



Information Management Governance, Ownership and Stewardship

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The Information Management Governance Imperative

Many organisations find themselves unable to deliver real business value through poor decision making due to a lack of quality information, quite often despite significant investment in Information Management (IM).

This manifest itself in many ways, the following are some typical examples:

- Inconsistent information in different reports
- Multiple sources of the 'same' information and data
- Inappropriate focus of scarce IM resources and skills
- Confused and/or limited involvement of the business in IM decisions
- Poor prioritisation of IM investment decisions

Acuma has identified from our significant experience of delivering IM solutions that effective management of Information requires good Governance, Ownership and Stewardship.

Acuma – The Information Management Specialist

Acuma Solutions Ltd has more than 20 years experience of delivering Information Management ¹ projects, and has successfully implemented hundreds of solutions, across the full spectrum of data integration, data quality, data warehousing and business intelligence. Acuma's **Information Value Model (IVM)** methodology has been developed to encapsulate all of our acquired knowledge and experience around IM solutions delivery. **IVM** recognises the importance of addressing both the **human** (process and organisation) factors as well as the **technical** (technology and data) factors. This ensures that a complete and sustainable solution is delivered.

Application of the **human** side of **IVM** has been shown to be effective in managing the development of appropriate quality information. Acuma has worked with our clients to effectively implement IM Governance with identification of business owners and allocation of skilled stewards.

IM Governance

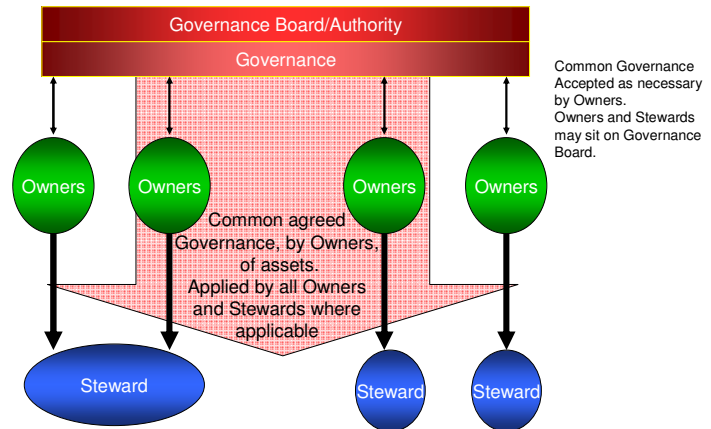
IM Governance is the application of formal approved rules to the management and control of IM Assets, such as data, data models, data definitions, reports, toolsets, data sources, ETL (Extract, Transform, Load), governance and documents.

IM Governance rules are defined in one or more of the following ways:

- Policy/Principles – a general statement of intent and scope
- Process – a defined series of steps or actions to achieve an objective
- Procedure – a detailed definition of a process
- Standard – a defined statement of an agreed level of requirement
- Methods – an approach to be taken when carrying out a task
- Definitions – detailed descriptions of IM components

¹ Acuma defines Information Management as the ability to deliver the right information, of the right quality, to the right people, in the right format, at the right time and at the right cost.

The approval of IM Governance can be through an existing IT/IS Governance Board but due to the specific and specialist nature of IM, Acuma recommends an IM Governance Board. This IM Governance Board needs to be fully integrated into the overall governance of the business and have the necessary authority to mandate compliance. The representation of the board should be from across the organisation with people who have the necessary experience and understanding and can take a non-parochial view making decisions for the benefit of all. These representatives are likely to include existing owners and stewards. The approved governance can then be applied to any IM assets, through the owners and stewards.



IM Asset Owners and Stewards

It is important to allocate IM Asset Owners and Stewards because:

- Investment in IM Assets needs to be justified and prioritised based on business value and usage
- To maximise business value from IM assets they need to be managed effectively and good governance consistently applied
- To manage IM assets effectively all interested groups needs to be identified and have a say in the management and control, the IM Asset Owners
- To ensure good long term management and control the interested groups need to have someone managing the asset on a day to day basis, the IM Asset Stewards

IM Asset Owners are people in the business who gain value from using the IM asset within their day to day activities. These IM Asset Owners can be identified by looking at the usage of the IM asset within the key business processes of the organisation. By looking at key process it is possible to identify the key owners and their percentage share of the usage of the IM asset, this then reflects their level of say over the usage and direction of the asset.

The responsibilities of the IM Assets Owners are:

- To manage the overall strategic investment and control of the IM Asset
- To control its existence and lifecycle
- To provide a strategic direction based on the assets contribution to overall business objectives
- To provide business reasons for continued investment in the asset

IM Asset Owners need the support of professional IM Asset Stewards because:

- They are business experts and not experts in the management of IM Assets
- They are busy managing the business delivering the business value
- Management of IM assets is not likely to be part of their core job role
- Multiple owners of IM Assets need to have a single focus for the management of the IM asset

IM Asset Stewards are appointed to manage IM assets in behalf of their owners. They are responsible for:

- Extracting the maximum business value from the IM asset over it full lifetime
- Maintaining and enhancing the value, where appropriate
- Managing the asset to meet the owners expectations

- Managing the lifecycle of the IM asset on behalf of the owners through acquisition, creation, maintenance, exploitation, enhancement and finally disposal

In addition the IM Asset Steward needs to support the IM Asset Owners in fulfilling their duties but must NOT take on themselves the owners responsibilities. This is where most organisations fail to effectively manage their IM Assets. They appoint people to manage assets without specifically identifying owners and defining their responsibilities. The steward assumes the strategic control and management of the asset because they are required to deliver its usage to the business. However, the steward may not have the necessary level of business understanding or the value the asset provides and therefore makes incorrect assumption leading to poor return from the asset and sometime significant business repercussions.

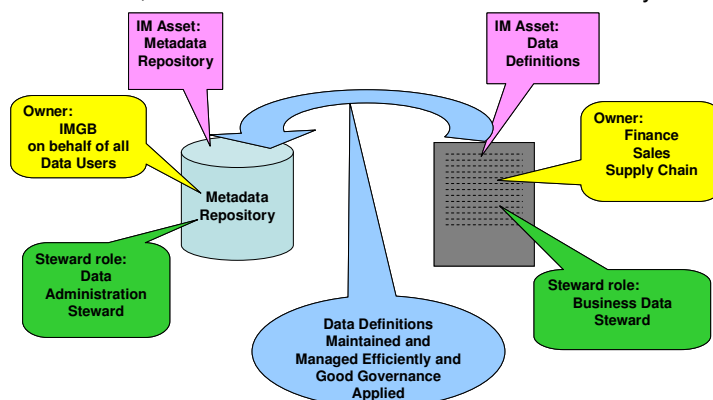
Acuma's Approach

Definition of IM Assets, alignment with business processes and identification of owners and stewards can seem daunting. Acuma has developed a number of alternative development approaches, these are:

- Full definition of the IM Assets for the organisation complete with business process identification and allocation of owners and stewards
- Limited identification of a small number of key assets, ones that can provide significant business benefit
- Identification of IM assets associated with a specific IM project, defining the assets, owners and stewards associated with the assets involved

Whichever method is chosen it is recommended that:

- An initial list of all IM Assets is identified at the outset, care should be taken to differentiate correctly the different assets e.g. Metadata definitions and the metadata repository, reports and a report library
- An IM Governance Board is appointed (Acuma has a generic terms of reference for the governance board that can be used as a template). This will provide a framework within which the specific detailed definition can take place, a formal means of authorisation as well as provide understanding of the overall approach



The key steps are:

- Identify all IM assets
- Prioritise the IM assets based on the business value they deliver, their usage within the business, the value and investment against the asset and the issues associated with management
- Identify within which key processes the IM asset is used and who the key process owners are.
- Identify who is the existing steward for the IM Asset or allocate someone.
- Define the roles and responsibilities for the owners and steward (Acuma has generic definitions that can be used to speed this process)
- Educate the owners and stewards in their roles
- Identify what governance is required to support the IM assets
- As a minimum define the key governance for the IM assets

Key Business Benefits

The key business benefits of defining IM Assets, Owners and Stewards are:

- Clear identification of the IM assets of the organisation and who owns them and who is stewarding them
- No gaps in responsibility and management of IM assets therefore no confusion of who is responsible
- Understanding of how the IM asset delivers value to the business
- Appropriate investment based on business driven reasons
- Improved management of IM assets over their complete lifecycle reducing short term decision making and increasing return and value
- Common understanding of information assets across the business – single version of the truth
- Ability to identify information and data and ensure it is appropriate and valid
- Drive information and data quality based on business driven requirements
- Consistent application of good IM governance
- Reduced instances of business issues related to identification of information and data
- Ability to drive education of personnel based on a clear understanding of skills and capability required based on defined roles and responsibilities