

# The Information Agenda:

Rapidly Leveraging Information as a Trusted Strategic Asset  
for Competitive Advantage



## Introduction

*"Since 2006, IBM has deliberately and doggedly constructed an unparalleled portfolio of software.....it's difficult to see how any competitors will be able to [compete] anytime soon..."*  
Ovum Report, August 2008

### The need for an Information Agenda

As the CIO of a flourishing business, you are happy to report that your latest information projects are going well. The new call center is up and running, the new data warehouse is on-line and the new customer loyalty systems have been deployed successfully.

Things seem to be going well until the CEO asks, "Who are our most profitable customers and which channels do they prefer?" Although the new systems hold a great deal of data, they cannot immediately produce the cross-enterprise information requested. The answers the CEO needs will take time and effort to extract and may even delay other projects.

To top things off, the CFO asks, "How are we going to make cuts across the board to respond to tough economic times?" You have just invested in new information-intensive applications and systems and are building up your resources to support them.

You are dismayed to realize that your information projects have not created the ability to rapidly and efficiently respond to these and other questions. How will you find the answers to address new and emerging business opportunities? How do you become more efficient and reduce costs? How do you innovate, optimize and perform?

You realize that you need a more unified approach to leverage the information you already have—you need to create an Information Agenda for your organization.

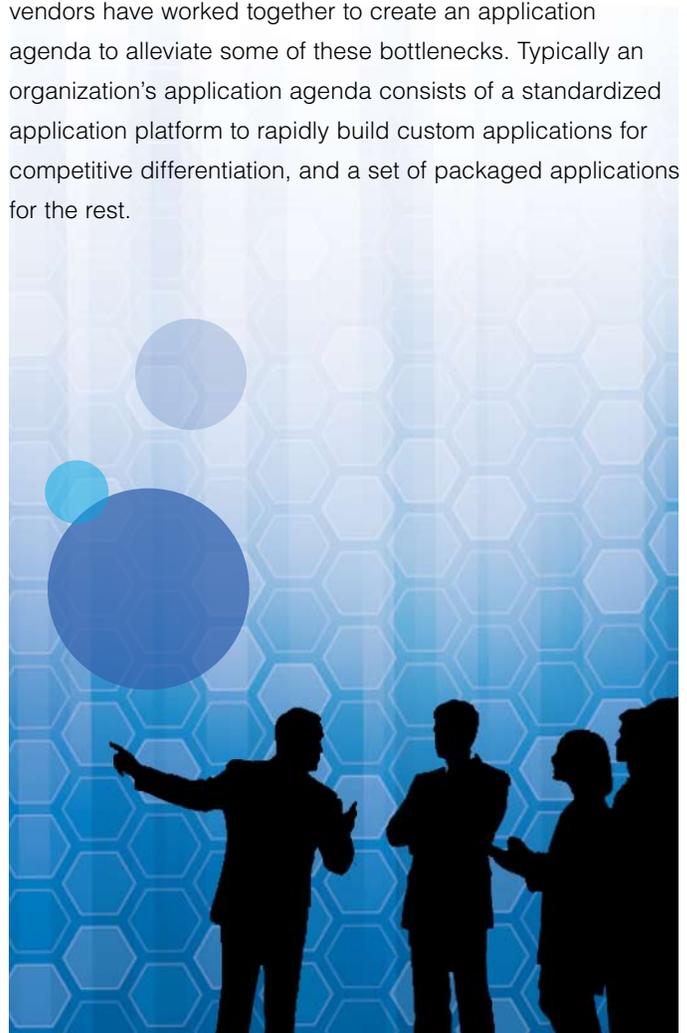
### What is an Information Agenda?

An Information Agenda is an approach for transforming information into a trusted strategic asset that can be rapidly leveraged across applications, processes and decisions for sustained competitive advantage.

### The evolution of the Information Agenda

Over the years, businesses have focused on reducing processing time and costs by investing in applications that helped automate and streamline processes. Frequently, business units made localized decisions that were convenient at the time, but resulted in an amalgam of multiple applications with little consistency. This often meant that cross-organizational decisions couldn't be implemented with speed.

Over the last two decades businesses and technology vendors have worked together to create an application agenda to alleviate some of these bottlenecks. Typically an organization's application agenda consists of a standardized application platform to rapidly build custom applications for competitive differentiation, and a set of packaged applications for the rest.



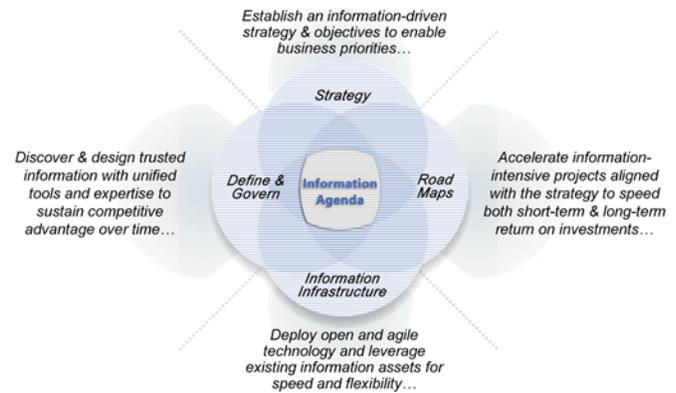
Information management is at the same inflection point that applications were about twenty years ago. A multitude of local information solutions such as data warehouses, data marts, business intelligence and master data management have been created with little information consistency among them. Information remains locked in various silos across the organization, the volume of information and the variety of different information types is growing exponentially, and the velocity of business in today's market is driving more real-time requirements for accessing and using information.

New requests for information cannot be delivered across projects with speed and flexibility. But business cannot wait. Businesses need to treat information as a trusted strategic asset. They need a common set of cross line-of-business and IT goals and objectives to coordinate and direct their efforts for shared usage and extension of their information.

They need to create an Information Agenda for their organizations to achieve the information agility that allows for sustained competitive advantage. A common, but false, assumption exists in which an organization undertaking an array of information projects may believe they have an active Information Agenda. However, an Information Agenda requires a broader view of information, one in which information is realized as an asset that can be reused across the enterprise.

### **Transforming to an Information-Based Enterprise**

An information-based enterprise is an organization that has an Information Agenda. It has the flexibility to rapidly deliver information as needed to optimize processes, applications and business decisions for sustained competitive advantage. The transformation to an information-based enterprise doesn't require the replacement of existing systems and information sources. It only requires that those systems rapidly expose insightful information in a flexible way.



Market-leading companies have taken steps to transform their organizations by applying the key concepts of an Information Agenda. Regardless of industry, region or business model, there is one key set of common criteria across all companies which successfully embrace an Information Agenda. Information-based enterprises are collectively addressing:

- Information Strategy,
- Information Definition and Governance,
- Information Infrastructure, and
- Information Roadmap

### **Strategy**

Information strategy establishes the principles which will guide the organization's efforts to create and exploit trusted information. The information strategy provides an end-to-end vision for all components of the Information Agenda and is driven by an organization's business strategy and operating framework. It helps set the tone, nomenclature and common

## Information Agenda Methodology

set of objectives, providing cohesion to ease the process of executing against the vision.

The organization's ongoing framework and guiding set of principles ensures that current and future investments in people, processes and technologies align and support an agile and flexible information environment.

CIOs looking to develop and implement an effective, business-aligned Information Agenda for the delivery of trusted information will need the assistance of line-of-business colleagues. It is important, therefore, that an Information Agenda has executive sponsorship (e.g., BOD, CEO, CFO) and the support of line-of-business and other colleagues to determine basic level setting at the very beginning of the development process.

A typical information-based strategy begins with vision lock, creating an agreement with executive stakeholders regarding the need for an Information Agenda and shoring commitment to guiding principles. Guiding principles are unique to each organization and could include any of the following realizations:

- Trusted information is needed to make the decisions that deliver business strategy.
- Business functions should be responsible for defining the information needed to support their processes.
- Information should be efficiently provided as a shared service to all parts of the business by experts working in information-critical functions.
- There should be one version of the truth for critical business information.
- Information should have one standard definition and

presentation, unless compelling business differences dictate otherwise.

- Data quality and compliance with standards should be built in at the source, with minimum intervention in the flow to the user.
- Information is a corporate asset. It should be freely shared within the business unless cost, legal or commercial sensitivity prevent it.

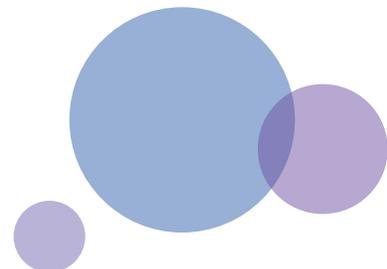
The vision lock is complimented with identification and review of strategic imperatives and supporting information-intensive business objectives. Once identified and reviewed, goals and projects are defined to help set the priorities upon which to build plans and executable roadmaps.

The information strategy is a critical component of an Information Agenda. It represents a commitment, across the enterprise, to recognize and treat information as a strategic asset. Without an information strategy, investments cannot be sustained and leveraged over time.

### Information Definition and Governance

Information definition and governance is one of the most difficult challenges companies face.

- What information do you have?
- Where it is stored?
- How it is updated?
- What is its level of accuracy?
- How does your business use it, and for what purpose?
- What is the actual value of this information?



- What information do you keep, and for how long?
- What information do you retire, and when do you do it?

In order to adequately answer these questions, there needs to be alignment and consistent understanding across IT and business.

As cross-department information demands continue to grow, the need to address this key challenge becomes even more important. For every new project comes the daunting task of locating necessary information, validating its content, reconciling definitions between sources, ensuring proper usage and updating. Problems are further exacerbated with the increased number of new projects that require cross-silo sources under ever-reduced time requirements.

Without the ability to gain a complete understanding of existing data, and align that understanding with the business, IT departments continue to expend exuberant and duplicative amounts of time searching, cleaning, transforming and pushing information—resulting in inefficiencies and slower response to growing business demand needs.

Addressing information definition and governance separate from applications and independent projects delivers cost savings by eliminating duplication of work efforts, redundancy of information stored and redundancy of technologies applied to govern.

Effective information definition and governance can enhance the quality, availability and integrity of a company's information by fostering cross-organizational collaboration and policymaking. This requires the establishment of a specific corporate organization whose mission is to define the policies and practices for managing and protecting critical information assets

over their lifecycle. Some of the objectives of information definition and governance include:

- Defining governance infrastructure and technology
- Establishing common and standard information domain definitions
- Defining ongoing governance processes
- Developing architecture practices and standards
- Monitoring and ongoing improvement of data quality
- Identifying and training key business sponsors, governors, stewards and executives of high-priority business areas
- Establishing necessary organizational policies and cross-organizational oversight
- Training and enabling all affected staff

Although it is sometimes challenging for the CIO and line-of-business managers to work together to establish information governance standards, the importance of this component of the Information Agenda should not be underestimated. Robust information definition and governance is necessary for an organization to comply with external regulations more quickly and more completely. Information governance can help unlock the financial advantages that are driven by improved data quality, management processes and accountability. Business performance can also be improved as a result of information definition and governance—via common definitions and processes that drive effective strategy development, execution, tracking and management.

### **Information infrastructure**

In order to manage information as a strategic asset over time, companies must commit to an enterprise-level information infrastructure. Anything less results in significant operational inefficiencies, unacceptable turnaround on projects and the continued proliferation of multiple copies of data and content. Within the context of an Information Agenda, an enterprise information infrastructure framework identifies the technology required to integrate current investments with future technologies, helping to optimize return on investment. Most enterprise information infrastructure frameworks include the following elements:

**Information integration** works to accelerate the delivery of trusted information by enabling effective integration of information management tools such as enterprise intelligence (data warehouse) solutions, enterprise resource planning (ERP) and customer relationship management (CRM) deployments, and infrastructure consolidations such as SAP.

**Master data management (MDM)** enables master data—such as customer, supplier, partner, product, materials and employee data—to be consolidated to provide an integrated, appropriate view of relevant, trusted information within any given business process.

**Dynamic warehousing** provides the next-generation data warehousing capabilities required to help organizations turn traditionally latent and historical data into relevant, real-time predictive analytics that enable timelier, more insightful business decisions.

**Enterprise content management (ECM)** provides content management, discovery and business process management to support content-based business transformation.

**Enterprise data management** encompasses the data servers and data management tools that can support a wide variety of platforms in helping to reduce cost and enable rapid use of data.

**Business Intelligence and Performance Management** provides decision makers across the organization with information they need to understand, oversee and drive the business. These capabilities provide an understanding of what happened and why, enables them to establish a forward-looking view of the business and measure and monitor actuals against forecast so they can align their actions with organizational objectives.

**Metadata management** creates and manages an organization's metadata (information about information) and defines the meaning of data within the repository. Consistency, completeness and context of data are assured via service directories, data directories, content directories, translation, retrieval and navigation processes.

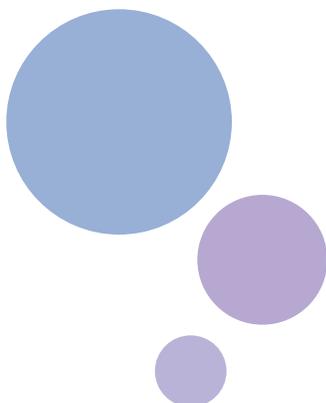
### **Roadmap**

The Information Agenda includes the deployment roadmap for both the near and long term. For the roadmap to be most effective, the CIO needs to show where his or her organization stands now in terms of the maturity of its information use, and where it wants to go in the future. The Information Agenda roadmap is an actionable plan that reflects:



- Prioritization of projects that deliver a significant return on investment based upon the information strategy
- Go-forward deployment of needed technology to support. information defined and governed to meet stated objectives
- An execution plan to support how and when the data should be made available
- Capabilities required to support and access relevant information
- Ties into new or pre-existing management processes and governance practices that are required to sustain the information strategy over time
- Leverage of existing investments such as hardware and software
- New investments which support a longer-term, information-centric, enterprise vision for extension and use for future information-based projects

Many companies, if not most organizations today, already have some form of compiled strategies, governance practices, information management technologies and project plans. What differentiates the companies who are getting their arms around their information for competitive gains from the rest is that they are pragmatically addressing each of the four components together.



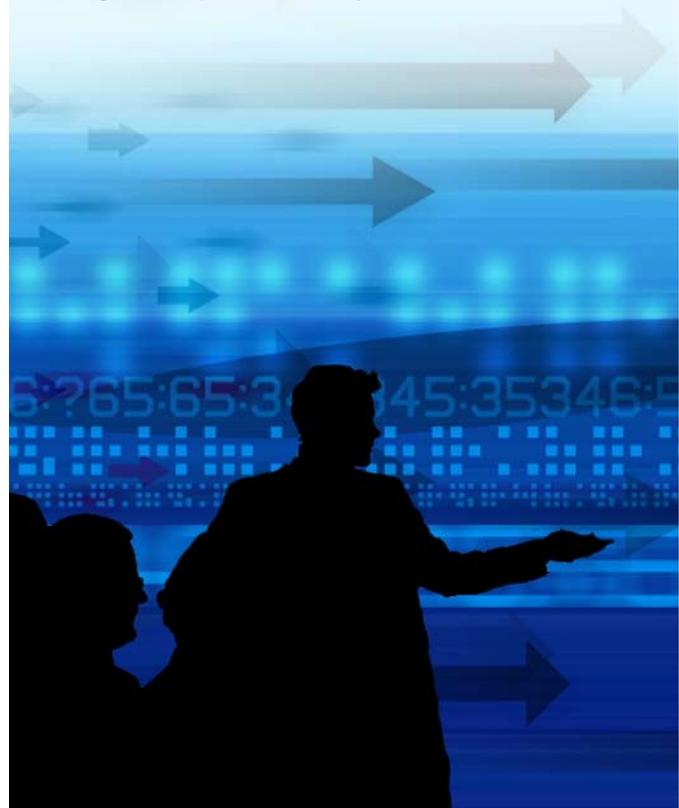
### The Information Agenda Methodology

Understanding the key tasks in the transformation to an information-based enterprise, such as discovering and governing trusted information, is vital to completing the transformation successfully.

Undertaking an Information Agenda and transforming to an information-based enterprise can seem like a very daunting task. It doesn't have to be. IBM's Information Agenda approach arms the market with a step-by-step, practical, proven approach that accelerates the transformation and improves results.

Based upon years of experience and best practices garnered from market leaders who are taking the journey to transform information into a strategic asset, IBM has created a practical and proven approach with supporting tools and information management technologies to create and execute an effective Information Agenda:

- Aligning IT and business goals with **Information Agenda Industry Guides and Workshops** helps create an Information Strategy as well as a Roadmap to help navigate and perform the key transformation tasks



- Defining and governing information with an open set of **Foundation Tools** help you discover and understand the data you have, design your trusted information structures for business optimization and govern your information over time
- Leveraging industry specific expertise through **Industry Accelerators** like data models and proven business optimization assets reduce risk and achieve a better return on investment in a shorter time
- Centralizing best practices with Information On Demand **Competency Centers** which can capture new standards and best practices, embed those capabilities as new skills of the organization and facilitate the transformation to an information-based enterprise

#### Information Agenda Guides

To expedite the transformation process and minimize risk, IBM has created industry-specific Information Agenda Guides.

Information Agenda Guides provide proven, prescriptive methodology as well as mature industry assets, delivered by cross-IBM practitioners with deep industry expertise—all designed to aid CIOs and organizations in their efforts to develop their own Information Agenda.

Assisting clients across 18 industries, IBM's Information Agenda Industry Guides detail the priority business imperatives, objectives and key information-intensive projects in the respective industries. The guides help you choose and tailor key tasks aligned to industry best practices so you can keep your information transformation focused, efficient and competitively viable. Using the guides and industry-tailored workshop sessions will help you develop a sound information strategy that will provide the foundation for future state design, identification of key information requirements and gaps.



In essence, the guides and workshops will help you quickly establish an Information Agenda vision and strategy that is aligned to corporate goals and provide common objectives across line-of-business and IT to support your long and short term needs.

### **Information Agenda Foundational Tools**

A crucial part of adopting an Information Agenda is gaining a clear understanding of the information that exists across disparate business systems. Organizations must assess and manage their current information landscape to determine what information is available and what information is needed to drive greater business value, and then devise a well-thought out, phased plan for bridging the gap.

Foundation Tools were designed to address this need by helping organizations profile, model, define, blueprint and govern their information separate from the applications and technologies which utilize this data for day-to-day support activities. With Foundation Tools, organizations can discover and design the most optimal information infrastructures to build greater trust across the enterprise. They are an open set of tools designed to work in a heterogeneous environment to maximize previous investments made by your company.

### **Information Accelerators**

IBM Information Accelerators are pre-packaged assets created by harvesting best practices experiences in specific information management disciplines and/or industries. Information Accelerators help businesses reduce the amount of time it takes to implement Roadmaps by leveraging pre-built assets designed to address immediate business needs and are aligned with Information On Demand architectures for extended use and value.

IBM Information Accelerators speed the journey to Information On Demand across the enterprise and minimize risk. Among the Information Accelerators currently available:

- Over 180 Industry-Specific Assets
- Over 30 Performance Management Assets
- Over 50 Enterprise Content Management Assets
- Over 10 IBM InfoSphere® Assets
- 6 IBM Industry Models
- 25 IBM Information-Intensive Applications
- Over 10 IBM Global Business Services Analytical Assets

### **Competency Center**

A Competency Center, sometimes known as a Center of Excellence or Center of Knowledge, is a virtual or fixed team of interrelated disciplines. Organizations know that they are ready for a Competency Center when their projects extend beyond tactical deployments to broader-based strategic solutions where a managed, predictable, repeatable approach shared by IT and line-of-business is needed. By building expertise in the technology, process and skills required to deliver strategic solutions, organizations can leverage resources and effectively support their Information Agenda.

Using a combination of practice aids, methodologies, tools and technology, IBM will guide you through the process of establishing a Competency Center in your organization. Competency Centers are a proven vehicle to ensure alignment, engagement and communication with all key stakeholders and an effective use of resources.

## A Flexible Environment

An information infrastructure built as an open, flexible environment enables the use of existing systems to rapidly deliver new capabilities to the business, and is critical to a successful transformation to an information-based enterprise.

IBM delivers a best in class, open and flexible environment based on shared metadata that can support organizations' key information requirements. This extensive set of capabilities are delivered through IBM's Information On Demand solutions to help organizations unlock the value of information to optimize business outcomes:

**Manage Data Over Its Lifetime**—Helping organizations use data for maximum business value, and delivering the ability to manage information over its lifetime. This helps organizations efficiently and effectively use data and ensure protection and compliance with policies and regulations at the lowest cost.

**Optimize Content, Process & Compliance**—Arming companies to manage the growing volumes of unstructured content, optimize associated business processes and help satisfy complex compliance requirements. This helps companies optimize growing content for excellent customer service, maximum workforce efficiency and double-digit return on investment.

**Establish, Govern and Deliver Trusted Information**—Providing a complete view of enterprise information to enable accurate and timely decisions and optimized business processes. Delivers the right information to the right place at the right time to empower effective

processes, applications, and people. Enables organizations to take control over the growing types and volume of information, transforming it into an enterprise asset.

**Optimize Business Performance**—Providing business intelligence and performance management capabilities to decision makers across the organization so that regardless of where they sit, they have the information they need to take action to impact performance.



## IBM can help

From creating an Information Agenda to providing the technologies, products, services and expertise needed to execute your agenda, IBM can help you succeed. IBM Information On Demand solutions have been specifically designed to address trusted information needs. Open standards based and reflecting an investment of over 10 billion dollars in the last three years, IBM Information On Demand solutions are among the industry's most comprehensive. They provide organizations with an



enterprise-wide approach to deploying and managing an information infrastructure. In addition, you gain the advantage of IBM's industry-specific accelerators and extensive knowledge of technology best practices that can deliver a cost-efficient, tailored set of trusted information solutions.

### **Conclusion and next steps**

Organizations who use an Information Agenda to enable their organizations to deliver trusted information using an orchestrated combination of people, proven processes and technology may greatly improve their organizations' ability to identify and manage risk, meet regulatory requirements, speed new products and services to market and enhance customer service.

Organizations ready to jumpstart their trusted information efforts should consider a hosted Information On Demand information agenda kick-start workshop. This workshop leverages IBM's extensive experience and Information On Demand best practices to guide CIOs and their business colleagues quickly through the process of building a cohesive information agenda, with an actionable set of projects to execute.

For more information, visit <http://www-01.ibm.com/software/data/information-agenda/engage.html#workshop>.

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