

TITLE: "IRM: PUTTING ALL THE PIECES TOGETHER"

by Tim Bryce

Managing Director

M. Bryce & Associates (MBA)

P.O. Box 1637

Palm Harbor, FL 34682-1637

United States

Tel: 727/786-4567

E-Mail: timb001@phmainstreet.com

WWW: <http://www.phmainstreet.com/mba/>

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

*"IRM is the view of the enterprise from 50,000 feet."
- Bryce's Law*

INTRODUCTION

Years ago I was visiting a large manufacturing company headquartered in Connecticut where I was making a presentation on our "PRIDE" Methodologies for IRM. I thought I had done a pretty good job of explaining the basic concept of Information Resource Management, but the IT Director was having a problem comprehending it. He said, *"Tim, what I'm looking for is the ability to know where all of our plants and offices are throughout the Atlantic seaboard, what their systems are, and the data they use."* Then, elevating his hand over his head like an airplane, he continued, *"I want a view of the enterprise from 50,000 feet."*

I told him he had just succinctly described the concept of IRM and I have been using this expression ever since. (I also got the contract shortly thereafter). IRM is the global view of an enterprise's information resources, including its business, systems, and data components. I have described this concept in-depth in past bulletins, see:

No. 12 - *"Understanding the IRM/MRP Analogy"*

- Feb 21, 2005

<http://www.phmainstreet.com/mba/ss050221.pdf>

TYING IT ALL TOGETHER

What concerns me lately is how the industry seems to have developed distinctly separate approaches for such things as:

- Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP)
- Information Architecture
- Business Process Reengineering (BPR)
- Agile/Extreme Programming
- Object Oriented Programming (OOP)

- Data Mining
- Enterprise Architecture
- Project Management
- Service Oriented Architecture (SOA)
- Data Base Design
- Programmer Workbenches
- Business Rules
- Process Management
- Quality Assurance
- DBMS
- SDLC/Waterfall Methods

All have developed their own unique market niche complete with conferences, books, magazines, and self-proclaimed gurus. All are segregated into separate fiefdoms with little, if any, interfaces between any of them. It seems strange to me they do not work together harmoniously in a cohesive manner. Frankly, we tend to make things more complicated than they need to be.

I tend to believe this is caused because the industry takes a rather myopic view of things. Basically, all of these efforts started out as rather simple ideas which have been refined and marketed as the panacea du jour. I am reminded of IBM's efforts in the 1980's with AD/Cycle who made a futile attempt to develop an integrated development environment. The reason for its failure was primarily due to the lack of cooperation between the participating vendors to agree upon standards for developing a unified environment. And frankly, as competitors, it was not in their best interest to do so. To do so might impact their competitive advantage. Interestingly, AD/Cycle and most of the vendors who participated in the project have moved on, but the problem of an integrated environment has not.

Unlike the IT Director mentioned earlier, very few people want to see the "big picture." Instead, people in the industry have evolved into taking a tool-oriented approach for solving problems. In other words, the only problems seemingly worth addressing are those that can be conquered by the tools they are currently using. Anything outside of their scope is considered irrelevant and *"someone else's problem."* This is like having an orchestra without a maestro; all of the instruments play well but not in a concerted manner (and believe me, this is not a concert we would pay to see).

The objective of any CIO or IT Director is to create a homogeneous development environment as opposed to the heterogeneous environment just described. Doing so allows the staff to row on the same oar and not in opposing directions.

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So, what is the common bond? Another new tool or technique? Hardly. Instead a very simple concept: Information Resource Management. IRM is more about management than it is about technology. In fact, it is a philosophy of management; a way of thinking, a management approach (not tool-oriented) to design and control resources to satisfy the information requirements of an enterprise. Ultimately, it represents organization, discipline and accountability. Like the comment about "50,000 feet," IRM requires a new perspective, one derived from the fundamentals of manufacturing and engineering. It begins with a belief that a system is a product that can be engineered and manufactured like any other product. If you can buy into this belief, than synchronizing all of the disciplines is not only feasible, it is highly likely.

CONCLUSION

In this industry, we tend to worry about the wrong things. This is like rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic. Instead, we should take a more global perspective on the problem, organize ourselves accordingly and conquer it. To do so does not require the use of any particular tool or technique. Instead, we have to climb up upon the mountain, look down, and chart a course of action. This is what Information Resource Management is all about. Its not about mastering a specific instrument, its about orchestration. But this can only happen if we define and standardize our concepts and terminology and turn IRM from an art to a science. Together, we can create a symphony.

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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