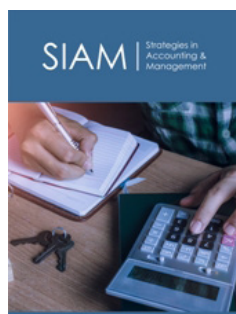# How Covid-19 Positively Impacts Information Governance Democratization

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Introduction

Information governance (IG) is a major issue in companies. The latter rely more and more on timely, high-quality information. Effectively and efficiently governing information requires the definition of rules aligned with the strategy of the company. Therefore, it is a management topic and not an Information Technology (IT) subject. Even when companies share this opinion, they do not easily train their managers on this topic. Companies may use emotional influence to facilitate the understanding of IG components.

What is information governance?

According to Gartner[1], information governance is "the specification of decision rights and an accountability framework to ensure appropriate behaviour in the valuation, creation, storage, use, archiving and deletion of information. It includes the processes, roles and policies, standards and metrics that ensure the effective and efficient use of information in enabling an organization to achieve its goals". Kooper et al. [1] proposed four hypotheses to define when information governance may be considered as successful, how companies can obtain an acceptable level of the value of information, and how they can optimize the value of information [1]. Information governance may be implemented using different frameworks. As an illustration, the Information Governance Reference Model (IGRM)[2] proposed by the EDRM structures IG around the three dimensions of value (for business), duty (for legal compliance) and asset to be protected. Information governance includes, but is not limited to, data governance. The latter is also described by some frameworks. As an example, DAMA International[3] defines "data governance as planning, overseeing, and controlling management of data and the use of data and data-related resources".

It maintains the DAMA Body of Knowledge describing Data management as composed of nine topics, e.g. data quality management or meta-data management. When justifying information governance, data quality is often taken as the best means to convince the companies about the importance of the topic. But data quality requires a correct metadata management. Thus the different topics are closely interrelated. Many publications on information governance are dedicated to the healthcare industry since this field uses very sensitive information. Thus the stakeholders early detected the importance of information governance. The early recommendations of the American Health Information Management Association[4] (AHIMA) inspired all other industries. Nowadays, information governance is of prior importance in all companies since their reputation highly depends on the information circulating on the web.

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[1]https://www.gartner.com/en/information-technology/glossary/information-governance
[2]https://www.edrm.net/resources/frameworks-and-standards/information-governance-reference-model
[3]https://dama.org/
[4]http://www.ahima.org/

What are metadata?

One main topic of information governance is metadata definition. Metadata management is of prior importance for companies who want to improve their information governance. It is a necessary step allowing them to build a common understanding of business. As an example, the definition of what is a customer seems to be obvious. However, when does a prospect become a customer? How long a customer is of interest for the company? How is a customer defined? Metadata management involves a shared definition of such basic concepts. If stakeholders in companies do not agree on these basic definitions, they cannot correctly manage related information. They complain about bad data quality. However, it is not possible to reach a satisfying level of data quality if the corresponding metadata are not correctly defined. Finally, the metadata definition is not a technical topic. It is a management issue.

Metadata and Covid-19

These are some of the questions that we bring up in the research we are carrying out at ESSEC Chair of Information Strategy and Governance[5]. As an illustration, we study how we can improve efficiently the literacy of managers in terms of information governance. We organized a distance session just at the end of the recent lockdown due to Covid-19. The objective was to train a group of twenty managers on information governance. They had no common business experience and did not know each other before. To illustrate the concept of metadata, we asked the trainees how they tried to follow and compare the evolution of the disease around the world. Indeed, during Covid-19 crisis everybody was captivated by online news trying to understand how this pandemic disease was evolving. Different indicators were used by newspapers to describe the development of the disease, the impacts in terms of death or hospital saturation. As an example, number of novel coronavirus deaths is published on several websites. How are these metadata defined? Defining the metadata requires defining an indicator in its whole context: time, geographic scope, metrics, etc. As explained in Kitayama et al. [2], the ability to understand a complex concept may be positively impacted by emotion. Being embedded in Covid-19 constrained all managers to understand how the crisis was developing and when it could stop. The experiment was very successful. We did not need to define anything about metadata. The trainees shared their different views about the various indicators and came out with very interesting definitions of good indicators, that means indicators correctly defined with a pretty good set of context dimensions.

Conclusion

A huge number of papers and studies are published on the recent and always current crisis due to Covid-19. The coronavirus crisis is raising important governance questions regarding the handling of information and especially of health information. It is unique in its impact on the whole planet and on the professional and personal life of all individuals in our countries. Whether on social networks or conventional information media, we all tried to understand the phenomenon by capturing and analyzing information. Although existing information governance frameworks are biased toward the interests of specific stakeholder groups, the systematic use of metadata will facilitate the emergence of a more balanced information governance framework leading to greater democratization for the benefit of the legitimate interests of information holders. We experimented that, in such a situation, the emotional influence positively impacts the training curve of managers who are able to very quickly understand complex concepts like metadata. Therefore, the challenge of information governance experts is to find such case studies generating interest and shared by all the managers who must become aware of IG concepts if we want information governance to be better taken into account in companies.

References

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2. Kitayama S, Howard S (1994) Affective regulation of perception and comprehension: Amplification and semantic priming. In: Niedenthal PM, Kitayama S (Eds.), The heart's eye: Emotional influences in perception and attention. pp. 41-65.

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[5]https://infostratgovernanceessecchair.wordpress.com/

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