

Information Architecture – K.I.S.S (Keep it simple silly!)

Information Architecture (IA), Business Classification Scheme, File Plan, Taxonomy. No matter what you call it, the way you organise information will either hinder or assist your knowledge worker. I recently read a very interesting and surprising statistic, that a whopping 46% of employees say its challenging and time-consuming to find the information they need. The time your knowledge workers are spending looking for or figuring out where to save their document is a productivity killer, but we, as Information Management professionals can help them by K.I.S.S!

Here are my 5 golden rules for a user centric, simple, logical IA;

1. **Functional Based structure** – An oldy, but a goody. Always model IA on the business functions, activities and tasks. This will be robust in the eye of organisational structural changes, logical to knowledge workers as they know what activities they deliver and easy to administer and develop by the IM professionals.
2. Use the organisation's **natural language** – Organisations can have their own language, abbreviations and acronyms for what they do, so use them in the IA. For example, Human Resource Management, could also be called Human Capital Management, People Management, Personnel Management.

Using whatever term/abbreviation is the norm in your organization will enable the connection to be made by current employees and support new ones, in learning the organisations language. But remember if you use an abbreviation or the term is a little left field, always include the full name or explanation in the scope notes. Which leads me into.....
3. **Scope notes!** Always, always, always provide scope notes. Within most ECMS you can write a description or scope note. Do it! This will help all knowledge workers when looking for and saving information, by providing them with context. A great scope note will include a description of the function/activity/task, including a purpose, scope and examples of the information that you can expect to see. Also include a note if information is managed in a specific way. E.g. Using document sets in SharePoint.
4. Don't forget **metadata** – Does it really need to be part of the IA structure, or is it better suited to being metadata that the business tags with? Too often we are creating unnecessary layers to the IA, when if we did a little more investigation, we would find it better utilised as metadata.
5. **Common sense** – Use common sense with all the above. If something doesn't quite fit with the above but it makes sense to the business due to the way they work, make it work in the IA to support them. Also, really look at the number of areas in the ECMS you are requiring a knowledge worker to use. Following the rule of simplicity, sometimes a little compromise will really make it a much better experience for the knowledge worker.

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