Attributes of Success

In studying organisations' Information Asset Management practices and environments, a range of achievement from failure through to success has been observed at both macro (organisation) and micro (project) levels. Attributes have also been observed that, when present, are associated with success and, when absent, have been associated with failure. In the table below, each Attribute is named, it is described at organisation and project level and anecdotal evidence of success or failure has been provided.

The Attributes and observations are tabled informally, as anecdotal evidence of business behaviour without the rigor of a formal study. Further the Attributes of Success have not been correlated with the Barriers to Information Management referred to below. These observations have been made from working with and studying organisations:

- of all sizes from a handful of employees to the world's largest multinationals with hundreds of thousands of staff;
- representing the industries of mining, energy, oil & gas, engineering, defence, banking & finance, insurance, utilities, manufacturing, retail, legal, transport and logistics and all levels of government;
- in Australia, Asia, North America and South Africa.

These Attributes of Success complement Barriers to Information Management. Together they provide a check-list of issues that each and every organisation may face in managing their Information Assets. Whilst we recognise the significant difficulties in doing so, by acknowledging and preferably addressing each of these Attributes and Barriers, organisations improve their chances of Information Management success with the resultant tangible and lasting benefit to their organisations.

ATTRIBUTE	ORGANISATION LEVEL	PROJECT LEVEL	OBSERVATION
Executive leadership and sponsorship	The Board and executive team understand that information is a business asset and enabler, they lead by example and they implement the governance to manage it.	Information Management projects are led by a senior executive, typically C-level.	**Success:** A financial institution's Chief Financial Officer, John Comley is a vocal supporter of Information Management initiatives. He recognises that financial success is just one indicator of good business management which is created by improving people, processes and information. The organisation's SharePoint implementation transformed the organisation from taking days to find information to hours and, in John's case, minutes. **Failure:** An oil and gas company with a $30 million per year business case failed to implement enterprise wide improvements due to lack of senior management commitment. **Failure:** A defence company fined $400 million failed to implement an effective IM initiative through lack of executive interest.
Business driven	Information Management is driven by demand from the business, rather than the supply of services from IT	Information Management projects are driven by demand from the business, rather than the supply of services from IT	**Success:** Shrink projects at a financial institution, an oil and gas explorer in Thailand and an oil and gas producer in Australia were driven by building moves. They resulted in >50% reduction in hard copy storage requirements and, in one case, saved $1.8m per year in floor space. **Failure:** A global mining company implemented a document management solution because it was scalable, without any business engagement. The implementation was never embraced by the organisation and the project was a failure.

ATTRIBUTE	ORGANISATION LEVEL	PROJECT LEVEL	OBSERVATION
Sound justification	Culture of continuous improvement. A culture of continuous improvement can obviate the need for project by project business case justification.	Compelling business case. The business case should have a "do nothing" option, should address tangible and intangible benefits and should have implementation, maintenance, support and sustain components.	**Success:** A wine company recognises that its Information Management is a source of inefficiency and waste and is actively addressing the issue. Recently, an operations employee provided unsolicited feedback that he can now find the information he requires to do his job. **Success:** An energy producer had attempted to justify the implementation of an EDRMS three times before the final business case was sufficiently compelling for approval. However the main justification was to reduce unpaid overtime, i.e. they wanted their staff to go home on time. **Failure:** Although a mining company's $25 million per year business case was sound, because the organisation was unable to crystallise productivity improvements, the business case failed.
Benefits realised and recognised	Enterprise metrics pertaining to Information Management. What can't be measured can't be managed. Business improvement can only be sustained if performance is measured in multiple aspects.	Benefits Realisation for each Information Management project. Whilst anecdotal evidence of business improvement can be compelling, each improvement sets a new but ephemeral benchmark. Corporate memory of improvement is short and without empirical evidence, successful projects will not receive the recognition they deserve.	**Success:** A wine company implemented a Benefits Realisation project to support evidence of business improvement from its Information Management initiatives. **Success:** The Australian Board of a global oil and gas company approved a business case on condition that anticipated benefits be demonstrated at the Board meeting by the CIO 12 months hence. The benefits were presented and corroborated by the CFO and the CIO's next proposed project was approved without argument. **Failure:** Although a Financial Institution enjoyed an outstandingly successful IM initiative, it did not deploy a benefits realisation programme. The incoming CEO had not experienced the project and its improvements, no benchmark had been set, no benefits can be demonstrated and the goodwill created by the successful project has been lost.

ATTRIBUTE	ORGANISATION LEVEL	PROJECT LEVEL	OBSERVATION
Clear business outcomes	Information is one of the four fundamental business assets that an organisation deploys in the conduct of its daily business. A clear articulation of Information Management objectives and strategy is required to effectively support the business and its objectives and requirements.	Clear business objectives, definition of requirements at business, functional and technical levels and outcomes of IM project. Unlike building a bridge, the before and after conditions of Information Management initiatives can be difficult to visualise and articulate.	**Failure:** Two oil and gas companies and a defence contractor are currently implementing major Information Management initiatives, none of which are guided by a clear vision of business objectives and outcomes. Without a precise understanding of purpose, these projects have little chance succeeding – requirements cannot be determined, costs and benefits cannot be identified, configuration is a guess and the setting of expectations and management of change is tenuous at best. Without stated business outcomes, Project Managers can reduce the scope of the project to ensure achievement of budget and time target and thus project success with little attention to whether business benefit has been generated.
Roadmap	An Information Management Strategy and Project Portfolio that address business needs enables investment and assets to be effectively deployed.	Information Management projects are complex, requiring detailed planning, careful resourcing and attention to benefits, change and project management.	**Success:** A wine company has enjoyed a successful Information Management project, partly because each component of the project jigsaw was described by what it is, what it does and business implications of doing / not doing it. Each project component helped to build the picture of the Information Management future, enabling planning, resourcing and explanation of the initiative.

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Easy to use solution		The solution is intuitive and easy to use.	**Success:** A grain handler faced disaster when deregulation allowed its only client to also become its greatest competitor. The only way of surviving was to provide superior service to its suppliers. An Internet application was developed to allow grain growers to make unhurried, informed business decisions rather than taking on-the-spot offers at the weighbridge. However, the user interface needed addressing and the application of heuristics significantly improved information delivery and the success of the application with growers ensured that they remained loyal suppliers. **Failure:** An energy distributor spent $7 million on an EDRMS. Driven by the Records Management function, the solution did not consider the business requirements for usability with the result that the solution was so cumbersome that the organisation refused to use it.
Change management	To manage information effectively, organisations need to inculcate a culture of valuing information as a vital business asset.	Comprehensive change management including Quick Wins. Information and knowledge are tools of every person in an organisation.	**Success:** Following the $94 million implementation of a multi-campus Clinical Information System, the Director of Hospital Systems was approached, independently and unsolicited, by the CEOs of three of the eight major hospitals. They requested that the project be documented as a benchmark or case study of how massive software solutions should be implemented. The CEOs had been highly impressed how each stakeholder group had been consulted and their requirements catered for. Each group knew how it would benefit them. The CEOs knew how it would affect their bottom line. The doctors knew how it would affect their work at the bed side. The nurses' union knew how it would affect its members' working conditions and the Minister knew how it would affect him politically. When a newly installed government investigated the project to determine whether it could reduce funding the budget was increased from $94 to $110 million.

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Project management		Appropriate project management. Information Management projects are complex and uncertain requiring high levels of consultation and communication.	**Failure:** A defence contractor selected the IT department of a country operation to conduct a pilot of a global SharePoint implementation. A project manager with traditional, engineering based project management skills and experience was appointed. Rather than securing executive and business engagement and articulating the benefits to the business of initiative, the project manager systematically reduced the scope of the project so that the software implementation was technically a success but organisation failed to achieve its potential business benefits.
Appropriate skills and experience	The Board and executive team understand that information is a business asset and enabler, they have the capability to inculcate a culture of valuing information and they implement the governance to manage it	Project teams have the skills and experience to ensure project success, which will include business, Information Management and technical ability as well as the attributes listed above.	**Failure:** Many organisations fail to properly resource their Information Management projects which become IT software installations rather than business initiatives. Projects that are IT focused, without executive sponsorship, without business ownership, without clear business outcomes, without effective change management and / or without sound justification and benefits are doomed to mediocrity if not failure.