The Challenges Facing the Records and Information Manager.

In the past ten years or so, there has been much change to our profession of managing corporate information and records for small, medium and large enterprises. The ever-changing technology landscape and continuous upgrading of Records and Content Management systems, as well budget constraints and a constant need to find efficiencies in business processes with online applications has led me to think further about how to survive successfully in the current environment. I work with many professional people from our industry and I think we need to continually adapt and remain updated on trends and policy direction in government and other organisations.

These challenges are based on principles and theories outlined by the Late Ray Holswich *MRMA (MRIM)* from an industry news article while he was President of the Records and Information Management Professionals Australasia in the 1990s. They are still relevant to today's records and information management environment.

Challenge 1

Selling the need for records and information management to management and senior personnel. This challenge is never easy, getting management to understand the issues and help resolve problems while at the same time selling the benefits of strong investment in records and information management programs requires creativity and consistency in selling.

Challenge 2

Determining the place for records and information management in the structure of today's organisation. There is no one model to determine what is the right fit in any organisation's structure. There has been much debate over the years as to what is the best position on the corporate landscape. The best fit is with a team with good awareness of the records and information management programs and with leaders who will provide support to the function.

Challenge 3

Clarify the roles of records and information managers. The scope of the records and information managers responsibilities varies depending on the size and structure of the organisation and whether they are in private or public sector. These roles in any organisation should be structured in advance and consideration given to organisation-wide managerial responsibilities for records systems.

Challenge 4

Implementing the Fundamentals. What organisations need most is the implementation of records and information management fundamentals, including the analysis of the appropriate mix of records media and practical filing systems and the use of technologies that support preservation and security while providing ease of use capture of records.

Challenge 5

Determining an appropriate mix of Records Media. Should it be paper or electronic or both? Records and information managers and indeed management, need to thoroughly understand the functionality and potential of records and information systems and the records media that results.

They also need to know the pros and cons, application strengths, weaknesses, legal implications, conversion processes, cost justification approaches and current trends in each of the information media that is used in the organisation.

Challenge 6

Integrating Records Management systems with Business Applications and Office Automation. Today's and tomorrow's records administrators will place themselves in the best possible position by enhancing their education and knowledge of business systems, forms management, information architecture and related content management systems. Individuals should plan their own strategies and take steps that will give them the greatest potential of successfully integrating records and information management systems with office automation within their own organisations.

Challenge 7

Disaster Recovery Planning. One of the most important contributions that any records administrator can ever make is to be a pro-active leader in the development of the comprehensive disaster recovery plan. Accessing the risk and value of records will be at the heart of any organisation to protect and support reconstruction if disaster occurs.

Challenge 8

Selecting and Implementing Records Management Systems. Many records and information administrators have discovered the excitement, the systems potential, the efficiencies, the occasional frustrations and success possible when quality systems are implemented to augment and compliment records and information functions. Thoroughly researched acquisition of systems that will adapt to the IT architecture of an organisation is a project more and more records administrators should undertake.

Challenge 9

Recruiting Records and Information Management Personnel. The position of records administrators in more and more organisations requires individuals who have academic preparation in records and information systems, experience in the industry, and who aspire to hold management positions. Records managers of today need to have the ability to speak at careers nights, seminars and events, and promote their specialised field of work.

Challenge 10

Continuing Education and Training.   The best people in any profession are almost always those individuals who make a strong commitment to continuing their education and who continually strive for perfection. All of us should develop a personal plan for continuing education and ongoing personal development. Records and information administrators should set aside time to visit other organisations, network and keep abreast of trends in their industry.

The Records and Information Management Professionals Australasia provide many events and conferences in each state, to help its membership continue their professional development throughout the year. Visit http://rimpa.com.au

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