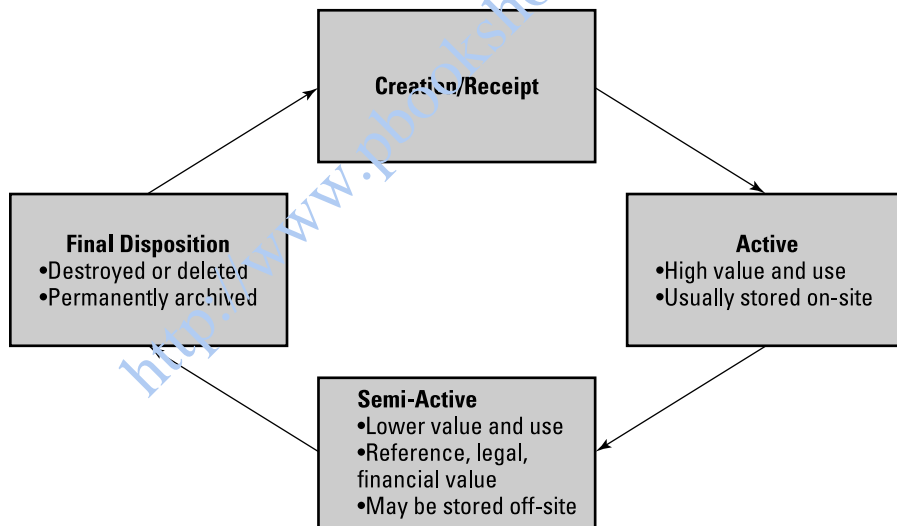


Figure 1-1:
The information life cycle.

To grasp the concepts behind the life cycle diagram you see in Figure 1-1, think of that new toy you received as a kid. When you first got that shiny red fire truck or that new doll, you played with it constantly; you kept it close by so that you didn't have to look for it. However, as time passed, it lost some of its appeal — it might have ultimately been relegated to your closet. A few years later, when mom tells you to clean out your closet, you find the fire truck or the doll, which has no value to you now, and you decide to throw it away; or, if you're sentimental, you keep it.

Grooving with the records (and the information retention schedule)

An important tool you can use to manage the life cycle of records and information is a *retention schedule*, which is a document used to list an organization's records and how long to keep them. Although commonly referred to as a "records retention schedule," records and information management professionals have begun to incorporate items of business value information that are *not* records into the retention schedule.

The primary reason for this change is that organizations are starting to realize that nonrecord content accounts for a significant amount of their total information population, and if left unchecked, will continue to grow out of control. Record and information retention schedules are discussed in depth in Chapter 3.

Hold on!

If a company believes there's a chance it's going to be sued, or chance just flew out the window when the subpoena was served this morning, the company needs to determine what records and other information may be relevant to the lawsuit. After this is determined, the powers-that-be will want to implement an *information hold order*. Organizations may use different names for the hold order, such as *legal hold*, *records hold order*, or *freeze*. In many cases, information hold orders pertain to legal matters, but can also apply to tax audits, regulatory investigations, and operational issues.



An information hold order doesn't just apply to records; it can apply to nonrecord content as well. When a hold order is enacted, the information must not be altered or destroyed. This topic is covered in depth in Chapter 8.

For now, you've probably absorbed enough terms and definitions for one day, so it's time to move on.

Role Playing

Businesses that effectively manage their records and information perform better. All organizations create and receive information, but some don't capitalize on the opportunity to understand it and properly optimize it.

It's true; if you improperly manage your records and information, it can result in hefty fines, closure of your business, and possibly a chance to get acquainted with other inmates at your local five star federal prison. But enough with the scare tactics.



Information is tangible. It should be viewed and treated as a company asset, just like your inventory, real estate, and equipment. Look at your file cabinets and computer folders as gold mines waiting to be tapped. Yes, there's gold in them thar hills! Just look at companies like Amazon, Google, and Facebook for examples of organizations that capitalize on information as an asset. They know their customers' desires; some may argue that they can even anticipate your needs.

Aside from death and taxes, there is another inevitable: Companies will create (and enter into) new initiatives. A company may be launching a program to increase sales, offering a new product line, purchasing a software system, or opening a new location. Regardless of the nature of the initiative, responsible organizations don't jump haphazardly into the fire without conducting exhaustive research and analysis of available information. In many cases, the needed information isn't available, so they conduct specific studies geared toward providing them with the information they need. Business decisions should be based on timely and accurate information.

And information isn't used only for major business initiatives; it plays a vital role in routine daily business processes such as invoice payments. When you pay an invoice, you don't just take the word of the vendor that you need to pay \$25,000 for a box of paper clips (unless it's a very big box of paper clips). You ensure that the product has been received; you check the packing slip and match the invoice to the purchase order. The entire decision process is based on information.

The Records and Information Manager

Time to hit the rewind button: For decades many organizations, even large ones, didn't have an employee with the official title of records manager, much less a records and information manager. Back in simpler times, before personal computers, e-mail, and the onslaught of compliance-related laws, records management consisted of an employee ordering a file, and the file clerk pulling the file from a shelf, providing it for the requestor, and then refiling it when it was returned.

The evolution of the records manager

Today, most public and private organizations realize the need to dedicate a manager and staff to oversee records and information management. Although the phrase *from the basement to the boardroom* may not be applicable to all records and information management operations, the role that records and information management plays within many companies has significantly changed over the past decade.

This change has brought about an evolution in the job description of records and information managers. No longer is the manager responsible only for ensuring that her staff pulls the correct file and refiles it in a timely and accurate manner. Records and information managers are now tasked with many other responsibilities related to an organization's records and information life cycle. In addition — and maybe even more importantly as a sign of the profession's credibility, records and information managers are increasingly serving as consultants to company employees on matters related to records and information.

Records managers now chair and serve on corporate committees, assist senior management, and work in close conjunction with different departments such as legal, risk management, compliance, and IT. They are sought out for their expertise on records- and information management-related topics. So how did this change in the records manager's role come to be?

In the past, the records and information a company possessed were mainly used to facilitate the processing of routine functions such as accounting, payroll, and purchasing. Technologies hadn't been developed to allow organizations to easily *data-mine* — conduct in-depth analysis in areas like customer buying habits or trending. Records were kept in file cabinets; gigabytes of data on personal computers and how to manage it hadn't yet entered into corporate conversations. Regulatory legislation such as Sarbanes-Oxley, the Fair and Accurate Credit Transactions Act (ACTA), and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) didn't exist.

The big bang!

Thanks in part to Bill Gates, Steve Jobs, Intel, and white collar greed, the role of the records manager began to transform in the '80s and '90s. Not so long ago multiple employees might have shared a lone computer, and no one thought that was inadequate. (Today, if this were still the case, there would be a corporate coup.) Companies didn't ponder the records and information management impact that adding so many computers would create, but instead focused on efficiency and productivity.

And companies weren't negligent by not anticipating the records and information effects caused by the proliferation of desktop computing. Probably only a handful of visionaries could have foreseen these potential issues — which, ironically, created job security for many records and information managers. And that leads you to see how these managers have been able to evolve with the changing tides and obtain the necessary knowledge and skill set to operate in today's records and information management environment.

School is in session

At a young age, many children dream of becoming a firefighter or astronaut. Probably not many aspire to be a records and information manager. Most records and information managers never received formal training, much less a degree in this field. And in many cases, this responsibility was never originally listed on their job description. As it has occurred for many managers, one day the boss calls you into the office and says that in addition to your other responsibilities, you're now in charge of managing the company's records — and don't mess it up! If this has happened to you, probably your first thought was, "I don't remember making the boss mad." And then, "I know nothing about managing records and information."

Today's records and information managers (and staff) need help to stay abreast of a myriad of topics such as compliance laws, document imaging, enterprise content management, information hold orders, discovery, secure shredding, offsite storage, retention scheduling, and the effects of file shares and applications like Microsoft SharePoint (all of which are covered in Chapters 9, 10, 8, 12, and 3, respectively).

So, what's a newly christened records and information manager to do? Some options are more advisable than others. Some managers may decide to travel down the status quo highway, and maintain a mind-set of, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." The risk assumed with this approach is that as a manager, you might not know what you don't know — meaning the state of records and information management within the organization may be in shambles, but how can you tell?

Another course of action is on-the-job training and self-learning. You may seek to improve your knowledge of records and information management by understanding the current processes and learning from your staff. The possible pitfall here is that when trying to improve the efficiencies of the current operation, you might not know whether fundamental problems are putting the organization at risk.

I can associate with that

The best option is to begin your records and information management education as soon as possible. A great way to make this happen is to seek resources, guidance, and knowledge from reputable sources in the records and information global community. Managers can significantly benefit from the been-there-done-that guidance available from numerous records and information management professionals and associations. Two of the more prominent and recognized associations are ARMA (Association for Information Management) and AIIM (Association for Information and Image Management); these are not-for-profit and nonprofit associations, respectively. Their missions are as follows:

- ✓ **ARMA** (www.arma.org): Educate, advocate, provide resources, and set standards that enable professionals to govern information as a critical element of organizational value.
- ✓ **AIIM** (www.aiim.org): Ensure that information professionals understand the current and future challenges of managing information assets in an era of social, mobile, cloud, and big data. Big data is covered in Chapter 16.

In addition to these two organizations, other records and information management associations focus on specific industries, such as nuclear energy and health and pharmaceuticals. Most records and information management organizations have an international headquarters, with local satellite chapters. A quick Google search for *ARMA Chapters* or *AIIM Chapters* will provide you with information on a chapter in your area.

These organizations offer programs for experienced records and information managers as well as the new kids on the block. In most cases, their membership represents a variety of industries. By attending these educational sessions, you have a great opportunity to learn, share, and network.

Let me see your credentials

Pursuing a designation is a personal choice. You should assess the current and future Records and Information Management direction of your organization and determine whether you need to acquire additional skill sets and education to lead the charge.

Have you ever received an e-mail with cryptic letter combinations after the sender's last name in the signature block? You guessed it — those letters are designations and certifications. Some may call it the “ego alphabet,” but in

fact, it reflects a person's achievement and expertise in specific disciplines. For many years no formal designations for records and information managers existed. However, in 1975, that changed when the Institute of Certified Records Managers (ICRM) was incorporated.

According to the ICRM website, the goal of the ICRM has been, "to meet the requirement to have a standard by which persons involved in records and information management could be measured, accredited, and recognized according to criteria of experience and capability established by their peers." The folks at ICRM determined that a need existed for accreditation, and they established the Certified Records Manager (CRM) designation, which is still the most recognized designation for records and information managers. To achieve the designation, a person must first be accepted as a candidate. Candidacy is based on a combination of formal education and practical records and information management experience. After acceptance candidates must successfully complete a six-part examination that covers a variety of relevant topics.

Over the past two decades, as technology, laws, and regulations affecting records and information management burst upon the scene, additional designating and certifying bodies have been created that focus on document imaging, privacy, and technology, to name a few topics. Table 1-1 shows some of the prominent designations in the records and information management profession.

Table 1-1 Records and Information Management Certifications

<i>Certification</i>	<i>Certification Name</i>	<i>Certifying Body</i>	<i>Description</i>
CDIA+	Certified Document Imaging Architect	Computing Technology Industry Association (CompTIA)	An internationally recognized credential acknowledging competency and professionalism in the document imaging and document management industry
CIP	Certified Information Professional	Association for Information and Image Management (AIIM)	A certification recognizing the holder as a professional in information management

Certification	Certification Name	Certifying Body	Description
CIPP	Certified Information Privacy Professional	International Association of Privacy Professionals (IAPP)	Demonstrates a strong foundation in privacy laws and regulations
CISSP	Certified Information Systems Security Professional	The International Information Systems Security Certification Consortium, Inc. (ISC) ²	Demonstrates an information assurance professional who defines the architecture, design, management, and controls that assure the security of the business environments
CKM	Certified Knowledge Manager	Knowledge Management Professional Society (KMPro)	Demonstrates the ability to link organizational knowledge to the strategic vision and initiatives of the company
CRM	Certified Records Manager	Institute of Certified Records Managers (ICRM)	An internationally recognized credential acknowledging an individual's proficiency in managing records
ICP	Information Capture Professional	The Association for Work Process Improvement (TAWPI)	Recognizes achievement and dedication of professionals in payment/remittance processing, data capture, imaging operations, and forms processing
PMP	Project Management Professional	Project Management Institute (PMI)	Demonstrates that the holder has the experience, education and competency to lead and direct projects

When you earn a designation like the CRM, you feel a sense of pride and accomplishment. Better still, you stand a good chance of increasing your credibility and marketability. Many employers today looking to hire a records and information manager prefer (or require) the candidate to have the CRM designation.

In 2011, AIIM introduced the Certified Information Professional (CIP) designation, which is a great complement to the CRM designation. The CIP consists of one exam, with no educational or work-related prerequisites required to take the exam. The exam is designed not only to test a person's records management knowledge, but also technical knowledge in a variety of areas, such as master data management, text analytics, and technical architecture.

I've got to do what?!

As if keeping on top of the technical aspects of her job isn't enough, a records and information manager is now expected to do even more. The 21st century records and information manager has to hone skills in additional and essential areas. For example, yesterday's file room manager rarely interacted with other departments' employees on matters of records management, but those days are over. Records and information managers now find themselves responsible for consulting, formulating and implementing organizational policy, training, reviewing contracts, managing vendors, and addressing senior management and other employees through verbal and written communication. Because of these new responsibilities, records and information managers have to become well-rounded professionals prepared to effectively handle many scenarios. The next section addresses the complementary skills records and information managers need to enhance their success.

The written word

Writing is an art, a science, and a skill that records and information managers need to effectively communicate. As with any form of communication, the first step is to know your audience. You wouldn't address the CEO in the same manner as your co-worker in the next cubicle. If you are writing a procedure for a function in your department, it will likely contain extensive details that allow the reader to perform the process. However, in most cases, when composing a document intended for senior management, you won't need to include many of the details. You may be thinking, "But aren't details a good thing?" Yes, in some cases they are vital, but depending on the target audience, it may be the death of your document.

Say hello to the *executive briefing*. Records and information managers in today's corporate environment often have to document proposals — say, an initiative that affects the entire organization, or a recommendation to purchase a software application — for senior management review. As its name implies, keep your executive briefing brief, but provide enough information to get your point across. It's a delicate balancing act. The reality is that most senior managers are very busy (or so they say), and consider yourself



lucky if your document commands more than a few minutes of their time. Therefore, you have to make the most of it.

The following tips help you compose an effective business document and should also help you avoid some common writing pitfalls:

- ✓ **Know the subject matter.** Forget winging it. Don't attempt to write about something you don't know the first thing about. Make sure to research the topic and be prepared to respond to questions.
- ✓ **Plan.** Resist the urge to immediately begin drafting a business document. Plan and outline your communication before you begin writing. This allows you an opportunity to organize your thoughts. Thinking of the outline as a table of contents for your document will increase your chance of not forgetting important points.
- ✓ **Less is more.** Don't inundate the reader with unnecessary words or details. Make the reading experience efficient and convenient.
- ✓ **Avoid jargon or slang.** Anyone who has spent time in corporate America has heard phrases such as *boil the ocean*, *bleeding edge*, *bricks and mortar*, and *30,000 foot level*. "Corp-speak" may be okay for water cooler conversations but shouldn't find its way into business documents.
- ✓ **Write once, check twice.** Proofread immediately after you write; then go have lunch, sit back down, and proofread again. Typos and grammatical errors can instantly discredit the communication and the author. Take advantage of the spell-check tool in your word processing app, and have a co-worker review the document before you distribute it.
- ✓ **Pay attention to names, titles, and gender.** You don't want to find out after you send your document to Ms. Jones, the vice president of the Sales department, that she's actually a he (Mr. Johnson), the CEO, and that you demoted him because you didn't know his title. Besides being offended, the reader may feel that you don't pay attention to details. If you're not certain about the spelling of someone's name, job title (and what it means), or gender, check with someone who does know (like an assistant), or use gender-neutral language.
- ✓ **Professional doesn't necessarily mean formal.** Business documents shouldn't require the reader to have a dictionary and thesaurus to interpret your communication. Many readers will immediately detect when an author is trying to impress them with extravagant language rather than substance.
- ✓ **Remember the five Ws (and one H).** Your business document should answer all the questions relevant to the reader — who, what, when, where, why, and how. For example, who is this communication relevant to, what should they know, when and where will it apply, why is it important, and how should they use this information?

- ✓ **Include a call to action.** Most business communication is intended to achieve a purpose. So, make sure that your document contains a *call to action* — something the reader is supposed to do. Don't leave it to the reader to decide what to do with the information you provide.
- ✓ **Don't provide too many choices.** If you know what you want, ask for it and instruct the reader (diplomatically) to follow the needed course of action. Most senior managers don't like to receive mandates; therefore, present options and choices to the reader, but not too many. Ensure that the options you present in your document don't dilute your objective. For example, say you submit a proposal to the CFO requesting to purchase and implement an electronic records management software application. You prefer to buy all the modules at one time, but another option is to buy the modules incrementally as needed. If either option is approved, you succeeded.
- ✓ **Convey what's in it for the reader.** This is one of the most important aspects of business writing. Benefits engage the reader. Why should I take time to read something that provides no benefit to me? As the author, construct and tailor your communication so that it's not all about your wants and needs, but how it benefits the reader or the organization.

If you need assistance with your writing skills, many large organizations have online training classes designed to help employees with their development in areas such as business writing. Another option is to find a mentor. If you have a co-worker whose writing you admire, ask him for help.

Professionally speaking

It's not all about writing. You likely have to speak to an audience, whether one person, entry-level employees, or senior management. For many people the mere thought of public speaking invokes anxiety and physical distress. Most of the writing tips discussed in the last section are applicable to oral communication, too, so rely on them: Know your subject matter, plan your communication, less is more — you get the picture.

Still, no matter how well some people know the subject matter, plan their communication, or picture the audience in their underwear, they still fear speaking in front of others. If you fall into this category, you're definitely not alone. There is no substitute for practice and experience (whether good or bad). Find associations dedicated to public speaking, such as Toastmasters (www.toastmasters.org). Look up one of its local chapters and see what kinds of resources it can offer in terms of public speaking and leadership skills.

I'm Excited — Why Aren't You?

Here's a fundamental truism: An overwhelming percentage of employees don't find records and information management to be a riveting topic or task. To put it bluntly, they don't like it! Employees find filing documents, boxing records for storage, or cleaning up electronic files a distraction. Chances are that most employees aren't evaluated on their annual performance review by how well they boxed up records or maintained their network folders and files. The sooner the records and information manager and staff accept this reality, the less frustrated they will be.

Core function junction

Employees don't consider managing records and information part of their core business functions (even though for the records and information manager it clearly is). Remember this when developing a records and information management program. Keep it as simple and convenient as possible for the masses without compromising the integrity of the program.

Depending on the size of your organization (assuming that you're not a sole proprietor), you need help in managing the company's records and information. You can't accomplish your objectives by yourself. In this case, it does take a village — okay, maybe other employees — to help manage the organization's records and information.

The best way to get employees to buy into records and information management is to demonstrate how it will benefit them in their daily functions. (See Chapter 2 for more on that particular topic.) Make your requirement a process and not an end-of-month -or-year project. That way, you change the records and information culture of the organization and the employees' perception. Done right, you can transform records and information management from a necessary evil and distraction to a tangible benefit.

Show me the benefits!

Showing the benefits a new company program or initiative will bring to an organization greatly increases its chances of approval and support by senior management and acceptance by its employees. Administrative and support functions — such as accounting; payroll; facilities management; and yes, records and information management — are usually considered cost centers and not profit centers. Demonstrating the benefits of an initiative in these types of areas can sometimes be difficult.

Although records and information management may be a support or administrative function, an effectively designed and implemented program reduces organizational expense, improves efficiency, and ensures that your company is in compliance with laws and government regulations, decreasing the potential for fines. The benefits of a records and management program range from short- and long-term reductions in expense to improving the processing of routine functions.



Know how to market and communicate the organizational benefits of records and information management. A bit later in this chapter you have a chance to look over some proven techniques for developing a marketing plan and how to communicate it to senior management and other company employees.

Trimming expenses

Office space is expensive, and file cabinets aren't cheap nor should be used to store information that's infrequently accessed or not needed at all. Although the cost of computer storage has significantly decreased over the past ten years, the costs associated with *maintaining* electronic storage isn't. My experience over the years has been that the majority of the records and information retained by organizations contains no business value and can legally and operationally be destroyed. This can have a positive impact for all types of businesses.

Effectively managing organizational records and information will prevent your company from appearing on an episode of *Corporate Hoarders*. The storage of each unneeded document and electronic file has a price tag that's taking away from the bottom line of your organization.



As eager as you might be to reduce your company's records and information expenses, don't just dive in and start throwing things away! You have to be certain that the retention periods for the records have expired and that those records aren't needed for any potential lawsuits or inquiries.

Reducing the company's volume of paper records and information decreases the number of file cabinets you need to purchase and use, which results in more space for productive purposes. The less junk you have in a file cabinet, the easier it is to find what you really need.

To make space for the upcoming year, many companies periodically (typically, annually) purge their files from cabinets, place them in a box, and then send them to onsite or offsite storage (usually with a records storage vendor).



The costs related to storing a box of records or adding a gigabyte of electronic storage are minimal. The inexpensive nature of storage is a contributing factor to many legal, risk, records, and information management problems — such as continuing to retain information (that is eligible to be destroyed) that may be a liability to a company in a lawsuit or adding electronic storage rather than deleting files that are no longer needed. If the question is “If storage is so cheap, why not keep everything forever?” the answer should be “Because the cost of storage is just the tip of the iceberg.” For example, every gigabyte of storage results in additional expense — *total cost of ownership (TCO)* — which represents a variety of expenses that affect storage, including

- ✓ Electricity
- ✓ Service
- ✓ Engineering and installation
- ✓ Power equipment
- ✓ Cooling equipment
- ✓ Space
- ✓ Racking
- ✓ System monitoring
- ✓ Backups and redundancy

Studies indicate that the price of storage represents less than 20 percent of the TCO (source: Hitachi 2011 White Paper, “Four Principles for Reducing Total Cost of Ownership”). Eliminating unneeded electronic information reduces your storage dependencies, thereby reducing your TCO.

In addition, keeping everything forever because the organization can purchase inexpensive storage can actually increase the company’s risk and liability. In decades past, most organizations believed they needed to keep everything to defend themselves in lawsuits. However, over the past decade, many companies have come to realize that keeping information the company no longer needs and that should’ve been destroyed in accordance with established retention schedules can actually put them in a worse legal position by retaining information that can prove to be a liability during a lawsuit.

In most companies, computers are abundant. What’s not abundant are policies, procedures, and employee training on how to manage electronic information. The absence of these requirements and controls promotes a do-nothing approach. Think of a file cabinet or the box of records under a desk that’s used as a footstool. And an out-of-sight, out-of-mind mentality with electronic information is worse. Your boss will probably tell you to clean up

the files and boxes in the department but won't mention anything about the mess on the computers.

When considering cost-cutting measures, management seldom addresses the need to spring-clean hard drives and network drives. Many companies don't realize the monetary benefit to purging nonvalue information from the organization's computers. For example, every time an employee has to sift through the digital jungle of junk to find what she really needs, an unneeded labor expense is incurred.

Effectively managing organizational records and information can help reduce this cost by maintaining a focus on how to properly name electronic folders and files as well as how to effectively police and purge nonvalue information.

Improving efficiencies

Smart management of your records and information increases efficiencies within your organization. A records and information management program enhances customer service, staff productivity, and decision-making. Increasing your company's efficiencies doesn't involve any magic — just planning, support, and technology.

A records and information management program allows you to achieve efficiency by using the *Right principle*:

The right information to the right person at the right time

This may sound like an attempt to reach a corporate state of nirvana, but it's actually attainable. You know you've reached this level of enlightenment when your company is able to quickly locate information, reduce storage costs, and make office space available for productive purposes.

After all, we live and operate in an age of convenience — “I want it now!” Yes, Veruca, your clients and customers not only want “it” now, they expect “it” now, too. Clients and customers expect their problems or needs to be resolved or met during a brief phone call or through an intuitive, uncomplicated website experience.

That expectation means you should avoid having to tell customers that you have to order a file, or that you need to transfer him to another department in order to take care of his issue. Similarly, customers will likely become frustrated if your customer service website isn't efficiently designed — requiring excessive mouse clicks, for example — or doesn't provide interactive functionality. You run the risk of losing customers and revenue if you can't provide timely and accurate information.

A records and information management program, in conjunction with the right technology for your company, allows you to index customer information by category, such as personal data, previous purchases or sales, invoices, remittances, and comments. Indexing is the process of applying *metadata*, or information about information.

A good example of this process involves *document imaging*. After receiving a paper document (say, an address change) from the customer, you scan it. You then apply index values to the image, like customer name, customer account number, and form type (address change). After completing the indexing process, you send or release the image to another software application for quick retrieval. (For a more in-depth discussion of document imaging, see Chapter 9.)

Increasing staff productivity

A records and information management program provides employees with the tools to do their job more accurately and productively. Increased staff productivity is one of the biggest and most noticeable benefits of the program. Employees at every level of an organization file, retrieve, and refile information every day. Giving employees the right environment, guidance, and technology to work smarter and faster makes for more satisfied employees, more satisfied customers — and as a result, a more satisfied organization.



Creating efficiencies starts with knowing what types of records and information you have, including paper and electronic information. You have to understand how this information is currently stored and what it's used for. After you have an understanding of your company records and information — and how long you need to keep them — you can take steps to streamline filing and retrieval. You might revamp your paper filing systems or create effective folder structures on your computers so that employees can better use filing systems that meet their operational needs.

Filing systems can significantly benefit organizational efficiency and profitability. The following filing concept represents two extremes:

Instant filing, forever retrieval — forever filing, instant retrieval

The premise of this concept is if you create the proper paper and electronic filing system, you increase efficiencies and decrease company costs.

Take the first half of the preceding axiom: “instant filing, forever retrieval.” Picture opening up a file cabinet that contains all your company's personnel files with only one hanging folder (yes, a very large hanging folder). All

500 employee files are located in the one hanging folder but aren't alphabetized or in employee ID order. When you file new employee documents, you just dump them in the folder — instant filing! How much better can it get? Of course, the result is not being able to retrieve a specific document. The efficiencies you gain by instant filing are now negated by the significant time spent going through every piece of paper in the mega-hanging folder.

The second half of the axiom: “forever filing, instant retrieval” — is the extreme opposite. If you're not careful, you can create such a complex filing system that it takes forever to file anything. (Small upshot: When you go to retrieve, you can eventually pinpoint what you need.)

Both approaches decrease staff productivity and increase labor costs. So what's the answer? The solution lies somewhere in the middle based on your organizational needs.

When you take the guesswork out of your job, you become more productive and less stressed. A records and information management program helps you do both. Employees want to do the right thing, but sometimes they just don't know what the right thing is. This is especially true when it comes to dealing with the records and information in their departments. Employees don't intend to keep all information forever or dispose of records before the retention has expired, but in the absence of records and information management guidance and policy, these eventualities do occur. Employees spend unnecessary time determining what to do.

Efficiencies gained through records and information management also benefit the corporate decision-making process. Whether related to routine processing or senior level initiatives, accessing relevant information in a timely manner can mean the difference between success and lost opportunities or profit or loss. By applying the approaches and principles discussed in this book, companies increase their potential to make better-informed decisions.

Risky business

Organizations face many types of risks. Risks — some expected and some completely unforeseen — come in many shapes and sizes: lawsuits, work stoppages, government inquiries, disasters, public relations issues, fines, and penalties. Although an effective records and information management program may not prevent all adverse events, it can eliminate some and reduce others, and ensure that your business is prepared to face the rest.

Whether you're a small-business owner or the CEO of a global corporation, you're exposed to risks. It would be great if you could predict when bad

things were going to happen; then you would be prepared. We all know that this is impossible — but wait, is it really? Even though you may not be a soothsayer, you can still be prepared to deal with certain risk-related issues. Consider records and information as a form of risk insurance.

Organizations have the information they need to anticipate and respond to lawsuits, inquiries, disasters, and other risk-related issues. The problem is they may not even know they have it or they aren't appropriately managing or using it. A benefit of a records and information management program is that this type of information is accounted for, classified, retrievable, and retained as needed.

Creating your support group



A records management program without the proper support will fail. Therefore, get the right support in your corner: people who can further the cause of records and information management, and who have a stake in its success. The following list of corporate departments represents key players in your quest for support:

- ✓ Senior management
- ✓ Compliance
- ✓ Information technology (IT)
- ✓ Risk management
- ✓ Internal audit
- ✓ Legal

The senior class

Senior management support (or lack thereof) will determine the fate of your program. All other support hinges on their membership. Keep in mind that by implementing a records and information management program, you're going to be asking departmental management and employees to do things they haven't done before — things they don't consider part of their core group of functions. And they likely aren't going to get on board if the only person requiring them to do so is the records and information manager. Throw in a dash of senior management backing, though, and you have the recipe for cooperation. It's funny how quickly people cooperate when they know you have the CEO's blessing.

Mandating employee cooperation is not the only benefit of having senior-level support. Although you may be the organizational driver for a records

and information management program, you may need passengers on your journey in the form of a staff to help you. For example, chances are that you aren't authorized to hire new employees without additional approval, but senior management can provide the approval you need.

In many cases, you might need to purchase software to help manage your records and information, requiring extensive evaluation by the IT department as well as the business sponsor. And records and information software isn't cheap. Senior management can ensure that you receive the cooperation you need from other departments, as well as the funds to acquire the software. After you secure approval from senior management, you have the organizational commission you need to proceed.

The key to compliance

After obtaining support from senior management, knock on the Compliance department's door. If your company has a Compliance department, you quickly discover that it has clout and can be a great ally in your push for a Records and Information Management program.

Small- and medium-sized businesses may not have a Compliance department. If this is the case, your accountant or attorney can be a great advocate for your Records and Information Management program.

The Chief Compliance Officer (CCO) and staff's role in an organization is to ensure that employees are aware of and comply with bylaws and regulations that impact the company. The CCO acts as a consultant to senior management to ensure that the organization isn't conducting business in a manner that violates any laws or regulations.

Your initiative is an essential complement to their efforts. Most compliance laws and regulations have a records and information management component that involves making sure that certain information is readily accessible and retained for the specified length of time.

Techie talk

If your program vision includes a records and information management software application, you need the services of your IT department, who are the resident experts on evaluating and supporting software systems. Most business users of technology know what they want an application to do, but aren't trained to know whether the system is compatible with the organization's current technical infrastructure. IT folks know, though. They have experience in talking with software vendors and asking the right questions.

Before you begin searching for a records and information management software system, document your requirements into a list of mandatory functionality that the application must have. After you compose your list, give it to IT and let those folks conduct the initial screening of vendors. If IT determines that a vendor's system meets your requirements, they will hand it off to you for review. Having their support in this area saves you the time and trouble of having to do a lot of spadework on your own.

Risk reward

A company's risk management department is responsible for the identification, assessment, and prioritization of risks the company is (or may be) exposed to, and finds ways to eliminate or manage them. Risks come in a variety of shapes and sizes: For a grocery store, it may be a customer slip and fall; for a manufacturer it could be a product that has harmed a consumer; for an airline it could be maintenance and safety issues — records and information management to the rescue! Although a good records and information management program won't keep a customer from slipping on a grape in the produce aisle, it will help to ensure that store floor-sweeping logs are maintained and accessible to show evidence that the aisle was properly maintained at the time of the incident. Corporate risk management departments rely heavily on records and information to ensure that risks can be eliminated and mitigated.

Partnering with the risk management folks provides a benefit to them as well as to you. Risk management is a hot topic in every organization. Just like the Compliance department, risk management has the ear of senior-level employees. Garnering their support will help you in your program endeavors.

Take a hike down the audit trail

Most employees cringe at the thought of a visit by the internal audit department. However, as an employee who is trying to get support for a records and information management program, you should welcome them with open arms (figuratively, not literally).

An organization's internal audit department is designed to provide an independent and objective analysis of the company's operations by following a systematic and disciplined approach. Internal audit reviews establish procedures for different company functions to determine whether they're appropriate, and also whether they're being followed. The internal audit department also assesses company business processes and makes recommendations for improvements.

Internal audit fits into your support group because they have needs that you can help fill. For example, they rely on records and information to do their job. Prior to starting a scheduled audit engagement, internal audit needs access to review specific department records such as policies and procedures. After the audit is underway, it needs to evaluate transactional records like invoices to ensure that they were processed correctly. A records and information management program can ensure that this information is readily accessible, allowing internal audit to be more efficient.

Internal audit can help you because it usually reports directly to senior management, giving itself the ability to advance your cause with the right people — a win-win for everyone involved.

The tax man

The tax department takes a vested interest in how the organization's records and information are managed. These folks are required to produce large volumes of information for federal, state, and municipality requirements. In many cases, tax-related inquiries can last for years, which require the organization to retain information — resulting in information hold orders.

Organizations place a significant amount of emphasis on tax records. The inability to properly manage tax records can result in hefty fines and penalties. Most companies retain tax records permanently. A Records and Information Management program can benefit the tax department by ensuring that the information life cycle is appropriately managed and readily accessible for governmental inquiries.

The legal beagles

The last — but certainly not the least — important addition to your support group is the legal department. Aside from senior management, this one group of employees may be able to provide you more support than all the other departments combined (and vice versa). It's not uncommon for large companies, depending on the industry in which they operate, to deal with multiple lawsuits at one time. The core of each lawsuit involves information — in most cases lots of information. Whether information can or cannot be found may mean the difference between winning a lawsuit and paying millions of dollars in judgments.

In the past decade, e-mails have played a huge role in litigation. However, due to the massive volume of e-mails that a company receives daily, coupled with the absence of effective e-mail management policies and technology, e-mails prove to be one of the most difficult information types to manage. Here's your chance to shine.

Organizations spend millions of dollars annually just finding and reviewing information that is potentially relevant to lawsuits. The sad part is that the majority of information they collect and evaluate turns out to not be pertinent. One lawsuit may require the review of gigabytes of e-mails and other electronic file content as well as paper documents.

A comprehensive records and information management program allows the legal department to reduce the amount of irrelevant information they have to review by ensuring that information is identified, classified, accessible, and retained for the appropriate length of time. In addition, a well-designed program includes e-mail usage and management policies, and the ability to place information hold orders to ensure that information pertaining to lawsuits is not altered or destroyed.

Marketing Your Program

One of the biggest hurdles in obtaining support for a records and information management initiative is the organization's lack of awareness and understanding of its importance and the benefits it provides. Senior management knows that managing company information is a good thing, but they are so removed from the details of the process that they don't know what resources it actually takes to create and implement an effective records and information management program. It's your job to educate them.

When a company develops a new consumer product, it markets and advertises it. Think of your records and information management program as a new internal company product. It may not reduce wrinkles and make you look younger, but it can definitely reduce stress.



As you prepare to market your initiative, remember that all members of your support group have different needs. Although an effective records and information management program addresses the needs of the corporate masses by its very nature, you need to tailor your marketing message so it focuses on their specific issues and concerns. The more you can emphasize what's in it for them, the more successful you'll be.

A basketball team that never practices — just walks on the court at game time and plays its opponent — would probably lose the game. Practice is the key to winning. However, before you start to practice, you need to know what you're going to work on. Say hello to the game plan.

To improve their team's chance of success, coaches develop game plans based on information about the opponent: their likes, dislikes, tendencies,

and patterns. Coaches use this information to determine where they can expose the opponent's weaknesses and capitalize on their own strengths. Then coaches formulate a game plan as the basis for how their team plays their opponent.

The more knowledgeable you are about each department, the better equipped you are to win them over.

Before you begin showing up on the doorstep of all the departments in your organization to discuss records and information management, ask yourself the following questions:

- ✓ Who are my internal customers?
- ✓ What organizational functions do my customers perform?
- ✓ What are my customers' needs and pain-points?
- ✓ What do I have to offer my customers?
- ✓ How will a records and information management program benefit my customers?
- ✓ How will I bring awareness of the program benefits to my customers?
- ✓ How will I market the product to my customers?
- ✓ What price or effort does the customer have to pay or expend to use the product?
- ✓ How will I roll out the product to my customers?