

The Dual Role of Records and Document Management in a Corporate Knowledge Management Strategy

INTRODUCTION

For a more detailed consideration of these issues consult "Effective Document Management - unlocking Corporate Knowledge" by Bob Wiggins Gower Publishing, 2000 ISBN 0 566 08148 2

What is an Organisation?

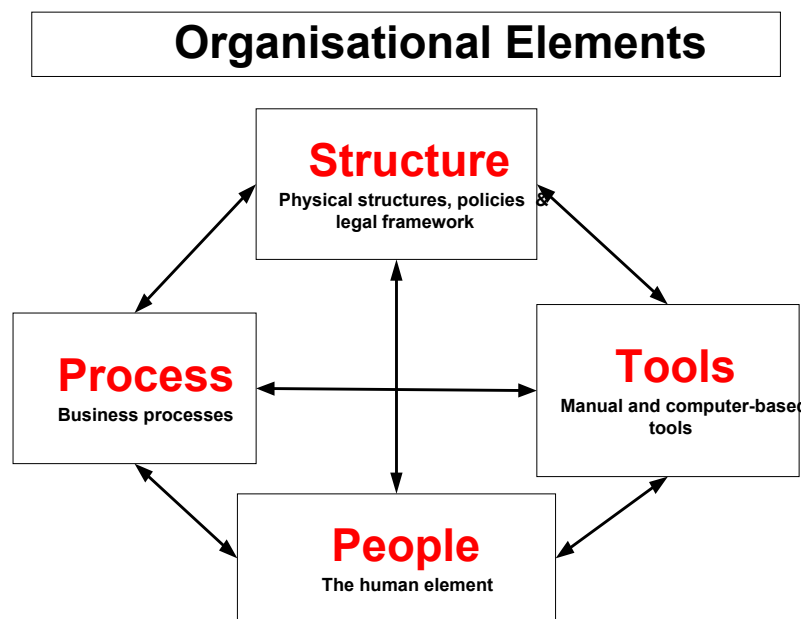
An organisation can be considered to comprise four inter-related elements that influence the effectiveness and efficiency with which information is managed. These elements are:

Business Processes (that relate to information and its management)

Structure (the framework and policies for business processes, human resources and supporting tools)

Tools (manual and computer-based tools to support the organisation, processes and people in managing and exploiting information and knowledge)

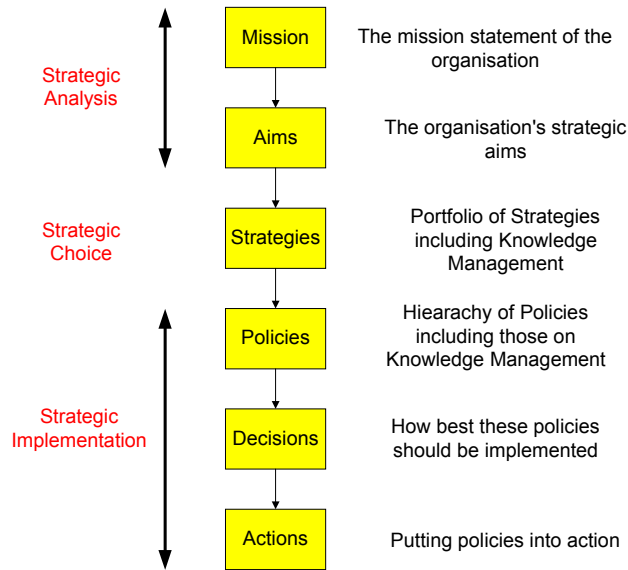
People (The human element that can use, create, communicate, revise and manage information and retain information as knowledge)



A Strategic Approach

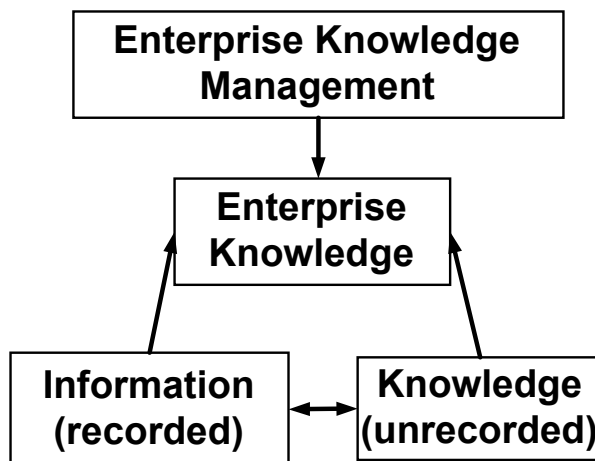
A strategy is the process of setting overall organisational goals. Goals are long term objectives. The development of a strategy involves a planning process as shown below.

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS



Knowledge, Information, Documents and Records

“Knowledge” means information (tacit knowledge) that an individual knows and holds in their brain, “information” (explicit knowledge) is that which is available in recorded form independent of humans. “Enterprise Knowledge Management” (EKM) embraces both “information” and “knowledge” in the corporate context.



According to the draft Records Management Standard (ISO/DIS 15489), a document is "recorded information or object which can be treated as a unit". Records are defined as "information created, received, and maintained as evidence and information by an organisation or person, in pursuance of legal obligations or in the transaction of business".

Records Management and Document Management

It is well to clarify the subtle differences between “document management” and “records management”.

With records management the main emphasis is on the organisation and safeguarding of recorded information throughout its life cycle; there are thus strong administrative overtones in the application of this discipline.

Document management as it has emerged, focuses more on the dynamic and transactional nature, and use of recorded information as coherent records of information meaningful to their relevant users. Thus all “documents” are potentially “records”, but not all “records” are “documents”. A comparison of the two is presented below.

	RECORDS MANAGEMENT	DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT
Definitions	Records are pieces of recorded information providing evidence relating to business actions.	Documents are coherent records of information meaningful to their relevant users
Principal focus of attention	Administrative control	Operational use
	Physical storage	Work flow
	File classification	Indexing
	Retention	Revision and version control
	Statutory and legal requirements	Operational needs
	Storage media	Information content
	Integrated series	Individual items

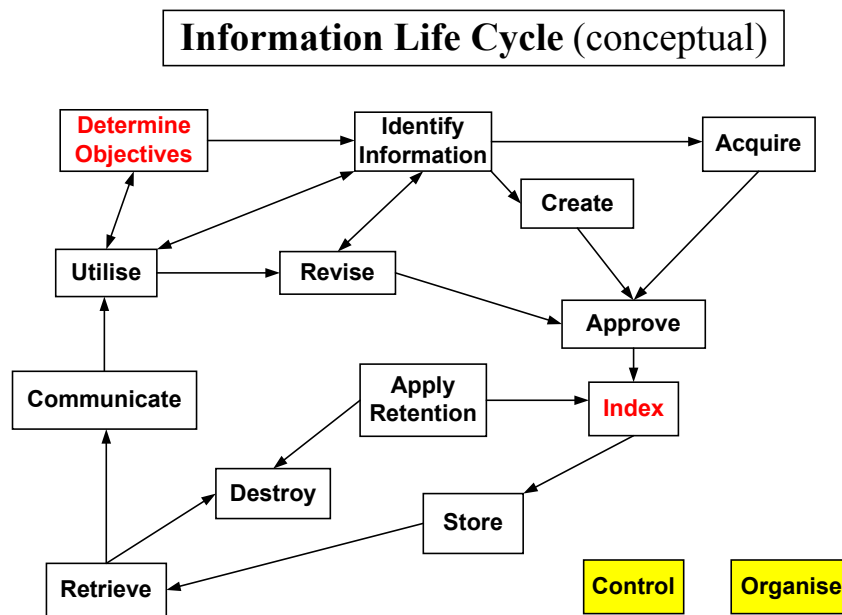
Strategy into Action

A Knowledge Management Strategy needs to encourage the sharing of knowledge and its recording in permanent form independent of humans. The success of this relies greatly on such factors as the culture of the organisation and the degree to which staff and management feel committed to their employer.

The management of the information (recorded knowledge), must embrace the skills and different viewpoints of the various information professionals and disciplines. These will include, for example, those in the IT department, librarians, records managers, technical authors and intranet editorial boards.

The implementation of an EKM strategy may involve extensive analysis and review of current information management policies and procedures. It may usefully begin with a scoping study. This will help identify those areas requiring a more detailed investigation. These reviews must consider the different perspectives of records and document management as noted above.

Cura uses its "Infobuild" approach for these investigations based on the concept of an information life cycle.



These life cycle activities are reviewed and assessed in relation to the organisational elements of "structure", "processes", "people" and "tools" .

The key output from the "Infobuild" approach is the identification of applications that are candidates for establishing as formal projects. Typical application categories are shown below.

These projects need to be prioritised and justified relative to one another to determine which projects will be adopted as part of a coherent programme of work in support of the strategy.

Application Categories	
Application	Description
Case processing	Documents gathered and held together during the lifetime of an extended transaction.
Transaction Processing	High volumes of documents processed as a series of single items
Document Publishing	Creation, maintenance and distribution of documents
Projects	Management of a complex range of document types
General office administration	Day-to-day correspondence and paperwork.
Records Management	The registering and safeguarding of business records
Reference Services	Documents (often externally published) accessed for reference purposes.

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