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Find the Right Captain for Your IG Program

Mar 24, 2015

A successful, enterprise-wide information governance (IG) program requires buy-in from all corners of the organization – particularly legal, records and information management (RIM), information security, compliance, IT, and the business units – to ensure that all stakeholders’ needs are represented and addressed.

This need often results in each department being represented on an IG committee, which sounds good in theory, but doesn’t always produce the intended result as committee members become overwhelmed by their daily responsibilities, and IG initiatives lose priority.

“Representation on the committee is rooted in the best of intentions, but it doesn’t necessarily facilitate the process of actually getting things done,” remarked attorney and IG expert Linda G. Sharp in a recent *JD Supra* article. “The true dynamic that has arisen typically consists of sprawling committees of individuals that already have a full-time job with little to no time to make committee meetings, much less make things happen.”

Without a single person tasked with overseeing the IG initiative, it could drag on for years with little or no real benefit to the organization, Sharp said. “Everyone is on deck to ensure they’re not forgotten, but rarely is a dedicated captain at the helm.”

So, who should the captain be? According to Sharp, it should be someone who has a broad understanding of the organization. For example, this person needs to understand the organization’s business processes, the regulatory requirements it needs to comply with, the ramifications of litigation and regulatory investigations, and how to minimize the IT footprint. Often, the individual with that breadth of understanding will come from the legal, RIM, compliance, or IT department.

When’s the last time you took a good look at your IG initiative’s progress and its leadership? Has it grown stagnant? Are things moving in the direction you expect? Do you have the right people in place? More importantly, does someone truly “own” the initiative? If not, it’s time to do something different. Before you try to ramp it up, advised Sharp, “you need to take a critical look at who should be the ‘owner’ of it. In many businesses, the ship is afloat without a captain.”

Sharp properly draws attention to the inter-disciplinary nature of IG work and the need for a captain who understands the underlying business needs as well as the regulatory, technology, litigation, and compliance needs. In addition, since the role is necessarily enterprise-wide and collaborative in nature, the captain must have negotiation and conflict resolution skills.

ARMA International has devoted time, effort, and financial resources to defining the knowledge, skills, and abilities that an IG owner must have to be successful, and it developed a professional certification program through which such people can be recognized for having attained them – the Information Governance Professional (IGP) certification.

The IGP program’s mission is to “Provide an information governance credential within an ethical and professional framework to support individuals to deliver organizational value and reduce risk.” Through developing and supporting this credential, ARMA International is having an impact on the developing IG profession, setting standard practices for IG, and helping individuals distinguish themselves through earning and maintaining the IGP credential.

Applications are being accepted now for the spring 2015 testing window, which runs from April 4 through May 28. Additional information about the testing process can be found at www.arma.org/igp.

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