

# The Principles, IG Maturity Model: Tools for Professional Growth

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In a field of endeavor where change is incessant and uncertainty is constant, the Principles and the IGMM are signposts that point out current position, future direction, and the means for getting the RIM program – and the professional – from one place to the next.



For the last three years, articles in this space have discussed the value of the Generally Accepted Recordkeeping Principles® (Principles) and the Information Governance Maturity Model (IGMM) to the enterprise. Emphasis has been on how these tools benefit organizations by providing a framework on which to build an information governance (IG) program and an objective set of criteria for measuring progress toward its maturity.

Yet the Principles remain abstract ideals until they are put into practice. They tell *what* good governance comprises,

but they do not offer recipes for *how* to make it a reality. The hard work of translating the Principles into practice rests with an important, but often overlooked, element in program success: the records and information management (RIM) professional.

While RIM professionals have embraced the Principles and IGMM as tools they can employ to help their organizations attain excellence, they may not have realized they can also be used to their personal advantage. In addition to serving as the basis upon which to build, measure, and judge RIM and IG programs, the Principles and IGMM

can also be a means by which RIM professionals can grow, achieve, and advance their careers.

### The Tools' Explicit Uses

The Principles and the IGMM have both explicit and tacit aspects. *Explicit* uses are those for which the tools were developed. For example, the Principles of Accountability, Compliance, and Transparency show how a program should operate, and the Principles of Availability, Integrity, Protection, Retention, and Disposition show what a program should include. Taken together, these function as a roadmap for building or revising a RIM program; this is their *explicit* use.

The IGMM's *explicit* use is as a maturity meter, defining characteristics associated with sub-standard, developmental, essential, proactive, and transformational IG program levels. The IGMM tells what must be in place at each level, and its explicit use is as an assessment tool to take stock of a program and determine what it lacks. Once these deficiencies are clear, RIM professionals can prioritize them according to the risk they pose and formulate systematic plans to address them, ensuring that resources and budgets are used on the higher priorities. In this way, the IG program will ripen over time to its full potential.

### The Tools' Tacit Uses

What is not immediately apparent on the surface is that the Principles and the IGMM also have secondary, *tacit* aspects. In the knowledge management discipline, explicit knowledge is factual and tacit knowledge is experiential. While it is easy to see how the tools' primary uses benefit the IG program, it may not be quite as easy to see how their tacit or secondary uses benefit RIM professionals personally.

#### Enhancing Communication

The Principles and the IGMM are useful as communication tools, providing simple, standard, descriptions of the elements of good RIM and IG. They can be shared with everyone in the organization as the fundamental concepts that will help get people with diverse ideas about IG on the same page. The Principles provide a brief way to say, "This is what we are doing and why," and they are useful to RIM professionals in explaining their own role within the organization, as well as in outlining the expectations for others who serve in program leadership, accountability, advisory, or technical capacities. They provide the narrative framework in which to tell the story of the IG program to insiders and outsiders alike.

#### Establishing Credibility

While clear communication is always a mark of excellence, the underlying reality is that the Principles and

the IGMM confer credibility on RIM professionals. These tools, because they are based on international standards and best practices, can be used as a basis of comparison for any proposed IG methods or processes. They are a means to keep discussion, assessment, comment, and criticism on an objective plane, beyond the realm of personalities or politics.

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#### Improving Collaboration

This is invaluable to RIM professionals participating on collaborative teams charged with evaluating proposed solutions, systems, and software. The Principles and the IGMM provide objective justification for why RIM professionals must sometimes point out the trade-offs and deficiencies inherent in proffered solutions. They offer a codified way for RIM professionals to assert their viewpoint, a subtle but effective background statement of "Here's where I'm coming from and why I must comment as I do."

They remove the taint of mere opinion from criticism, and rather than speak in general terms, the Principles allow RIM professionals to be specific in showing where a proposed strategy is strong or weak. By doing so, the tools remove the tendency to label RIM objections as being obstructionist or negative. The Principles make clear that the RIM professional is focused on specific concerns for good reasons.

#### Identifying Areas for Compromise

Credibility bolsters the RIM professional's role as an internal consultant who provides unbiased advice and guidance based on standard and measurable criteria. But as most consultants know, their sound judgment and caution about risks may be ignored in favor of profit or other motives. Just as the Principles are useful for collaboration, they can also show where compromise is needed. For example, cloud storage is not optimal from the standpoint of the Principles of Retention and Disposition, and it may raise serious concerns for Protection as well, but it may be the organization's best hope for reducing exponential growth in server costs and bolster much-needed profit margins.

#### Highlighting Good Performance

Just as the Principles provide a narrative framework

for communicating about the necessary elements of IG, the IGMM provides a cohesive way to talk about RIM professionals' accomplishments. Information management work can resemble a patchwork of small projects without many connecting threads.

## What results from the use of the Principles and the IGMM tools testifies to the skill and creativity of the professionals who use them.

For example, separate projects to develop uniform metadata elements, standardize protection levels, and streamline response to information requests can seem insignificant when viewed as separate items. But placed in the context of the IGMM, it is easy to see that the three projects strengthen Integrity, Protection, and Availability, three areas that can affect the organization's audits, how it interacts with its legion of contract workers, and how competent, efficient, and effective it appears to the outside world.

In short, the IGMM helps put the work into perspective as being part of a whole – not just random little pieces, but tiles that are part of an intentional mosaic. The IGMM elevates each project's value and worth because it shows where it fits in the overall enterprise IG effort, and in doing so it highlights the value and worth of the person who conceives, manages, and delivers the projects' results.

### *Evaluating Career Opportunities*

Aside from assessing the internal IG program, the Principles and the IGMM have demonstrated great versatility as tools for examining the programs of acquired companies (see the Principles article in the May/June 2014 *Information Management*), evaluating the trade-offs inherent in outsourcing agreements (March/April 2015 *IM*), and understanding the maturity levels required for successful technology implementation (May/June 2015 *IM*). For RIM professionals, there is yet another possible use of these tools.

Most successful RIM professionals are offered other opportunities in the course of their careers, from within and outside of their organizations. There are many aspects to consider when one evaluates a new position; interview questions based on the IGMM's specific levels could help the applicant find out what is in place and what is needed – a good way to see what may be in store for the person who accepts the position.

More important, where an organization is in its IG

maturity also conveys an impression of how the culture regards IG. How much time, money, and effort has it invested? Is there a stakeholder committee that reviews governance issues (Accountability – Level 4)? Has the organization comprehensively identified key compliance laws and regulations (Compliance – Level 3)? Are there written policies and a training program based on them (Transparency – Level 3)?

The answers to questions based on the IGMM can help RIM professionals decide whether their skills and personal objectives are a match for what the opportunity requires. Although it is nice to walk into a Level 4 situation, there is more challenge and more room for growth in a Level 2. Besides, a Level 4 may be quite complacent, while a level 2 may be hungry for change. It depends on what you want.

### *Prompting Lifelong Learning*

There is so much to learn about IG that it can seem overwhelming. Perhaps the greatest value of the Principles and the IGMM is what RIM professionals learn by working with them. Although they are not meant as guidance for RIM education, the concepts engendered in the Principles and the work of putting them into practice comprise a learning experience that never ends.

Consider that working on the Principle of Integrity will lead through topics such as audit trails and the reliability of electronic systems and their infrastructure, or that the Principle of Availability will require knowing more about topics as diverse as privacy, proprietary information, security clearances, and information leaks. It is true on-the-job training, and what is learned remains because it is that unforgettable combination of theory and practice.

Furthermore, this is knowledge that is transferable from one situation to another, whether the career path is a straightforward trajectory through a corporate hierarchy or a staggered path through private sector companies, non-profits, consulting, or government.

### **Signposts for Program, Career Growth**

In a world where change, collaboration, and compromise have become the watchwords of information management, the most important element in program success remains the RIM professional.

What results from the use of the Principles and the IGMM tools testifies to the skill and creativity of the professionals who use them. In a field of endeavor where change is incessant and uncertainty is constant, the Principles and the IGMM are signposts that point out current position, future direction, and the means for getting the program – and yourself – from one place to the next. **END**

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