

How the role of the information management professional is being reinvented for the digital age – study



By 2020, employers expect their records and information managers to be competent in risk management

The term 'Information' is often interpreted to mean 'digital data' so when people talk about information management, what they most often are thinking is 'IT'. Records and information managers, not to mention their colleagues in the IT department, know that the terms are not the same. They understand that what constitutes information created and received by organisations is far broader than digital data alone.

Consider, for example, the volume of paper still being generated, processed and archived by most businesses or the fact that information acknowledged as a formal 'record' in a court of law has included doodles on a paper napkin, core samples from oil exploration, a pipe with a part number on it, or sections of frozen tissue sample.

The reality is that information is derived from all of these things and more, including emails and texts, voice recordings of incoming enquiries, customer databases, social media, artifacts, and the internet of things.

As a result, the boundaries between different information-related occupations are blurring, and the role of the records and information manager – often seen as the traditional guardian of corporate records – is evolving.

It is a role that should help organisations balance the challenges of keeping information secure and compliant with the growing demand to analyse and extract insight from

information for potential business competitiveness and growth opportunities. The information management professional of the future, and indeed today, will require a broad skill set.

A new study undertaken with AIIM, a global information industry association, reveals the pressure records and information managers are under to reinvent themselves as analytical, security-conscious content professionals with an ability to think creatively and manage change.

The study shows that by 2020, employers expect their records and information managers to be competent in risk management, with security and data privacy skills a priority for 50%. They must also show competence in content and information management across a wide range of formats and platforms (47%); and in data analytics (44%).

However, the report also reveals that these skills may not be enough on their own. Employers want records and information professionals to identify new opportunities for efficient information management and to be able to support colleagues through times of disruptive change, such as a merger, acquisition or divestiture.

The study found that many of today's records and information managers underestimate the need for these softer skills and the weight their employers put on them. For example, change management is regarded as highly important by 70% of employers, yet only half of records and information managers are confident that they possess this skill today.

The findings reveal similar mismatches between what employers expect and what their information professionals currently deliver for innovation and strategic thinking.

Instead of focusing only on regulatory compliance and process, records and information professionals should become more passionate about proactively helping people do their jobs.

This could be as simple as structuring a line of business file repository in a way that directly supports the end-user (as opposed to themselves) or more complex, such as assisting the data analytics team in locating and accessing information to achieve greater productivity.

It's about coming into work every day with an attitude of 'what do you need and how can I help you' rather than 'what I want and what must you do to comply.'

As the information landscape takes on a new shape, it is no longer enough to be a competent records manager. Records and information managers need to evolve into information management professionals with stronger technical, analytical and management skills, complemented by the confidence to mediate and guide.

Through re-invention the information management professional can meet the expectations of employers and demonstrate their value to the organisation.

Sourced from Sue Trombley, Managing Director of Thought Leadership, [Iron Mountain](#)