Effective Records Management

Part 1: A management guide to the value of BS ISO 15489-1

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David Best

BSi

Business
Information

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Foreword

All businesses, whether private or public sector, rely on information and records to conduct their affairs in a systematic and legally compliant way. The strategic management of records and information is essential to this process and never more so than in an age of e-commerce and e-government. With a rapidly changing and developing business context there are considerable organizational benefits to adopting a consistent and standardized approach to the management of records and information.

In October 2001 the first international standard for the management of records, was launched in Montreal, Canada. The two-part publication of Standard and Technical Report, implemented in the United Kingdom as BS ISO 15489-1:2001 and PD ISO/TR 15489-2:2001 were the culmination of three years' work by a group of international experts to synthesize best practice from around the world in the strategic management of records. This Standard and Technical Report are applicable to multinational companies and small enterprises alike and provide an essential tool for the management of records and information.

The Standard provides a framework within which the necessary management of records and information can take place. This publication is the first in a series of publications on records management supported by BSI and is intended to complement the Standard and Technical Report and help place them in context for the user. The publications expand on the framework that the Standard creates and provide both interpretation and illustration of good practice. Each volume has been written predominantly from the United Kingdom perspective by leading United Kingdom practitioners, who have first hand, practical experience of, and insight into, the issues facing United Kingdom organizations today.

I can wholeheartedly recommend this informative series to the reader, which provides insight into the application of both BS ISO 15489-1:2001 and PD ISO/TR 15489-2:2001.

The other books in this series are:

—   BIP 0025-2:2002, *Effective records management — Part 2: Practical implementation of BS ISO 15489-1*; and
—   BIP 0025-3:2003, *Effective records management — Part 3: Performance management for BS ISO 15489-1.*

Further publications may be added in future.

Philip A Jones
Chairman IDT/2/17

1   Introduction

1.1   The standard

BS ISO 15489-1 is the first standard on records management and has its roots in the first ever Australian national standard on records management, AS 4390-1/6. It is accompanied by a Technical Report, PD ISO/TR 15489-2, which provides further details and explanation together with a methodology for implementing the standard. Both publications are implementations of ISO documents. PD ISO/TR 15489-2 is an implementation guide for records management professionals (and others) who have been assigned responsibility for managing their organization's records.

This book summarizes the case for implementing records management at an appropriate level in most if not all organizations.

1.2   What does records management have to do with me?

Whether your organization is in the public or private sector, records management is of vital importance. It will and does affect almost every area of corporate affairs. The application of the new standard, BS ISO 15489-1, is not merely more red tape. It is the first comprehensive attempt for some years to bring the relevance of records management to the awareness of management in general, rather than just to the specialist records manager. It does this by a comprehensive and readable description of what makes up a proper and professional records management system, comprising policies, procedures, standards and technologies.

There are many well publicized events and subjects where records management has had a significant role in either the discovery of problems and/or the recovery from those events in the last few years, in banking, industry, commerce and the media.

In each of these cases, the presence (or in some cases absence) of good records management had a material impact on the outcome. There are many more that are not in the public domain. In some cases these records were physical, in some cases digital, but in each case they had a significant effect on the way in which events unfolded.
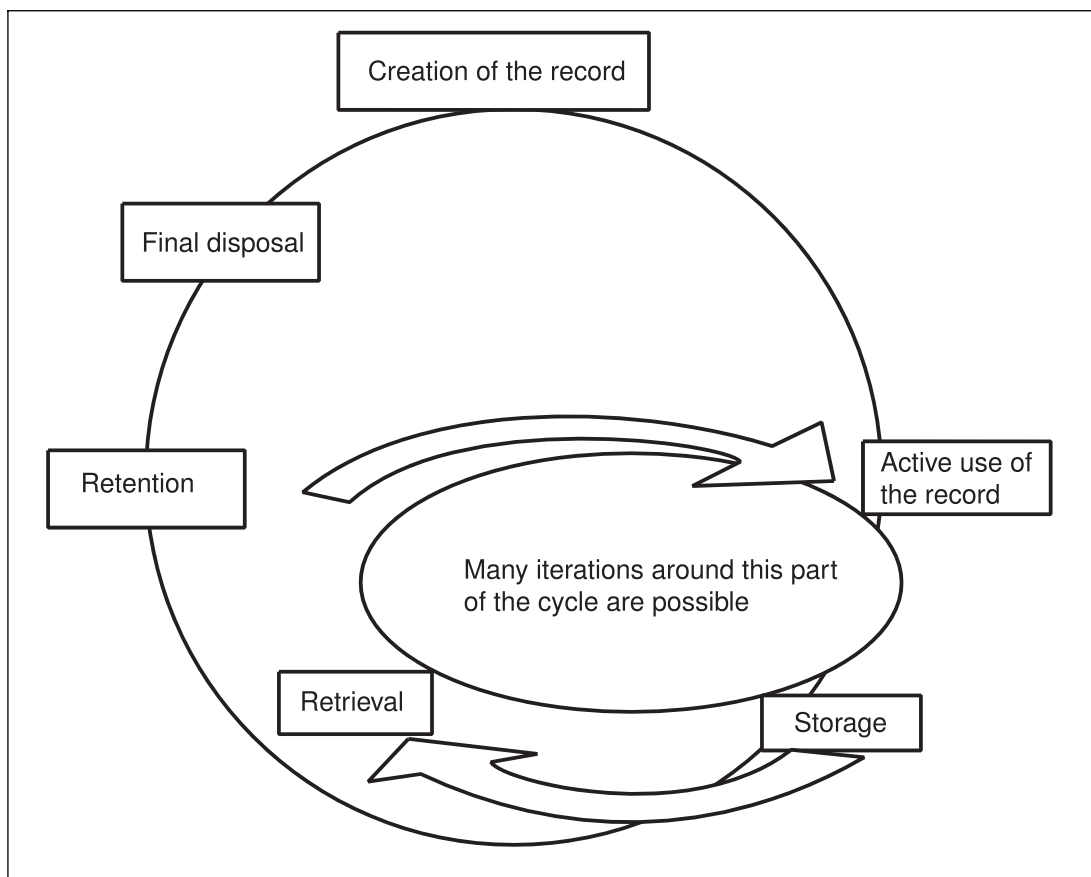
1.3   What does this guide cover?

In each section, where possible, case studies have been used to inform or illuminate the text.

The key points of this publication are as follows.

- Proper recording of the transactions of the organization is essential, not just in the areas of finance and production but also in all the organization's activities. This remains true independent of sectors, though some sector differences are highlighted, for example between regulated and unregulated and public and private sector businesses.

- Records provide the raw material for the exploitation of information about:
  - intellectual property;
  - the customer;
  - a range of supplier information; and
  - how to streamline cost or enhance productivity in:
    - procurement;
    - production;
    - logistics;
    - sales and marketing; and
    - administration.

- The payback on the implementation cost can be rapid, but the strategy for achieving such results should be set out in advance and should be clear and agreed by all senior management interests.

- An understanding of the basic issues of records management by senior managers is therefore very important and in some cases forms part of good corporate governance.

- The benefits (which are also described in BS ISO 15489-1) from the point of view of a practising senior manager are as follows.
  - customer and supplier management can be carried out in a demonstrably consistent and equitable way – the standards and policies to accomplish this are part of the records framework;
  - legislative and audit or regulatory compliance is less of an effort and inspections or inquiries are more easily accommodated at lower cost because the records and documents (electronic or paper based) are there and available as a matter of routine;
  - the corporate knowledge base is more accessible and less incomplete with an effective records management system in place;
  - business continuity and the training and development of key staff is less complex because of the availability of information in an accessible and standard form.

Figure 1 describes the life cycle of all information in the organization whether in paper or in electronic form. Usually when problems arise in the processes or accountability of the business, it is found that some part of this cycle has not been properly attended to. Either the records policies on how to create a record, or the indexing and retrieval issues have not been addressed.

Creation of the record

Final disposal

Retention

Active use of
the record

Many iterations around this part
of the cycle are possible

Retrieval

Storage

Figure 1. The records management life cycle

This leads to cases where decisions cannot be recalled because the documents are incomplete, or a series of events cannot be reconstructed because the integrity of the record has been compromised.

These events occur whether the record is held in paper form or on electronic media. They are problematic because of the increased span of control in modern flat organizations, and because the increased demands for transparency and accountability in corporate and public affairs have not been consistently reflected in the ways that organizations and managements deal with the cycle, pictured so deceptively simply above.

BS ISO 15489-1 recognizes and addresses the issues inherent in managing each stage of this cycle in an appropriate way and in a way designed to promote excellence and best practice to the benefit of those organizations applying it.

2 Benefits of a standards-driven approach to records management

2.1 Introduction

The major question for any senior manager of an organization confronted with the challenge to implement BS ISO 15489-1 is 'Why should we do this and what is the benefit to my organization?'

If the answer to this question is ambiguous or unclear, the determination and effort behind any implementation is likely to be less, and in some cases the implementation may fail.

The issue of benefits may be looked at in two parts.

- What benefits does a standards-based approach have in general?

- How does this affect the use of a standard in records management in particular?

2.2 Benefits of standards in general

2.2.1 Common approach

The existence of a standard means that staff trained in its application and use have only to be trained once and kept up to date. The skills they learn are therefore transferable from one employer to another.

The practice of a method or approach backed by a standard is auditable independently of the organizational setting in which it is practised. The down side to this of course is that although a standard will ensure that something is done in the right way it will of itself not ensure that the right thing is being done! This requires management investment and oversight.

2.2.2 Consistency

The presence of a standard in driving the way certain activities or processes are carried out ensures that there is consistency at least at the level of 'what' should be done. Of course it is never possible to use a standard to ensure that the 'how' of things is always done in the same way but at least the overarching presence of a standard ensures that the touchstone of good practice is always there. In this regard there is a book, BIP 0025-2, which gives excellent information on the implementation of BS ISO 15489-1.

2.2.3 Best practice

BS ISO 15489-1 is of itself a repository of good practice in the specification of the excellence that records management systems should reach. In itself though, it does not aim to provide a good practice guide. What is often the case is that the existence of a standard helps to promote best practice by setting a hurdle to reach. Examples of this have been seen most clearly in the area of consumer affairs where in car safety the development of ever greater standards have led to competition among manufacturers to advertise the safety of their vehicles in the areas of seats, air bags, passenger cages, and so on.

2.2.4 Accumulation of a body of knowledge

Because of the structure of a standard, the information and knowledge it contains is collated into a systematic code of material. It therefore becomes significantly easier to accumulate knowledge around the practice for example in records retention or in the definition of records (see below).

2.3   Benefits of standards as applied to records management

2.3.1 Availability of expertise

The existence of records management standards is almost certain to result in the development of a greater body of skilled practitioners. The reason for this is that as the propagation of a standard gets under way, and as it is increasingly adopted, then the demand for skilled staff to carry out these implementations increases and hence the incentive to become skilled increases also.

We are also seeing a convergence in the traditional skills of the archivist, the records manager, the information manager and the knowledge officer. From the role of the archivist, who has conventionally managed records at the end of their active usage when they are entering the retention and disposal stages of the records management life cycle (see Figure 1), to that of the records and knowledge officers, who have usually been involved in the active period of the life cycle, there is a growing awareness, fostered by initiatives like the development of BS ISO 15489-1, that all have a vital role to play in the 'information health' of the organization. See for example C Holtham, *Towards the new information professional* <u>in</u> *The Fourth Resource — Information and its management* [2].

As a consequence there is a growing body of skilled people and an improving career path for those who wish to spend their careers in this area.

2.3.2 Ability to compare or benchmark costs

As BS ISO 15489-1 is more widely implemented there will be a corresponding interest in the relative unit costs of implementation between different organizations. Whilst it will be some time before we can hope to see a Gartner type magic quadrant classification emerging for organizations in records management (see BIP 0025-2 for useful insights in this area), there is a range of metrics which the implementation of BS ISO 15489-1 will help to encourage use of. Such measures as the unit life cycle cost of records, the storage cost of active records, archive costs and retrieval efficiencies are all useful in comparing the costs of records management between organizations.

2.3.3 Reduction in the numbers of records under management

Paradoxically, the implementation of BS ISO 15489-1 will on the whole reduce the volume of records kept by organizations applying it. The reasons for this are that its application requires that organizations develop retention policies for each type or class of records as part of the overall set of records policies. When you turn your attention to these policies, you will find that the most extraordinary level of storage of information may be ingrained in the business. For example, during an investigation of the rapid escalation of disk storage requirements in a blue chip environment, the most extraordinary duplication of storage of records by a number of departments and individuals was discovered. No one knew whose responsibility it was to act as custodian of various sets of documents. The resulting storage in the separate corporate directories on the various shared disk drives was a bonanza for the IT supplier and a constant headache for the IT manager. When the records manager (formerly limited in their role to looking after paper records) was allowed to develop and apply some sensible policies on storage and retention, the problem vanished within three months.

In a second example of benefits realization a records strategy and implementation plan was developed for a leading hospital. On analysis, the leading cause of cancelled or delayed appointments was the unavailability of patient records at the clinic in time for the patient to be seen. So even when a patient turned up on time, between a fifth and a quarter of appointments were affected by lack of records. In some cases patients were seen without notes and had to give their history again. In other cases they were sent home until the notes could be provided to the specialist. In this case it is easy to see that the benefit arising from using systems that ensure the notes and patients coincide, easily exceed the cost of providing it.

It is impossible to put a figure on the general level of benefit from applying a standards based approach to records management. However, in the majority of cases the benefits are well in excess of the cost of implementation, and frequently it has been true that some business purpose or activity emerges as possible which was not previously feasible at an economic cost before.

3 Records management and knowledge management

Whereas five years ago the concept of knowledge management was much spoken about but rarely practised, now most organizations pay at least lip service to the idea of managing the knowledge which has built up over many years in the form of records, databases, customer files and the like. Indeed one of the major problems confronting many customer and/or supplier facing applications is that of ensuring that the content of these systems is accurate, relevant and timely.

BS ISO 15489-1 recognizes the vital role that records play in the management of knowledge in the organization. What might a few years ago have been recognized as a tedious statutory or governance issue is now clearly seen as having a fundamental business importance.

- Records are repositories of the organization's accumulated knowledge about itself, its suppliers and its customers.

- Properly managed, records can be mined as a rich vein of information, which can allow value to be added to relationships with third parties.

- Over time, records collections or series come to contain masses of information about trends through time, whether around processes, transactions or people. They therefore provide management with predictive possibilities for extrapolation which were not previously possible or were previously too expensive.

This section describes the relationship between the implementation of good practice in records management and the effective use of knowledge management within businesses.

From the previous section it should be obvious that good records practice is extremely important, and this means an implementation of BS ISO 15489-1 at a level appropriate to the business context.

One of the principal reasons for this belief is that records are the raw material of knowledge in most businesses. Whether we are discussing customer correspondence, supplier invoices, technical engineering files, client papers or any other form of record, this information lies at the heart of any plan to establish effective knowledge management in the organization, see Table 1.

Table 1. Relationship between records management and knowledge management

Record type or category	Knowledge management category
Customer correspondence	Preferences, or cases of complaint, knowledge of customer trends, future trends etc.
Supplier invoices	Knowledge useful for negotiating bulk agreements, master service agreements
Client files	(Self explanatory)
Technical engineering files	Research and development re-uses; patent sifting; process improvement, management of design or production technology
Management plans and papers	Governance, compliance, etc.

Table 1 makes it clear that although having good records management does not ensure any form of knowledge management capability, the absence of good corporate standards in records management will more or less preclude knowledge management.

Knowledge management requires several fundamentals to be in place:

- systematically stored information;

- access routes to this information, which may take the form of indexes, lists of documents or numbered volumes or edge marked shelves or, of course, numerous computer applications, accessing a corporate departmental or business unit data warehouse or database;

- clear statements of the purposes that the knowledge is required to serve.

It is fairly clear that a records system properly implemented fulfils these requirements.

A case study will make this point clear. Some years ago a video production company, long since defunct, had bought a news reel archive, a library of film spanning the period from the late 19th century to the middle of the 20th century.

These short films were produced as the earliest version of what are now the news channels. Two extensive, hand-written indexes used to access the archives were part of the collection. These indexes allowed the owners to produce all sorts of knowledge products from the archive.

When rights to the archive were let to a Japanese organization they asked to be provided with a CD ROM based version of the index as a condition of paying the asking price. The point is, though, that without those original records of the contents, the value of the archive would have been very much reduced. The transition from information to usable and exploitable knowledge relied upon good records practices.

The role of records management in this setting (i.e. knowledge management) therefore is to:

- identify the knowledge requirements of the organization and to what extent those can be met from information contained in the records;

- provide a system which enables the records of an organization to be:
  - logged;
  - indexed;
  - maintained;
  - accessed as needed;
  - re-filed and protected from damage in the environment.

The purpose of the indexing system within an overall records framework is that the index should allow the records themselves or appropriate information about the records to be accessed by whoever has need of them for a legitimate purpose.

A further example of this type of value in the record, rather than in the item itself can be seen from the automation of the indexes of the National Sound Archive at the British Library. These records were also handwritten or typed over many years and described the wealth of the collections from regional accents of the British Isles to original recordings of the great artists and actors of the 19th and 20th centuries. The automation of these has allowed the indexes to be put onto the world wide web, so that much of the information they contain and ultimately the recordings themselves will be able to be accessed, regardless of the location of the listener.

4 The role of records management in corporate governance

4.1 The problems with lack of corporate governance

The following text is taken from the Deloitte and Touche publication, *Corporate Governance*, Winter 2000/01 Progress Report. It highlights some of the problems of a lack of appropriate governance standards.

> *Damaging publicity when things go wrong. Financial penalties levied by the Financial Services Authority. Public statements of misconduct issued. Criminal offences imposed by foreign courts. Stricter action taken against directors who happen to be accountants. Increased pressure applied to finance directors. Audit Committee overloaded. All of this could happen in the near future to good directors and it is against a backdrop of pressure for tougher action against those blamed when things go wrong. There is much to worry about if you are not in proper control of your business.*
>
> *The key points for directors to bear in mind are as follows:*
>
> - *there is increasing pressure to take short cuts given market expectations;*
> - *the new Financial Services Authority is keen to make its mark;*
> - *there is a danger of more legalistic rules;*
> - *there are cost issues around increased regulation for both large and small businesses;*
> - *these costs are likely to impact on society in general;*
> - *the business sector needs to influence strongly the extent of regulation;*
> - *entrepreneurship is impeded by over-regulation;*
> - *there are some practical steps which you can take.*
>
> *Clearly there is a need to avoid falling foul of the tough new requirements. Therefore directors need to establish mechanisms for effective risk management, not just for Turnbull compliance reasons, but also to keep the growing challenges which they face at bay. As regulation increases, the best directors are frequently the ones who will be first to question whether they still want to be directors.*[1]

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[1] Reproduced by kind permission of Deloitte and Touche.

This publication is not about Corporate Governance, but it is important to realize how records management has a bearing on the ability of management to fulfil its obligations with regard to governance.

The following factors influence the applicability of records management to corporate governance in any particular case:

- scale of organization;

- regulated or unregulated industry;

- nature of business.

4.2   Scale of organization

It may seem obvious that large organizations are more complex than small. But this is not always true. Consider the case of a medical charity, with income of about £50 million per annum. Although this is not a large organization in revenue and expenditure terms its records are complex.

Several records series can be identified in such an organization:

- donor records and the amounts and regularity of such donations, including any specific limitations on the use of the funds donated;

- records relating to the beneficiaries, whether patients or medical staff, together with the qualifications of the medical staff and their suitability for types of grant;

- records relating to the progress and final outcome of patients in receipt of grants;

- in the case of medical research there may be further series of records that record the results of the research as well as the outcomes of clinical trials, patent applications relating to the research;

- the normal personnel and fiscal records of the organization;

- records in relation to risk and liability, which may include any of the foregoing.

The scale in this case is not so significant as the complexity of the activity being carried out.

In a small manufacturing company the records series may be significantly more straightforward because of the less complex nature of the business. The methodology contained in BIP 0025-2 provides guidance on how to deal with the issue of defining the scope of a records management system in relation to the scale of the organization.

4.3   Regulated or unregulated?

Whether or not an organization is regulated in its business should not necessarily have an impact on the way in which it conducts itself with regard to records management. What does make a difference however is the requirement of the environment for an organization to demonstrate its compliance. The previous section on sector specific issues dealt with this at some length, but the key to these considerations in the strategy is the extent to which the strategy needs to be formally and externally demonstrable.

In the financial services industry, for example, governance is closely linked to compliance. Any one taking out an insurance or pension plan will be familiar with the forms and questionnaires designed to ensure independence or at least transparency of provider adviser and advised. What is not so visible to the customer is the massive work in systems for records management of these documents, and the elaborate framework of compliance that is supported by these records frameworks.

4.4 Public or private sector

Increasingly as the principles of corporate governance become tighter and more strictly applied, the distinction between public and private sector becomes less stark. It will always be the case however, that the public sector will continue to be required to demonstrate greater accountability and visibility in its use of information.

In many countries there are now Freedom of Information Acts or equivalent pieces of legislation, which mean that the rules by which organizations treat information, and the range over access which they allow to it are set out in law. This requires yet a further form of compliance.

Principally records management is relevant in several areas:
- traceability;
- compliance;
- accountability;
- integrity; and
- availability of information.

4.5 Traceability

The traceability of information connected with decisions which may be subject to issues of governance is paramount. For example, in the case of charitable donations and their intended destination, it is essential for the records of the donations themselves and the destination and receipt of the funds to be traceable. This was vividly illustrated in the media in 2001 by the questions raised over the amount and destination of funds raised and distributed by a charitable organization. This demonstrated the high standards of the records keeping within the charitable organization and the level of support which the records staff were able to provide to the proper governance of the organization.

4.6 Compliance

The increasing degree of legal and self-regulatory compliance requirements makes it essential that the records systems of the business can demonstrate that it is compliant with the various bodies that have 'the right to know'.

These compliance regimes will vary from the strict and rigorous requirements of the Financial Services Authority (FSA), the US federal body, the Securities and Exchange

Commission (SEC), or other financial regulatory bodies, to compliance with the requirements of other ISO Standards, which, in the case of product safety, may also be governance issues.

It is also important to point out that however effectively a records management or any other standard is implemented it will not of itself ensure that the correct actions and decisions are effected; it will only ensure that they are properly recorded. In the case of the pensions mis-selling events in the United Kingdom a few years ago, the systems of compliance in place did at least point out the mis-selling, though they had not prevented it occurring.

4.7 Accountability

Directors should be accountable, to shareholders and to the other stakeholding groups.

To be accountable in the sense expected by modern governance is no easy matter. Accountability requires that the systems of reporting and controls in the business are appropriate and transparent. They should also be demonstrable and visible. At the base of many of these systems lie basic systems of record keeping. These systems determine what information is kept for what purpose, for what users, in terms of function and seniority. The records systems also determine the period of time for which these records should be kept and to what extent the record itself should be available or to what extent governance is served by having a record of the record.

4.8 Integrity

Integrity is a fundamental building block of good governance, not just in the sense of the integrity of those people responsible for the running of the organization and their advisers. In the context of the implementation of BS ISO 15489-1 integrity is also essential in the information on which they seek to rely for the proper ordering of the affairs of the business.

The records systems should be capable of showing that the records being used are indeed as they were originally created or if not why not, and when and by whom they were changed and to what effect.

This integrity of information has been of huge importance in some of the most high profile of recent governance cases. They appear to have been issues surrounding the checks and balances in such cases and the availability in a timely way, at the right level, of the appropriate records that were at the base of the subsequent investigations.

4.9 Availability

It is almost a truism to state that records should be available to be of any value in governance or indeed in any other application. However, the key point here is that the timely availability is the essential character. For example, the head of a nationally significant organization called into question the conduct of an engagement and hence the quality of the ensuing recommendations. The matter concerned an engagement

carried out some twelve months previously. The letter expressing the concerns had given limited time to respond. Immediately the case files were requisitioned from the archive where they were systematically filed and readily available.

Fortunately they were retrieved in sufficient time to respond fully to the enquiry. This availability was important. Equally fortunately the case files were also traceable and had integrity so that not only was correct handling of the matter demonstrated, but the files showed that this was true from the outset by the nature and content of documentation. Therefore both compliance with the firm's policies and accountability to both the client and to the partners could be demonstrated.

These brief examples show that, as in the case of knowledge management, although good records management will not ensure good governance, lack of a high standard of record keeping can render good corporate governance all but impossible.

5 How to develop a records management strategy: sector specific examples

5.1 General principles

BIP 0025-2 provides a good and robust methodology for the development of a records strategy. The methodology described is the Australian DIRKS methodology [1], see BIP 0025-2, which is rigorous but flexible enough to accommodate a variety of approaches.

It is appropriate here, though, to suggest how to set the overall business context of a strategic initiative for records management. This context has to articulate what should be established at senior level for a records management strategy or, for that matter, any strategy to be effective.

Key to this is the establishment of a business statement encapsulating a point of view (what P Checkland and later theorists in soft systems methodology would call a 'Weltanschauung' – or world view [3]) from which to view the role of a strategy for managing an organization's records. This means that although applying a methodology of itself will produce results, the exercise of doing a strategy needs to be informed and underpinned by a clear and articulated view of what such a strategy is for in the operation of the business.

This may seem a curious statement; after all, presumably a strategy for managing records is exactly that. Whilst true this is not the only purpose. The strategy should have behind it a statement or set of statements about how the processes of the organization will use and benefit from the activities implied by such a strategy.

This statement should identify:

- the purposes and objectives in the business which the records management strategy supports;
- the people, departments or groups (customers, suppliers, etc.) who will be the beneficiaries of the strategy's results;

- the identity of those who will implement and operate it;

- what it will set out to accomplish – in measurable terms;

- the point of view from which the owners of the strategy will view it;

- who owns it – the sponsor and the board or senior management representatives whose weight is behind it;

- the environment of the strategy – i.e. the organizational climate, whether competitive, regulated, safety critical, commercial or of course a complex combination of many of these.

5.2   Sector specific examples

5.2.1 In energy

For a major power generating company the records management strategy was a way to reduce the space required in a new headquarters building by 25 % whilst improving the speed of access of power station records and providing a higher level of productivity from some of the engineering sections.

- The beneficiaries of the strategy's results were the engineers and the facility designers and managers, but first and foremost the users of records in the various specialist departments.

- The group that implemented and operated it were the skilled records personnel who had to acquire new skills to manage the centralized and automated records.

- What it accomplished was a significant reduction in space required, together with clearly established service levels for retrieval speed and for accuracy of retrieval and classification.

- The point of view was to move from a bureaucratic paper based engineering and science driven system to a modern, competitive, cost conscious, business driven operation.

- Who owns it? – The senior functional managers not the records management specialists.

- The environment of the strategy: privatization in a period of intense financial and operational pressure.

For a nuclear resources company the fundamental purpose was to support the safety regime and the engineering integrity of the organization.

- The purpose was to enhance an already effective records function to a computer supported system which allowed records to be viewed as a component of an integrated knowledge management system across the business.

- The beneficiaries of the strategy's results would be the scientific and technical staff but also the commercial staff who were charged with extending the services of the organization.

- Those implementing and operating it were the information professionals and the technical and scientific staff.

- What it will accomplish? Higher productivity, savings in staff and overhead cost, greater opportunity for new applications of knowledge.

- The point of view of technical records and scientific knowledge being a commercially and technically valuable resource to be husbanded, exploited and developed.

- Who owns it? – The Board.

- The environment of the strategy: an aggressively growing and highly efficient commercial organization with its roots in the scientific tradition but with its future firmly in the future of a technological export led business.

5.2.2 In financial services

For a financial services company the records management strategy was designed to provide a higher level of access to the investment records and correspondence of private clients.

- The purpose of the project was to try to provide the organization with competitive advantage by ensuring that it could provide better knowledge of their very wealthy clients at lower unit cost than their major competitors. Also, whichever branch worldwide a client walked into would have an equal knowledge of their affairs, regardless of where their home branch was located.

- The beneficiaries of the strategy's results were the organization through better retention of clients and the clients through much better service.

- Who will implement and operate it? – A specialist team from the organization implemented it but thereafter it was designed to be operated by the caseworkers at each location.

- What it will accomplish? – Better profitability per client, lower cost to serve, higher retention, better customer satisfaction ratings.

- The point of view that wealthy people expect to be known and served to an excellent standard wherever they contact the organization in which they place their wealth for safekeeping and investment.

- Who owns it? – The private client service personnel.

- The environment of the strategy: highly competitive financial services sector in an era of unprecedented expansion following deregulation.

5.2.3 A national museum

For a national museum the purpose was to improve the quality and rigour of the collections management faculty.

- The purposes of the project were to implement records management in a way that facilitated the records themselves being viewed as an asset of the museum as well as simply an adjunct of the items in the collections. The records contained masses of extremely valuable information about the items and were often valuable in themselves either because of the information they contained or because of the time, place and authorship of them.

- The beneficiaries of the strategy's results would be the public, because the descriptions and interpretations of the collections would be richer and more lively and the curatorial staff who would have greater access to better resources in their work.

- Who will implement and operate it? – The curatorial staff would both implement and operate the system.

- What it will accomplish? – Significant benefits in terms of research and learning about the collections' ability to attract a greater number and diversity of visitors, attraction of better funding through the evident attention to best practice, better exploitation of the collections and higher standards of professional service.

- The point of view that the collections of a museum should be displayed and explained to best possible effect as a contribution to education learning and science.

- Who owns it? – The Public as ultimate owners of the nations collections.

- The environment of the strategy: increasing pressure on museums to justify the money spent on them and the resources represented by their collections.

5.3   The outcome of records management strategy

In each of these examples the fact that these statements of strategic purpose had been articulated meant that the records management strategy lived for the people it affected and for those who had to implement it.

The records management strategy became a powerful tool to help bring about some change for the better in the way the organizations carried out their processes, not just some dry academic exercise carried out by records managers.

Having articulated this process, the method used to derive a strategy should then enable the team developing it to identify what processes use records and how they use them. For example, in the case of the power station the physical and computer-based records for design and build needed to be available to ensure effective maintenance of the facility. Typically this would mean having access to both the design and the 'as-built' records.

A company was prompted to ask for a records management strategy by an incident in which the design documents were used to order a replacement length of piping. Unfortunately in the actual built case, the pipe used was some 8 cm wider. The cost of this mistake alone was £65,000. The company quickly developed and implemented a strategy to ensure that the records management system made it easier to avoid this type of mistake and to access the correct versions of drawings.

In the case of the nuclear resources company, the underlying purpose was to improve the responsiveness and accuracy of retrieval of the already very effective records and information management system and to reinforce adherence to policies and practices around information. By using the medium of a records management strategy, the company was able to give the new project structure and business focus as well as professional rigour, which greatly improved the outcome of the project and the quality of the results.

When these statements have been developed the hard work begins of developing an understanding of the categories of records to be covered by the strategy, the rules and policies and processes governing all of the stages in the records life cycle; their:

- capture;

- storage;

- access;

- retention; and

- final disposal or archiving.

In each of these areas the strategy has to establish how these processes are to be established or improved in line with BS ISO 15489-1 and how they are to be implemented. BIP 0025-2 deals with these aspects with clarity and in enough detail for the implementation of a strategy consistent with BS ISO 15489-1. Finally, it is strongly recommended that organizations do not omit to develop a strategy in the way that has been set out here.

6 Conclusion

In this short publication, a case has been set out for applying BS ISO 15489-1. In the past records management has scarcely been the sexiest subject at the boardroom table, if indeed it ever got that far. But organizations from every sector are now recognizing the value and intellectual property which is hidden in their mass of records, whether paper or electronically based. This intellectual property cannot be ignored; it represents the accumulated labour of many skilled staff members over many years. BS ISO 15489-1 comes at a time when all organizations are struggling to differentiate themselves against their competitors. For many the accumulated knowledge in their records stores contains the key to doing this. The application of the standard is the key to this store of knowledge.

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About the author

Dr David Best PhD; MSc; FIM

Dr David Best has consulted to many of the United Kingdom's top government departments and public companies in the area of records and information management since 1980. As a partner in Touche Ross and then the Deloitte Consulting Group he has been responsible for the IT consulting practice in the London office and for the European Energy practice, as well as for a number of senior posts in the management of the practice. He has held the post of Visiting Professor in the Department of Information at Strathclyde University and is a member of the Advisory Board of the School of Informatics in City University London. He was instrumental in founding the Annual Information Management Awards held in London, and is a member of the Editorial Board of the International Journal of Information Management.

He is currently Managing Director of Roundarch Europe Ltd, the United Kingdom subsidiary of Roundarch Inc. a joint venture between Deloitte Ventures, the WPP media group and Broadvision Inc. email: dpbest@roundarch.com.