

Why bother if we are already insane?

Each time I write a piece for distribution to my peers, I do think about the content/context and purpose/intention of the material.

As the title indicates, I want to discuss the reasons behind “why bother if we are already insane”

Why do we as records and information management professionals bother to perform the tasks and roles we perform? Now anyone who knows me, knows that I am passionate about our profession, I am unorthodox and plain spoken (sometimes as subtle as a sledgehammer to the face). If you are not interested in promoting our profession and acting as a spokesperson for our profession then leave it and stop reading now. This message is not for the multitude of practitioners who still just punch the card at the workplace.

No, I am speaking to those who are still passionate even if those embers are low or nearly extinct. I am also addressing this commentary to the many regulatory bodies that support us (those in a straitjacket or headed that way) to a greater or lesser degree. Personally, I believe you have failed us the practitioners and your responsibilities to the citizens you are accountable to.

Each day I perform my role as a RIM Professional I am cognisant that our profession and the importance of what we provide and the resistance we face. Our relevance and value are continually eroded, ignored and overshadowed. By the hype, bells and whistles of the latest fad and jargon generated by self-interested industries (the importance of Information Management, Data Management.....).

Einstein is commonly acclaimed as having exclaimed, “The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again, but expecting different results.” Now I do not know about you. But I am clearly in the insane category. Because I keep promoting, pressing and pushing the importance of having an effective records and information governance framework and program. That Program is to instil a culture of recordkeeping and information governance. It will raise the awareness and accountability of each employee, consultant and contractor as to their responsibilities. Providing a guide for how an organisation can value its information (and records) as assets. Depending on the organisation and sometimes you need to say this sub vocally “we need records to meet our business needs at the same time our compliance/obligations”

Why is compliance a dirty word?

That a record is a valuable asset for them and their organisation, employer and client. But as you are all aware a record requires certain evidentiary components. This separates it and raises the requirements around ensuring those components are managed appropriately v the requirements of a document.

That your line of business applications can store documents woo hoo. But can they store those documents and records (as evidence of a business transaction) over time? Now that is a different kettle of fish. Why bother? What’s in it for me? Compliance has no teeth in many jurisdictions now. The regulators of our profession have spectacularly failed in their role to hold government agencies accountable.

My perception and view is they are often backsliding and putting the responsibility on the agency to undertake a risk assessment as to what the organisation feels it should be doing in the records and information management space.

The majority of organisations have a risk appetite in their risk registers. Everyone I have seen has identified financial risks and the tendencies is that financial risks tend to have a low risk appetite. So if the organisation is going to lose/waste \$ they want to ensure that risk is limited. But how do we stack up against a risk register from a financial point of view.

Brand/Compliance Risks

Likelihood rating RARE. If there was another heading that meant non-existent that would be the most appropriate. That a regulator will come in an exercise their powers to review, audit recordkeeping and information management and FINE the organisation for breaches is a fantasy but still we hope (insanity). Softly softly is not working. Never complain your budgets are reducing. You have the power to generate revenue and enforce your will. If our regulators have been issuing fines then I apologise wholeheartedly. My request would be tell us so we can amend the risk ratings.

Consequence rating MAJOR. (Yes I am in my fantasy land my jacket is tightening and a gag is forthcoming as most give a moderate rating

- well there could be media exposure which affects the brand if information is released or heavens forbid was found to be non-existent or destroyed inappropriately.
- Non-compliance with legislative regulatory requirements

This would give us a risk rating of HIGH. Now high is good because again most organisations need to address high and extreme risks. But that consequence rating is quickly downgraded as the organisation has a RM program and an ISMS so now we are Moderate to minor consequence. A new risk rating of medium – monitor to Low no need to bother.

Financial

Likelihood rating remains at RARE/Non-existent

Consequence rating Catastrophic/Major (depends on the size of your organisation)

Risk rating High

After assessing current controls, it is lowered to Medium to Low

Now if our regulators actually performed their responsibilities as they expect us to perform ours on their behalf.

Financial or Brand/Compliance

Likelihood rating: Likely. Audits of your recordkeeping and information governance practices occur regularly

Consequence rating: Major/High The improper destruction of state records carries penalty units

- NSW s21 max 50 Penalty Units (PU). 1 PU is \$110,
- Vic s19 (1) 5 PU. 1 PU is \$155.46
- Qld s12 (1) Maximum of 100 PU & s13 Maximum of 165 PU 1 PU is \$121.90 (increases by 3.5% each year unless Treasurer chooses another amount before 1 March.

Risk Rating: Extreme/High

Your RM program now has teeth. Your value and the importance of the asset being appropriately managed is now recognised.

YOU ARE NO LONGER INSANE!!!!!!!!!!!

But then we remember we work in an industry and a profession where reality and not fantasy exists as it appears no regulator is going to actually regulate and fine their government counterparts. No Knight (gender neutral) is coming to ride in and release us from the sanatorium. We have to save ourselves. We have to find other ways to keep fighting the good fight. We can do that by collaborating with one another. Supporting each other and raising the awareness of our value in every forum we can.

We have to share the importance of those records. We have to pressure the regulator to step up and do their jobs. Support us the dredge on the coalface to achieve the mantle (records have to be created, captured, secured, accessible over time, reliable, authentic, managed, disposed of appropriately yada yada yada). As determined by the legislators at the behest of us the citizens.

Kemal (aka Don Quixote the insane)