TITLE: "THE IRM INFRASTRUCTURE"

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Since 1971: *"Software for the finest computer - the Mind"*

"We must apply the same discipline, organization and automation that we recommend for other parts of the company."
- Bryce's Law

INTRODUCTION

In my last paper I described the stages of growth in the evolution of an Information Resource Management (IRM) organization; see:

No. 53 - "*The 4 Stages of IRM Growth*" - Dec 5, 2005
http://www.phmainstreet.com/mba/ss051205.pdf

After reading this, one might say, "*Okay, it sounds great; now how do we get there?*" Herein, I will describe the infrastructure required to support an IRM organization. To do so, I need to first review the basic premise of Information Resource Management. IRM is the design, development and control over all of the resources needed to produce Information. IRM is ultimately based on a simple formula:

Information = Data + Processing

In a nutshell, data represents the facts about the business; processing represents how the facts are accessed and made available, and; information represents the intelligence needed to support the actions and decisions of the business. If the data remains the same, but the processing is changed, the information will change. Conversely, if the processing remains the same, and the data is changed, the information will also change. This implies the need for controlling and reusing the resources needed to produce information. It also implies there are three classes of information resources:

Data Resources: Data Elements, Records, Files, Inputs, Outputs, Data Bases

System Resources: Systems, Business Processes (sub-systems), Procedures, Programs, Modules

Enterprise Resources: Enterprises, Business Functions, Jobs, Human/Machine Resources

This last class is important as it represents the "consumer" of information and will also participate in the flow of information.
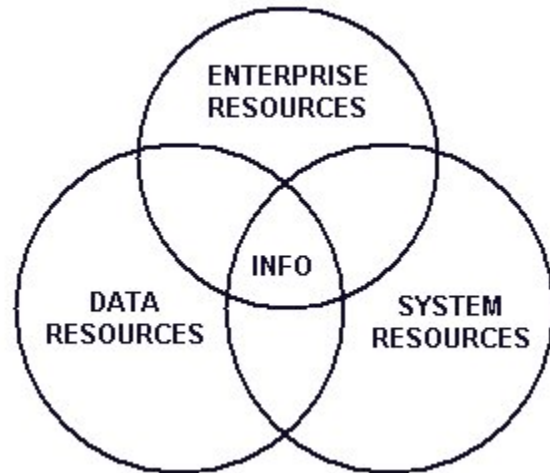
For additional information on the concept of Information Resource Management, see:

No. 12 - "*Understanding the IRM/MRP Analogy*" - Feb 21, 2005
http://www.phmainstreet.com/mba/ss050221.pdf

THREE TYPES OF WORK EFFORT

The three classes of information resources ultimately represents three types of work effort:

Enterprise Engineering- to model and study the business and formulate an enterprise information strategy. Such work is performed by "Enterprise Engineers."

Systems Engineering - to design and develop system resources to satisfy information requirements. This work is performed by "Systems Engineers" (concerned with the overall system architecture) and "Software Engineers."

Data Base Engineering - to design and develop data resources to satisfy information requirements. This work is performed by "Data Engineers" (logical DB design), DBA's (physical DB design), and Data Communications Engineers.

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These three areas complement each other and provides for synergy between them. It also establishes an interesting set of checks and balances. For example, Enterprise Engineering will ultimately determine the need for Systems and Data Base Engineering projects. Systems Engineering will identify application-level "objects" for incorporation into the enterprise Data Base model. And Data Base Engineering supports Enterprise Engineering by tracking the objects needed to run the business. The point is, the three areas are designed to be compatible and work as separate by equal partners.

TYPICAL I.T. ORGANIZATION

Historically, Information Technology organizations have not been in the mainstream of corporate management and has typically been delegated to an administrative or financial area of the company. This stems from the fact that the computer was initially used to support accounting activities in companies.
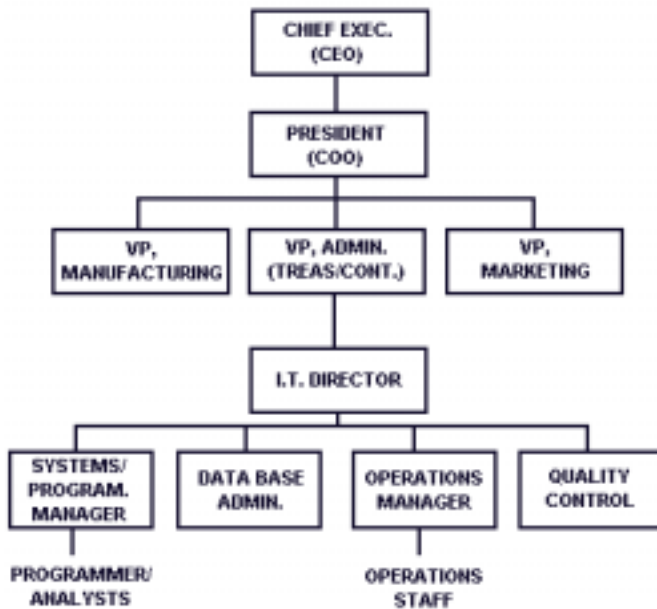
As can be readily seen, the I.T. Director is three levels down from the executive policy level of the enterprise. Under this scenario, policy is dictated without consideration or participation by the I.T. organization. Also understand I.T. is very "physically" inclined as they only support physical devices such as computers and communication equipment. The thought of total systems and integrated data bases on an enterprise-wide basis is lost on most I.T. organizations. In other words, the "logical" dimension for developing and managing information resources is seldom considered. For more information on the differences between Logical and Physical, see:

No. 23 - "*Using Logical Models as Templates*" - May 09, 2005
http://www.phmainstreet.com/mba/ss050509.pdf

THE IRM ORGANIZATION

Unlike the classic I.T. organization described above, the IRM Organization begins at a higher level with a Chief Information Officer (CIO) as an integral part of the executive management team for determining corporate strategies. Like the COO and CFO, the CIO is a legal officer of the company and speaks with the same authority, if not more so, than the other officers. Whereas the COO deals with corporate operations and the CFO manages financial resources, the CIO must provide information support for the whole company. The term "CIO" has been around since the early 1980's and, unfortunately, has not been universally applied with this level of authority. Too often, the title of CIO is synonymous with nothing more than "I.T. Director." In truth, the CIO represents the chief information architect/strategist of the company.
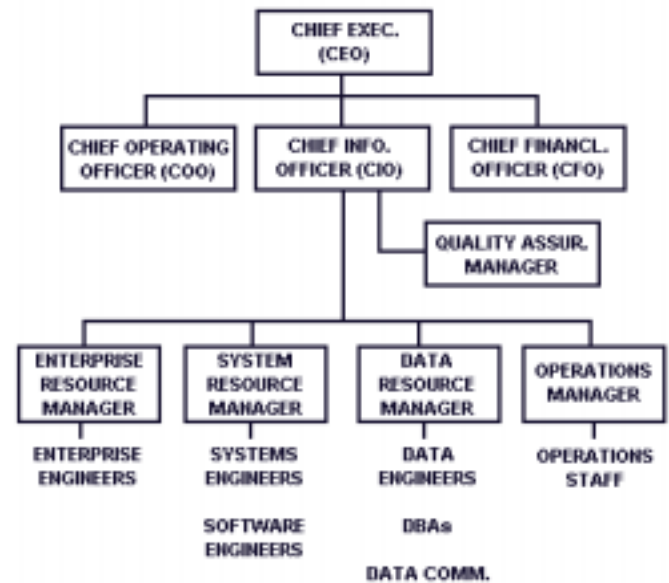
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The CIO is primarily supported by three managers representing the three types of information resources: an Enterprise Resource Manager, a Systems Resource Manager, and a Data Resource Manager. An Operations Manager is also provided for hardware installation and maintenance.

Reporting to the CIO as a staff position is a Quality Assurance Manager who overseas all IRM activity and enforces policy. This position is unlike the typical quality control position as known in today's I.T. organizations. Instead of being regarded as a clerical burden, the Q.A. group is viewed as industrial engineers to the IRM assembly lines, constantly looking for new and improved ways to expedite the development and control of information resources. In this capacity, they are continually looking for new techniques and tools to be used.

The IRM Engineer has the triple role of standards analysis, inspector and technology advisor. Project Administration polices project management and works closely with the Technical Librarian who maintains project and IRM related documentation, both current and historical. The IRM Training Coordinator provides a curriculum to continuously sharpen IRM related skills. As such, the coordinator administers the Skills Inventory for the organization.

At this point you might believe that creating an IRM quality assurance group is creating additional overhead. Just the reverse will occur; it will reduce overhead and bring development costs down while the quality of information resources will soar. In most organizations, the systems analysts and programmers do this work now (at least they are supposed to). By centralizing the function, it can be handled more effectively by a dedicated group. As a result, the analysts and programmers can concentrate on their primary responsibilities.

CONCLUSION

The reason why the IRM infrastructure hasn't come to fruition in most companies is because of corporate management's attitudes toward the value of information and the faith they have in their staff's ability to produce it. A lot of this requires simple education. Only when executives begin to think of information as a strategic weapon will companies then begin to mature into a robust IRM organization.

Footnote:

We have created full functional descriptions of each of the IRM functions described herein and put it on the Internet as part of our "PRIDE" Methodologies for IRM web page at:

http://www.phmainstreet.com/mba/pride/spfd.htm

PRIDE" users have found these descriptions an excellent means to develop full job descriptions. I hope they can serve you as well.

END

About the Author

Tim Bryce is the Managing Director of M. Bryce & Associates (MBA) of Palm Harbor, Florida and has 30 years of experience in the field of Information Resource Management (IRM). He is available for training and consulting on an international basis.

"PRIDE" Special Subject Bulletins can be found at:

http://www.phmainstreet.com/mba/mbass.htm

They are also available through the "PRIDE Methodologies for IRM Discussion Group" at:

http://groups.yahoo.com/group/mbapride/

You are welcome to join this group if you are so inclined.

The "Management Visions" Internet audio broadcast is available at:

http://www.phmainstreet.com/mba/mv.htm

Also, be sure to read Tim's Blog at:
http://blogs.ittoolbox.com/pm/irm/

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