

Services Brief – IPL’s Information Management Services

About IPL

IPL is a software & IT services company specialising in the delivery of intelligent business solutions. We help our clients to exploit corporate information assets to yield tangible business benefits.

IPL’s consulting is renowned for its quality and value. We consistently exceed our clients’ expectations through a combination of imaginative thinking, managerial and technical expertise and many years of systems engineering experience.

IPL’s track record in end-to-end software solutions development is exceptional. Our proven development methodology allows us to cut through technical complexity, manage risk and completely focus on delivery. We always deliver reliable, efficient and accurate systems to a precise schedule.

IPL is certificated against three international standards:

- ISO27001:2005 (Information Security)
- ISO9001:2008/TickIT (Quality)
- ISO 14001:2004 (Environmental)

The company has a permanent workforce of 260, revenues of ca. £28.8M p.a. and 40,000 sq ft of secure office space in central Bath.



Data management, governance and quality

The challenge

Data management & governance is rarely perceived as a fundamental component of IT strategy, yet data related issues cost organisations around the world millions everyday. Data is the life-blood of any organisation; few would argue as to its importance. Yet the conscious management of such a vital component of an organisation’s operations is often given a low priority.

An example of the importance of data management occurred in spectacular fashion when, on 23 September 1999, NASA lost its £60 million Mars Climate Orbiter. It simply disappeared from NASA’s monitors, having powered its way out of its intended orbit. How did such an expensive mistake occur? A post mortem was initiated. Instead of the commands for its thrusters being defined in metric units of thrust as its design dictated, they were calculated in imperial pounds. As a result, the spacecraft overshot its Mars orbit trajectory and accelerated towards the planet’s surface, disintegrating as a result. All because a consistent definition of data had not been applied across all of the design teams working on the project

Now that may seem a little far removed from an every day business scenario, but is it really? The scale may differ, but the issue is a common one.

Almost a decade later, with data volumes doubling every year, many organisations are struggling to manage their business information and ensure that it is both clear and consistent. This is where the experience of IPL can help.

Common information management issues

Companies face many difficulties when managing their corporate data assets. Such difficulties often manifest in the following forms:

- Data quality problems – incorrect customer data
- Inconsistent data definitions – the Mars Orbiter!
- Duplicated data – double counting, overstating resources
- Reconciling MI – difficulty in achieving a single view of an organisation’s activities
- BI returning inconsistent results – why do I get two varying results for one KPI?
- Compliance issues (SOX, BASEL, privacy legislation, Klinger-Cohen etc). Are we *really* complying? If not, the ramifications are serious!
- Master data management – losing sight of what is core to the organisation
- Difficulty in adopting Service Oriented Architectures – without consistent data, SOA does not work
- Systems integration – applications should be compatible, but they are not!

If you recognise any of these, the chances are you have an issue with your information management approach.

What is information management?

Information management can be broken down into four key areas of focus:

Initiating

- Data migration
- Data cleansing
- Data quality

Design

- Modelling
- Architecture
- Business rules

Managing

- Master data
- Meta data
- ETL
- Integrating data
- Governance

Reporting

- Business intelligence
- Data warehousing
- Inference

Effective information management

Information management in one shape or form has been around since the 1950s, but never before has it had such an important role to play in formulating effective IT strategies. An organisation with an effective information management strategy will operate more efficiently, with less duplication of effort and fewer errors. Systems re-use can generate substantial cost savings. Precise, timely, consistent data can create competitive advantage, allowing an organisation to react more swiftly and decisively to emerging market situations, and reduce the burden of ever increasing legislative compliance requirements.

Effective information management can be implemented via a number of key policies:

- A single consistent top down view of the core data of the business
- Enterprise wide adoption of consistent data definitions
- Data modelling, including conceptual, logical and physical

- Pragmatic data governance and stewardship
- Metadata management
- Effective use of data management tools
- And more

In short, it's about developing an Information Architecture strategy and backing this up with policies and procedures appropriate to your environment.

IPL's information management services

IPL's information management practice can help organisations realise the benefits of an effective Information Management strategy. Having worked with some of the world's largest multi national businesses, our experienced consultants are uniquely placed to assist your business realise the benefits of data governance via:

- Detailed analysis of the organisation's core data
- Formulation of data architectures
- Business process analysis
- Process modelling (e.g. BPMN)
- Master data management
- Data lineage & ETL
- Data governance
- Data modelling (enterprise, conceptual, logical and physical)
- Business intelligence & data warehousing

"Ultimately, poor data quality is like dirt on the windshield. You may be able to drive for a long time with slowly degrading vision, but at some point you either have to stop and clear the windshield or risk everything"

Ken Orr, The Cutter Consortium



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