

AIIM 2021 State of the Intelligent Information Management Industry:

A Wake-Up Call for Organization Leaders



In Partnership with



AIIM Industry Watch

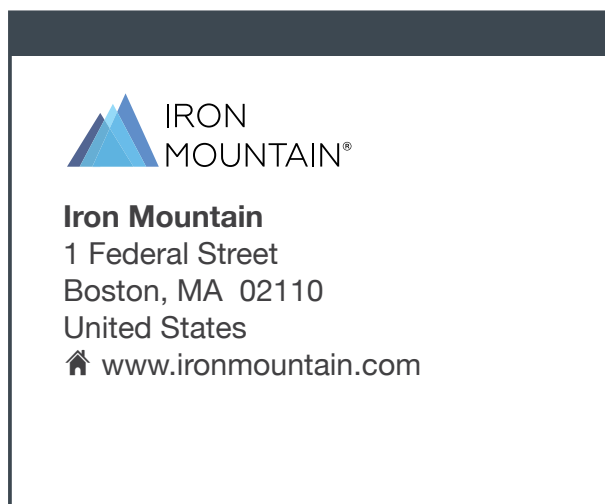
As the non-profit association dedicated to nurturing, growing, and supporting the information management community, AIIM is proud to provide this research at no charge to our members. In this way, the entire community can leverage the education, thought leadership and direction provided by our work. We would like these research findings to be as widely distributed as possible.

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About AIIM's Industry Watch Research

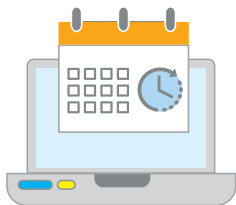
Over three years ago, AIIM introduced the concept of Intelligent Information Management, or IIM, and began researching the connections between IIM and Digital Transformation.

AIIM's Industry Watch research program looks at the impact of the rising tide of information chaos on the effectiveness of transformation initiatives, the adoption rates of core IIM technology building blocks, and IIM best practices.

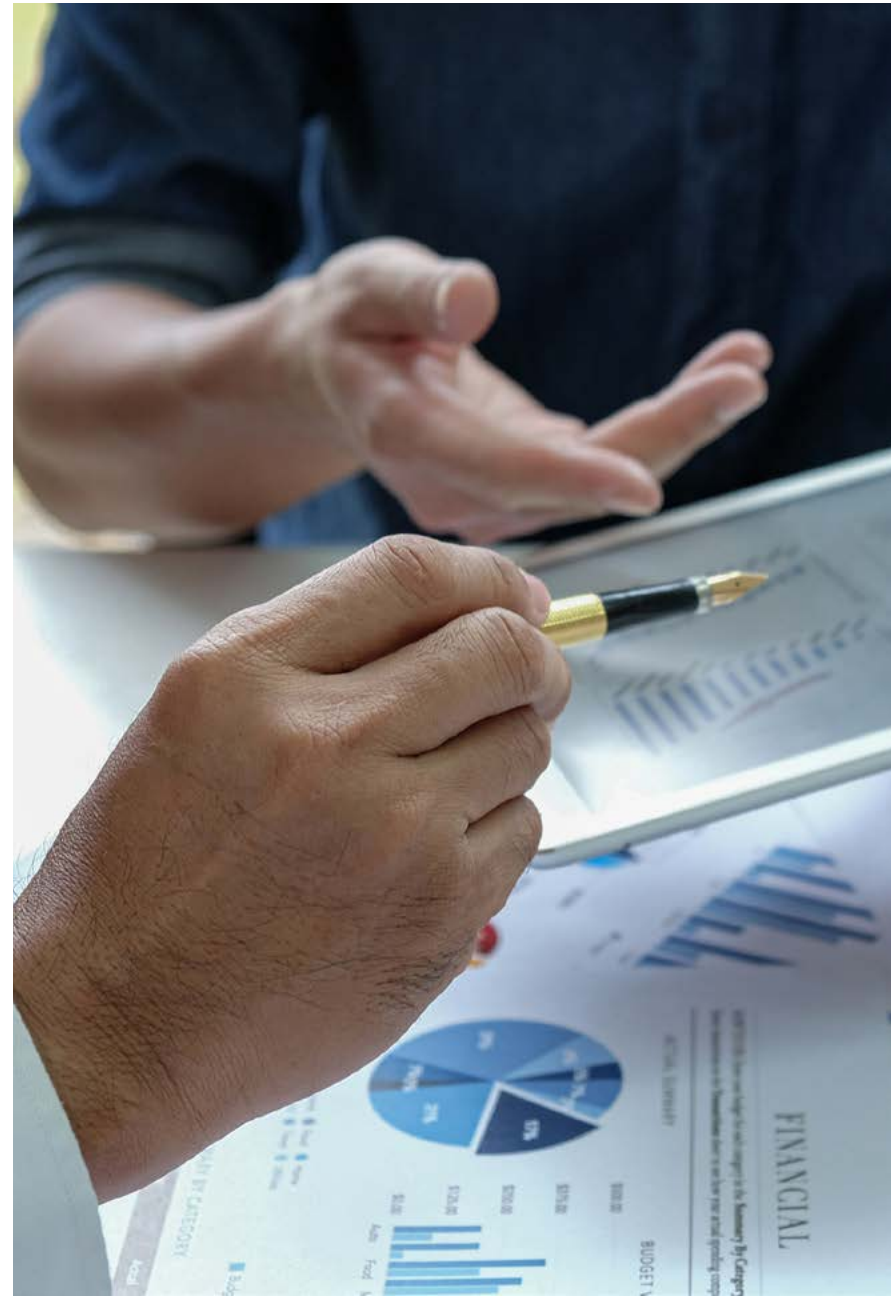
We specifically framed this research around the four core IIM capabilities that provide the structure for AIIM's Certified Information Professional (CIP) program:

- 1) Creating, Capturing, and Sharing Information
- 2) Digitalizing Information-Intensive Processes
- 3) Extracting Intelligence from Information
- 4) Automating Governance and Compliance

Other reports that may be of interest to AIIM members include:



- Intelligent Capture, assisted by Artificial Intelligence** (Mar 2020)
- The Ultimate Guide to Improving Your Business Processes** (June 2020)
- Balancing Records Management and Information Governance** (Sept 2020)
- Mastering Your Microsoft 365 and SharePoint Investment** (Nov 2020)





About the AIIM Community

We value our objectivity and independence as a non-profit industry association. The results of the survey and the market commentary made in this report are independent of any bias from the vendor community. The data shared in this report is just a small sample of the overall data generated in preparation for this research report, *and distribution of the full set of findings is limited to the underwriters.*

The survey was taken using a web-based tool in February 2021. *All the participants were drawn from the AIIM Community.* This is important because it means the responses are from an informed audience that understands the benefits – and the reality – of information management in their organizations.

Number of Employees	
1-99	19%
100-1000	34%
Over 1000	47%

Role in Organization	
RM, DM, CM, or information governance	51%
Line of business or management or process	23%
Information technology/IT	14%
Other	12%

Meet Your Expert Panel



Meet Your CIP Expert Panel

We thank these IIM executives – all Certified Information Professionals (CIPs) – for their commitment to share their expertise and time in order to improve the overall level of competence and knowledge within the industry.

Quotes within this report in each **CIP Expert** section were made during a special panel discussion of the survey results on March 4, 2021. The intention was to use the survey findings as a foundation for a conversation focused not just on the trends suggested by the data, *but on what to do about them*. To ensure confidentiality and candid perspectives, this discussion was conducted under a variation of [“Chatham House” rules](#).

The quotes within the report are intentionally not attributed to the individual participants in the Panel and reflect individual perspectives rather than those of the organizations they represent.

Note – For those unfamiliar with the CIP Certification, more information is [HERE](#).



Jed Cawthorne, CIP. Jed is an experienced strategy consultant, Information & Knowledge Management (IKM) practitioner, and social collaboration evangelist. He is a CIP and an AIIM award winner for his work with the Toronto chapter. Jed has 20 years of experience in information management working with EMC Documentum, OpenText, IBM FileNet, iManage, Alfresco, and NetDocuments. He has led ECM, Intranet, and Enterprise Search implementation in higher education, government agencies, and financial services.



Jeffrey Lewis, CIP. Jeff is Information Governance Manager at SOL Capital Management Company and has experience in records management, content management, requirements management, project management, and database management. He holds a graduate degree in Library Science and while obtaining that degree he performed independent studies in implementing digitization projects and an independent reading on long term digital preservation.



Laura Livingston, CIP. Laura is an Electronic Records Specialist with Sidney Austin, LLP. In addition to being a CIP, Laura is a Certified Records Manager and certificated paralegal with over 25 years of experience in all phases of records management, from assessment through implementation.



Jessica Marlette, CIP. Jessica is Information Governance Counsel at White & Case LLP. She leads the Content Governance Team at White & Case and develops policies, procedures, and best practices to further the firm’s information governance strategy. In addition to being a CIP, she is Immediate Past Chair of AIIM’s [Women in Intelligent Information Management](#) (WIIM) Leadership Council and is a member of the Law Firm Information Governance Symposium (LFIGS).



Alan Weintraub, CIP. Alan is Global Product Owner of Contract Management at Invesco US. He is an AIIM Fellow and leading expert on multiple aspects of enterprise information management (EIM) including enterprise content management (ECM), data management, information governance (both data and content governance), digital rights management, and digital asset management.

2020 – A Wake-Up Call for Organization Leaders

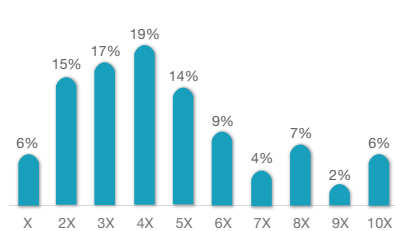


2020 – A Wake-Up Call for Organization Leaders

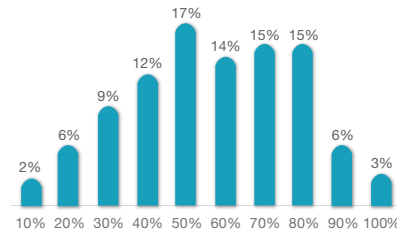
The Context for the 2021 Report – 1

A well-documented rising tide of INFORMATION CHAOS...

Assume the current volume of incoming information is "X" – what do you think it will be in 2 years?
Average = 4.5X



What would be your best guess for the percentage of UNSTRUCTURED information in your organization?
Average = 57%



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Two key trends are useful in understanding the context for the 2021 State of the IIM Industry report – and for understanding the information management challenges currently facing end-user organizations.

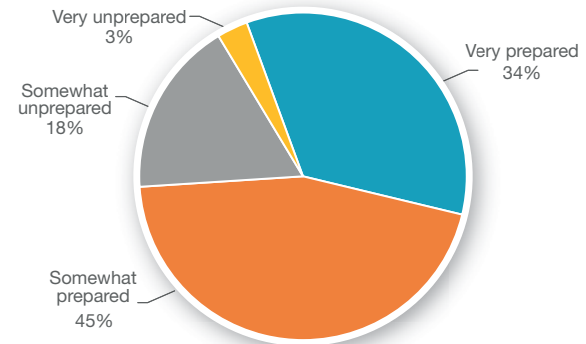
First, as has been well-documented by AIIM, end-user organizations began the year 2020 in the midst of an ongoing tidal wave of incoming information, threatening their ability to realize their long-standing digital transformation goals. This rising volume of information is made even more complex by the increasing variety of information types that must be managed. Most of this information is of the pesky unstructured variety – i.e., *content*.

On average, organizations expect the volume of information coming into their organizations to grow from X to 4.5X over the next two years. They expect more than 57% of this information to be unstructured (like a contract or a conversation) or semi-structured (like an invoice or a form). It is the *convergence* of these twin forces – information volume and information variety – that creates information chaos and makes true digital transformation so challenging.

The Context for the 2021 Report – 2

... with CHAOS weaknesses exposed by unexpected COVID-driven demands.

Prior to COVID, how prepared was your organization for remote work?



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The second key element in understanding how information management changed in 2020 is the impact that COVID had on demands for remote work and on the tools necessary to do so effectively and securely.

Only one in three organizations were prepared for the challenges of remote work prior to COVID, and thus many organizations were forced into a mad ad hoc dance to deploy collaborative tools. The crisis highlighted the weak points in many information management strategies and forced organizations to recognize their vulnerability. This elevated the importance of effectively managing information assets to a strategic priority, worthy of C-level focus – securely, anytime, anywhere, and on any device.

These kinds of experiences cited by one survey participant were not uncommon:

"We have heard awful anecdotes from customers in law firms both big and small – like re-routing all the physical mail to one person's house so they can open it, assess, and re-mail it to others' home addresses. Some firms with outdated accounting processes did not have enough cheques to pay bills, or the right people not having access to them, etc. Many processes were absolutely not ready to be changed to work from anywhere mode."

The COVID crisis forced organizations to rethink how they view remote work, remote workers, and the systems used to support them. According to the *Harvard Business Review* ("The Pandemic Is Widening a Corporate Productivity Gap"):

"The productivity gap between the best and the rest has widened during the pandemic. We estimate that the best companies – those that were already effective in managing the time, talent, and energy of their teams – have grown 5% to 8% more productive over the last 12 months. Additional work time, access to new star talent, and continued engagement have bolstered productivity at these companies. Most organizations, however, have experienced a net reduction in productivity of 3% to 6% (or more) due to inefficient collaboration, wasteful ways of working, and an overall decline in employee engagement."

The "State of the IIM Industry" in 2021 reflects the dramatic impact of these two forces: 1) rising levels of information chaos; and 2) demands for new modes of working and cooperating. The collective impact of all of this on the C-Suite is a rising appreciation for the importance of how remote working and collaboration actually work. There is also a growing awareness that much of what has been done out of necessity during COVID has governance, security, and accountability gaps that need to be addressed.

There is a new awareness about the importance of information assets – document, content, records – and process leaders and practitioners need to seize this opportunity. Organizations cannot continue down the path of viewing information management decisions through a tactical cost-minimization filter. In a digital age, the everyday decisions that organizations make about how they deal with information chaos become *strategic business decisions*.

There is also a new realism about the gaps that exist in information management strategies, gaps that are reflected in what at first glance might seem to be a rather harsh grading of the current state of IIM in most organizations. Unplanned and ad-hoc remote work has contributed to this. We need a higher level, more strategic discourse that addresses the bottom line for IIM investments. Budgeting for IIM initiatives often takes a back seat to front line business process-driven budgeting in many organizations, *even when the two areas should be connected*.

In this report, we discuss the state of information management within organizations, based on research conducted in February 2021, with 229 decision-makers drawn from the AIIM community. The importance of this being an "AIIM sample" cannot be over-emphasized, because these are the executives and practitioners within organizations *that have the best sense of the gaps that exist between information management good intentions and information management realities*.

The data highlights four specific information concerns that organizations need to seriously address if they hope to succeed in their journey to becoming truly digital organizations. For each of the concerns raised by the data, we provide two forms of crowd-sourced context to better understand what the data means.

- In the “Real-Life Perspectives” section, we include direct quotes from the participants in the survey, designed to punctuate and reinforce the data and to help bring the concern to life.
- In the “What Should You Do About It? – Recommendations” section, we focus on how to address each concern. The recommendations are direct quotes from our CIP Expert Panel; we are grateful to the CIPs for sharing their recommendations based on their years of experience.

The results should be a wake-up call to C-level and Information Management executives everywhere.

1. The C-Suite is failing to align business and technology strategies.
2. Organizations are losing the battle against information chaos and need to rethink outdated manual approaches to information management.
3. Organizations need to increase their investment in critical IIM competencies.
4. Money, focus, and culture – not just technology – are key to true digital transformation.



Additional reading from Iron Mountain:

Organizations have long made a link between all of the information flowing into their organizations, and the compliance and legal risk this information carries. But something bigger is now in play – an increasing connection between information governance and strategy.

[This research](#) covers the key trends with Information Governance and how leading organizations are structuring their strategies around them.



Finding 1 – The C-Suite Is Failing to Align Business and Technology Strategies

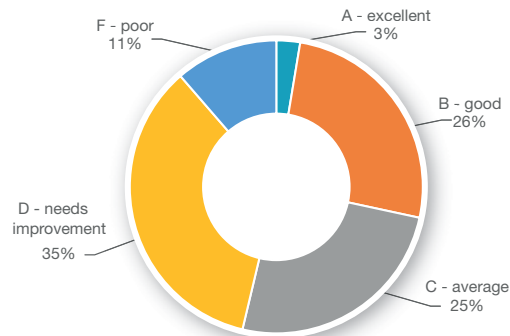


Finding 1 – The C-Suite Is Failing to Align Business and Technology Strategies

C-Suite Failing to Align Business and Technology Strategies

Average Business/Technology alignment grade = C minus (1.73)

Think about how well your organization aligns BUSINESS strategy with INFORMATION MANAGEMENT strategy. What grade would you give your organization?



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The AIIM CIP Study Guide clearly lays out the case for the importance of business/information management alignment:

"Most organizations and departments have a mandate to continuously improve operations. A conventional change agenda involves better tools and technology, better behaviors, and better processes, all focused on generating better efficiencies and improved productivity.

"Ultimately, AIIM believes digital transformation is more than conventional change. Digital transformation is about doing things differently – and doing different things. And different not just for the sake of being different, but in support of the key strategic objectives facing every organization in the age of digital disruption. In other words, digital transformation is not

about incremental process improvement. Digital transformation is about using information in brand new ways.

"The focus for information management is broader than simply reducing information-based costs and risks. While this is important, it is insufficient. Rather, organizations need to focus on how to effectively monetize their information assets, directly or indirectly, to move the organization forward. Information management must become a business enabler."

The *Harvard Business Review* ("Is Your IT Department Aligned With Your Business Outcomes?") reinforces how critical it is, especially now, for organizations to place renewed emphasis on more effectively aligning their business and technology strategies:

"Over the years, many organizations have weathered moments of upheaval. But this pandemic presents challenges unprecedented in their pace and scale. No doubt, challenges will continue to emerge and quickly evolve. To respond with the speed and agility required, business leaders must effectively leverage digital technology and establish quick and reliable methods for identifying needs, adjusting plans, and measuring results. With technology and business goals so inextricably interwoven, there is heightened urgency today around getting digital transformation right... Ultimately, there's a fundamental and costly lack of alignment and a persistent gap between IT and business. And this organizational disconnect has become the biggest impediment to digital transformation."

So how are we doing in this critical task?

Overall, respondents in the AIIM survey give their organizations an alignment grade of C-minus (1.73 on a 4-point grading scale).

A C-minus. This is clearly a wake-up call to get serious about improving how we link business and information management strategies. Almost half of participants (46%) grade their efforts at alignment either as “needs improvement” or “poor.”

There are many reasons for this harsh assessment. But as one might expect, the higher up in the organization you are, the better you *think* your organization is at performing this key strategic task. Particularly from the perspective of those with the most knowledge about the effectiveness of information management systems, vast improvements are needed.

Role	Grade (4-point scale)	% ranking: “B-good” or “A-excellent”
Senior executive – i.e., VP and above	2.34	55%
Mid-level executive – i.e., director or manager	1.70	24%
Non-managerial staff position	1.46	16%

Real-Life Perspectives (from survey participants)

- We have no leadership alignment and agreement on objectives and solutions and strategy.
- There still exists a divide between IT and business lines – neither wants to serve as a water-carrier for the other. Additionally, IT is continually positioning itself as an essential function rather than a service to the mission of the organization; a position that both confuses and conflates focus and resources.

- Information Management is not part of strategy... it’s mostly an afterthought.
- We try to align the two strategies, but it is difficult when you are catching up information management-wise and trying to innovate for the business. So, you end up with partially aligned strategies.
- We know what has to be done but getting there and aligning the various strategies is difficult.
- We try to align information management strategy with business strategy, but not the other way around. This is often wasteful and shortsighted.
- The integration of information management into our business strategy is very high. We use it to define, control, and support our business strategy. But we are still not managing our information assets perfectly.
- Dealing with COVID has forced us to adjust to the new way of dealing with information management. We have done more electronically due to the facilities being closed to the public. Ensuring that the proper equipment was in place as we worked remotely was a challenge.

What Should You Do About It? – Recommendations (from CIP Expert Panel)

- 1. Embrace flexibility in the wake of COVID.** In every organization, for every person who loves working at home, there is somebody else who cannot get out of the house quickly enough. And for every person who is super social, there's another one who is an introvert and would love to be working from home. COVID has forced people to figure out remote working. Hopefully now that's done, and you've made a big investment in sorting out the issues and making sure the infrastructure is there. You may have put the infrastructure in place while in panic mode, but now you need to optimize it. Why wouldn't you make the most of it? The key for most organizations post-COVID is going to be flexibility.
- 2. Elevate the conversation about information value.** It's all about driving value for the organization. Years ago, I was trying to roll out records management across the organization. The hardest lesson I learned was that nobody recognized the value of records unless they understood the value of that information. That meant transitioning from viewing a record as something you just stored, archived, and retained to something of value that you could utilize to extend your work processes.
- 3. Create an internal framework to understand and balance both risk AND value.** You have information everywhere and you need to start somewhere. Start by assigning both risk and value metrics to each source of information and begin by attacking information sources that are high-risk and high-value.
- 4. Clearly affix senior responsibility.** If you want digital transformation, someone has to lead it. They must be empowered to drive change and supported by the C-Suite and Board. Transformation does not just “happen” – it must be driven and actively pushed. In some organizations, transformation will be embraced and supported, in others it will be met with a resounding “meh,” and in others it will be actively resisted. An empowered and supported leader is required in all these cases. The leader must be able to shine a light on the truth of the situation in order to gain broad consensus on what needs to be done.
- 5. Push the business to lead alignment.** It always comes back to what we're selling or what we're making or how we use business processes to get work done, which means that the business needs to lead alignment efforts. They may need some coaching and some help with the information management side of things. But I actually think it's easier to coach and assist and guide a business leader to understand the information management perspective than it is to take an IT person and try to have them lead a business function. We don't do information management for the sake of information management; information management is a support function. That doesn't reduce its importance.
- 6. Identify cultural pressure points that can be leveraged.** Our company prides itself on being the most client-centric company in our space. Content and information are at the heart of delivering upon this strategic priority. We used this cultural norm of customer-centricity to get senior executives to buy into a strategy of centrally managing information instead of having multiple hubs of information.

Finding 2 – Organizations Are Losing the Battle Against Information Chaos

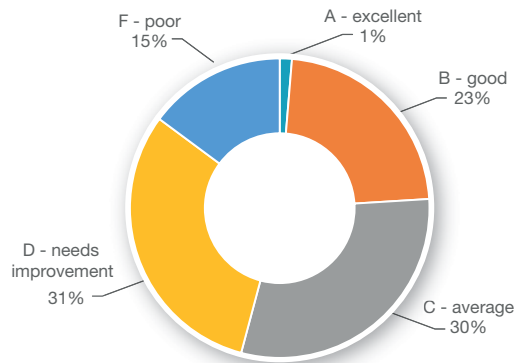


Finding 2 – Organizations Are Losing the Battle Against Information Chaos and Need to Rethink Outdated Manual Approaches to Information Management

Organizations Are Losing the Battle Against Information Chaos

Average organizational grade in addressing chaos = C minus (1.64)

How would you grade your organization in dealing with the rising tide of information chaos?



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So if the C-Suite is failing at the strategic task of business/information management alignment, how do those closest to the battle against information chaos feel about their progress in this struggle?

The short answer – likely exacerbated by all of the ad-hoc responses to remote work demands over the past year – is that there are huge gaps in this area as well. Overall, respondents in the AIIM survey give their organizations a grade of C minus (1.64

on a 4-point grading scale) in the battle against information chaos. This is actually *slightly lower* than the grade assigned to business/information management alignment. Almost half of participants (46%) grade their efforts at battling information chaos as “needs improvement” or “poor.”

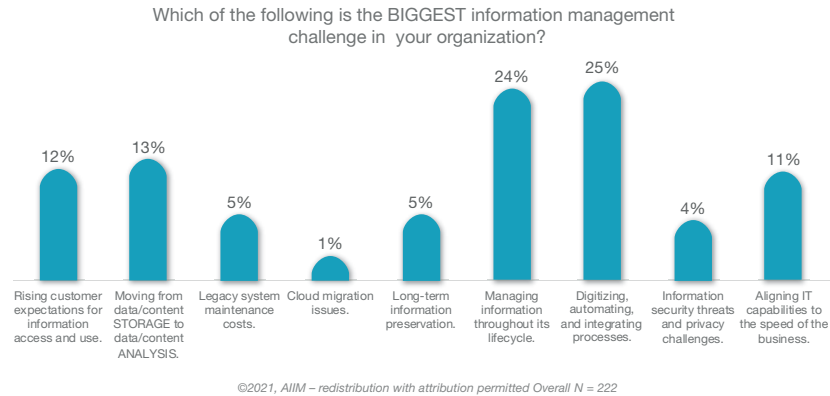
Once again, senior executives feel more confident in their efforts than the reality would suggest.

Role	Grade (4-point scale)	% ranking: “B-good” or “A-excellent”
Senior executive – i.e., VP and above	2.38	55%
Mid-level executive – i.e., director or manager	1.57	23%
Non-managerial staff position	1.39	11%

Those who describe their role as “executive level with broad organizational responsibilities” again are more optimistic about progress in the information chaos battle (average grade = 2.18) than are those with RM/DM/CM roles (1.47), IT responsibilities (1.59), or in line of business functions (1.58).

Lifecycle Information Management and Process Automation

Automation – of processes and governance – is the key challenge.



So where do organizations face the greatest challenges in dealing with information chaos? The survey responses suggest that the answer lies at a familiar point for AIIM audiences: at the intersection of content and processes. The two most important information challenges remain “digitizing, automating, and integrating processes” (25% say it’s the top challenge), followed closely by “managing information throughout its lifecycle” (24%). These responses are remarkably consistent across different roles.

The past year and the drive to remote work has clearly identified new risks tied to information chaos, risks that have even reached audit committees. Per the "2021 Audit Plan Hot Spots Report" by Gartner’s Audit Leadership Council:

"As organizations rapidly scale their remote work capabilities and deploy new technology, IT capacity is increasingly strained. ... Organizations’ data governance practices have yet to catch up with the speed and volume of data being collected and generated. Data environments are also becoming more complex, increasing the likelihood of duplicated effort and compromised data security. ... Organizations are still struggling to successfully implement and enforce data governance frameworks. As they accumulate new types of data and rely on fragmented storage systems, they are more exposed to regulatory, ethical, and data security risks."

AIIM CIP Study Guide on “Digitizing, automating, and integrating processes”

Organizations that work at “the speed of paper” are increasingly being rendered non-competitive and irrelevant. ... It requires that information be digitized and that work processes be developed, or reworked, with a focus on digital first and automation wherever possible. And it requires that organizations adopt a posture of agility and responsiveness rather than one of passivity and reactivity.

AIIM CIP Study Guide on “Managing information throughout its lifecycle”

Both the business and IT have critical roles to play with regard to information governance. Too often organizations assume that this function can be totally delegated to either IT or to records management or compliance. The concept here is an important one. The business must assume responsibility for stewardship of the organization’s information assets. IT must assume responsibility for the framework in which this is done. It is critical that this set of responsibilities be as seamless as possible and as easy to implement as possible from the perspective of the individual knowledge worker.

Real-Life Perspectives (from survey participants)

- ❑ Business strategy is set but IM needs to catch up with the strategy expectations.
 - ❑ We have a lot of “we’ve always done it that way.”
 - ❑ Information is called a “corporate asset,” but there’s no general movement to act on the concept. Data is still managed in fiefdoms because IT and business practices are still wedged in the 1990s.
 - ❑ When our EDM system was implemented, it was with the premise of capturing data without consideration of compliance requirements, policies, procedures, or work instructions.
 - ❑ I’m responsible for most of the information management in my organization, but business strategy and associated changes are not always known by me and my team.
 - ❑ The value of information management to the organization is still not appreciated.
 - ❑ Digitization, document control, and information management are not well understood. It is difficult to get management to understand the need to identify business strategy and how information management strategy plays an essential part in its success.
 - ❑ Our business strategy is far more advanced than our technological infrastructure.
 - ❑ Legacy systems for an older company are hard to remove. Getting comprehension is slow, and it is financially “not important” until there is a data breach. Then the breach eats up the resources and the post-breach remedy is no longer a priority.
 - ❑ Management simply does not understand the value of information management. And it’s near impossible to get close enough to the C-Suite to convey this message.
- ❑ A few people are aware of the risks of information chaos and there are local and partial initiatives, but C-level executives still need a lot of convincing to actually free (enough) resources for IIM, information governance, or even basic retention management. Example: we have a corporate document management system and a devops team for it, which together cost an arm and a leg. The C-level falsely believes that this is sufficient, and more is just “nice to have.”
 - ❑ We’re allowing new information stores to proliferate and not providing guidance on how to choose the right tool for a particular job.
 - ❑ Even though the chaos exists, managing the chaos has become a priority this year. Our focus is on growing revenue by monetizing information, while ensuring privacy requirements and maintaining company reputation.

What Should You Do About It? – Recommendations (from CIP Expert Panel)

- 1. Start by focusing on the lifecycle of information.** Focus on a specific element of the information lifecycle, depending on the nature of your business. Not every organization can wrap their heads around the whole lifecycle (from creation and digitization to records management and ultimately disposition). Every organization has a story, slightly different priorities, and different regulatory drivers to consider. But most organizations have some part of the information lifecycle that they're good at. Start by putting emphasis on that and expanding that capability.
- 2. You can't control what you can't see.** In our organization, the chaos problem wasn't simply about information volume and variety; it was more fundamental than that. It was the "Wild West" – we had all these silos of information and we didn't even know about half of the pockets that were out there. And while sheer volume and variety were key factors, the most important drivers to change were getting a better view of where all this information is, how it's being managed, the risks associated with that information, and the compensating controls that need to be in place. For our organization, the problem was not the sheer number of repositories and systems; the problem was not even knowing what we had.
- 3. Pick a place to start.** Is there a major regulatory driver like GDPR, PII, or CCPA in your organization? Is there the possibility of a giant fine for unmanaged information? Is that what gets management's attention? Or does management worry more about reputational risk, which makes any potential fine for non-compliance pale into insignificance. If you can only do so much, how do you prioritize? The prioritization has to be business driven and business led, because if you let the IT guys do it, they're going to pick the problem that's easy to solve and go fix that one. But a business person should be able to take a different view and say, "This problem

might be really difficult, and it will cost more and will take longer to do. But we need to do that one first." For example:

- Look at the most immediate need first and build a priority queue.
 - Look at compliance/regulatory/legal issues to determine priority.
 - Look at operations to see if there is one information issue (e.g., Outlook or collaboration needs) that is shared across the enterprise.
 - Directly ask the executive team what pain points they see. Most likely their pain points will be different than the ones that operations sees.
- 4. Engage the business in solving the chaos challenge.** How do we explain the benefits of freeing up IT to work on the "right" things? If the IT department has been stretched to their limit implementing new VPN hardware or figuring out how to support remote users effectively, how much bandwidth will they have to help teams manage their information effectively? Organizations need to ask themselves how much information management work can be off-loaded from IT and handled by the business teams. If the business team is mature enough, it can enhance its own effectiveness by embracing the "citizen developer" movement. Can business users be educated and trained to use no-code development environments to improve their workflows and automate some processes? Work by IT to support the ability of business teams to "learn to fish" can pay large dividends. And for the business team, the short-term pain of focusing on "non-core" work to improve their information management processes will yield long term benefits.

Finding 3 – Organizations Need to Increase Their Investment in Critical IIM Competencies



Finding 3 – Organizations Need to Increase Their Investment in Critical IIM Competencies

Increase Investment in Core IIM Competencies – 1

Elevate the strategic importance and awareness of IIM.

How would you grade your organization relative to each of these broad IIM competencies? (4 point scale, A = 4)	Grade	Grade
CREATE, CAPTURE, AND SHARE INFORMATION (i.e., Multi-Channel Capture, Collaboration, Content Migration & Integration, Knowledge Management).	C-	1.84
DIGITALIZE INFORMATION-INTENSIVE PROCESSES (i.e., Business Process Management, Robotic Process Automation, Case Management).	C-	1.79
EXTRACT INTELLIGENCE FROM INFORMATION (i.e., Capturing and Managing Metadata, Data Recognition/Extraction/Standardization, Analytics/Machine Learning/AI, Search).	D+	1.49
AUTOMATE GOVERNANCE AND COMPLIANCE (i.e., Privacy and Data Protection, Records Management, eDiscovery, Digital Preservation).	C-	1.72

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As one might expect, the evaluation of maturity within each of the four individual core IIM competencies mirrors the assessment of effectiveness in the overall battle against information chaos – essentially a grade of C-minus. The grading differences are predictable, and in many ways mirror the evolution of the IIM “space” within the AIIM community – the highest grade for information creation and capture, followed by process digitization

and governance automation, and then a bit of a gap before one comes to some of the edges of IIM technology centered around Analytics, Artificial Intelligence (AI), and Machine Learning.

Increase Investment in Core IIM Competencies – 2

Competency grade is above “C” in only two areas.



Going a bit deeper, the grades that organizations give to the maturity of some of the basic building blocks that are the foundation for each of the four competencies reinforces their overall ratings – and also some of the broader organizational priorities beyond information management. Organizations have the most confidence in how they manage information privacy and security (2.44). This likely reflects broader organizational privacy and security concerns tied to compliance requirements like GDPR and data breaches. Another key reason is that there are fines linked to failures here, and other financial and reputational risks associated with InfoSec breaches that affects the bottom line.

Perhaps reflecting the attention given to COVID-driven remote working requirements, digital workplace maturity comes in second with a grade of 2.08. However, it is likely that many organizations have deployed remote working solutions without fully understanding the long-term information governance issues associated with these rapid and ad-hoc deployments.

The bottom of the maturity rankings reflects the edge of the next phase of the IIM industry, a set of building blocks that will be critical to taking information management to the next stage – intelligent capture (1.46), machine learning (1.20), and robotic process automation (1.08). These technologies are key to overcoming the “manual” management bias that is at the heart of the chaos problems that organizations are experiencing.

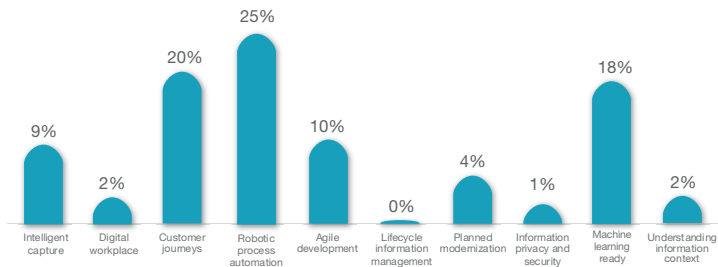
A look at the percentages responding “don’t know” or “not relevant” when asked to grade individual competencies provides additional context to the maturity rankings. These respondents were not included in the overall grades, but the percentages responding “don’t know” or “not relevant” are revealing with regards to competency maturity. These competencies are not even on the radar screen for these respondents.

Increase Investment in Core IIM Competencies – 3

Some key competencies - RPA, ML, Customer Journeys - not even on the radar for some.

How would you grade your organization's competency in each of the following areas?

PERCENTAGE RESPONDING “NOT RELEVANT” OR “DON’T KNOW” TO GRADING QUESTION.



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For 25% of organizations, RPA is not sufficiently on their radar screens to even merit a grade or opinion, and thus the actual maturity level is even lower due to the early stages of awareness of this technology. The same is true with machine learning, with 18% of the participants not having sufficient experience or

awareness to offer an opinion. These technologies are still in the early stages of adoption, and while they are promising for early adopters, they have not yet reached the point of widespread adoption.

In the same vein, the relatively high grade given to customer journeys (1.95) is likely overly optimistic given that this building block is not even on the radar for 20% of organizations. This is important because often customer journey mapping – across departments, not just *within* departments – is often the first step to truly understanding the gaps that exist in information strategies that are caused by inconsistent and unconnected information silos. It would be useful to know how many organizations have extended the concept of journey mapping to internal customers and mapping the experience of employees to information management processes and capabilities.

Real-Life Perspectives (from survey participants)

- The company tends to invest in solutions that tie directly to a revenue stream without looking at how we invest in the support areas more intelligently to further advance the business.
- We rely too much on file shares and lack the metadata that could enhance the ability to share and find content.
- Content capture is in the dark ages. Scan. Scan. Human indexing. People look at content as analogous to paper.
- Over the past two years, awareness and a culture shift have taken place due to using Information Governance programs to align with business strategies and rolling up projects to meet IT goals.
- AI/ML is a teenager in the general business environment – we will closely monitor and wait for maturity.
- We think of information management as a necessary evil and cost center instead of a strategic imperative and a necessary prerequisite to sustainable growth.

- ❑ Business provides their strategy and moves forward without integrating Information Management until pressed to do so – or forced by regulations or audits.
- ❑ We have too many information silos, people don't talk with each other or know what each other is doing, and we lack the political will to truly improve.
- ❑ Information management is mostly unrelated to the business strategy, we do what we need to in order to comply, but not much beyond that.
- ❑ Business strategy is not centralized – we don't know who's intended to evolve into what. There's not a single roadmap that shows what outcomes will be achieved by the aggregation of the strategies, and what interdependencies will contribute to the success of the strategies (or where one strategy may obstruct the realization of another).
- ❑ Information gathering and management is largely decentralized. Initiatives to improve the management of quality and integrity of data are stymied by legacy practices related to the perception of data “ownership” by small divisions within the organization.

What Should You Do About It? – Recommendations (from CIP Expert Panel)

1. **Don't get sucked in by the hype cycle.** AI and machine learning are not panaceas; they are not going to fix every business issue. You've got to look at these technologies in a properly aligned fashion. Do a proof of concept – whatever it takes to prove to yourself that it's worth doing and it's going to provide value. Because otherwise it becomes just another bright shiny object. And you'll be far down the path before you realize that you've gone off and done a random AI project that gives you little lasting benefit.
2. **Start by imagining what is possible, THEN look at IIM technologies.** Business people need to commit to enough technology competency to imagine what could be possible. And once they have imagined what is possible from a business perspective only then look at technologies. How does the technology fit in with the business outcome that we have imagined? Unfortunately, things often evolve exactly backwards. Somebody rolls in with a truck full of software, and says, “Go!”
3. **Piggyback IIM initiatives on existing investments.** Rather than buying an entirely new application, speak to IT about applications the organizations already owns that can be repurposed or enhanced with IIM capabilities. Offer “consulting services” to a team to formulate the groundwork and build good will. Once one team is on board, use the success and word of mouth to bring attention to the organization about IIM.

4. Build small successes at the edges of the IIM space.

We found that we just couldn't justify having more headcount in records, so we started automating a lot of the internal processes tied to records. For example, we now have an entirely automated process for onboarding and offboarding. We are applying Lifecycle Management concepts to our email archives to determine if we can do disposition in an automated way. We have found that these little inroads have created IIM success stories that we've been able to then springboard from to create additional opportunities in other places.

5. Don't waste a good crisis. Prior to the pandemic, privacy laws and regulations really got more attention with the C-Suite than Information Governance. And then COVID happened. The C-Suite – and everyone else! – realized that when you are working from home, you can't just knock on the door next to you and ask for information. You can't get to your papers in a file cabinet. The pandemic has really upped the ante for records and information governance across the board. At the C-level, the pandemic has pushed forward records and information governance. It has even pushed forward technologies at the edges of IIM. For example, we've seen a significant increase in requests for artificial intelligence technology, and also neglected areas like knowledge management. It's changed the whole dynamic of the work environment and forced people to pay more attention to how they're organizing and managing information day in and day out. When COVID hit and we had to go home, we were still doing wet signatures on all our contracts. We had to roll out an eSignature solution in under 30 days across the globe. Normally this would have taken more than a year.

6. The “legacy” long tail will not go away on its own.

Everyone loves to simply characterize something as “legacy,” with the assumption that this means we can just move on. But this isn't what really goes on in organizations. For example, based on different regulatory obligations, some legacy records needed to be retained for 50 years. Even though the legacy system had been decommissioned, the data still had to be maintained in some way where it could be retrieved and read. You can't always just assume that legacy data is dead data. One of the things that we discovered is there was a lot of data that looked ancient and didn't appear to have any value, but actually did have business value once we understood what we had.



Finding 4 – Money, Focus, and Culture – Not Just Technology – Are Key to True Digital Transformation

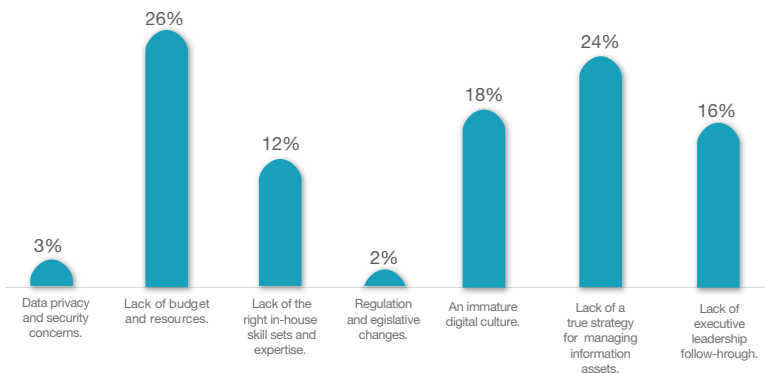


Finding 4 – Money, Focus, and Culture – Not Just Technology – Are Key to True Digital Transformation

Money, Focus, and Culture Are Key to True Digital Transformation

Moving beyond “business as usual” remains a challenge.

Which of the following is your BIGGEST obstacle to your efforts to become a truly digital organization?



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AIIM has long talked about the trifecta of “People, Processes, and Technology” that is critical to the success of any information management initiative. If pressed, most organizations will affirm that the relative attention they *should* pay to each of these elements is 80%/15%/5% (people/process/technology), but also confess that the reality is something more akin to 5%/15%/80%). As organizations think about their broader transformation dreams, are the challenges in realizing their dreams more tied to the rapid pace of technology or to “something else?”

At the top of the list of obstacles that organizations face is money – “lack of budget and resources” (26%). This is followed by “lack of a true strategy for managing information assets” (24%), and “an immature culture” (18%).

AIIM maps these major steps in any information management implementation process:

- Developing the information management strategy.
- Making the business case for information management.
- Identifying and prioritizing the business requirements for the solution.
- Designing and implementing the system.
- Engaging the change management required to ensure uptake of the system.

The survey respondents believe that getting the basics right at the start and the end of a project are the most important factors in a successful implementation. This means clear, consistent, and prioritized business requirements before you start talking to vendors and buying any technology (30%). But THE most important factor in the eyes of those with the most experience in implementing IIM projects is getting change management right (32%), which ironically tends to be THE most neglected factor in an implementation.



According to the AIIM CIP Study Guide:

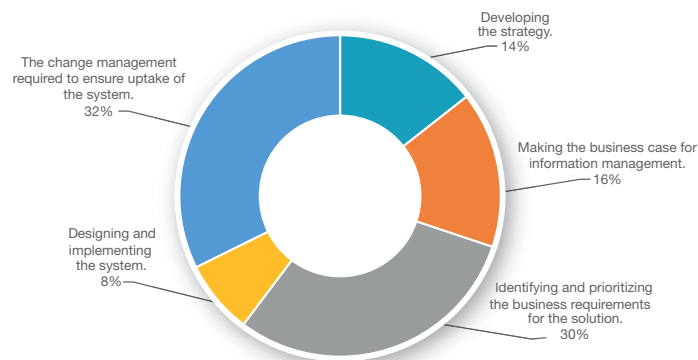
Regardless of the kind of change, whether technological, cultural, procedural, role-based, or any other, it must first be decided if an organization is ready to face the change and adjust to it. Change may be coming whether it's welcome or not. Determining readiness is a big factor in the potential success of your information management project. Organizational change is always going to appear threatening to people as it is often linked to job security. Some enterprises freely disseminate information regarding strategy changes. Other firms are very secretive and feel that this is for senior management only. Practitioners should be as open and honest with staff about change as they possibly can. Typically, people will more readily embrace the change process if clear information is available.



Get the Basics Right

Commit to change management and clear requirements.

Which of the following is MOST IMPORTANT to a successful information management project in your organization?



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Real-Life Perspectives (from survey participants)

- Senior executives seem uninterested in information management. Most of the time they are not interested in any information management agendas.
- We suffer from a lack of user engagement. COVID forced users to become more digital but it's still hard. Some users have issues with saving information to systems.
- Those who say “we’ve always done it this way” are not forward thinking and hold back progress. Open-mindedness is necessary to make sure we are moving forward and we must rise to the challenge, not shrink back from it.
- We still have some information silos and, mainly, budget and security constraints.
- Each department is doing their own thing, creating multiple duplicates of the same content, and also inconsistent practices within each department on what and how information is captured.
- Lots of tech capabilities = good. Risk/compliance oversight = good. Fractured governance = bad.

What Should You Do About It? – Recommendations (from CIP Expert Panel)

- 1. Recognize that change management isn't just for frontline workers.** You can have some great, fantastic ideas about what you want to do with information, but you need to be able to educate everyone up and down the stack about what you are planning. You need to be able to go to that frontline worker and explain what's in it for them, but you also need to be able to explain to the C-Suite what's in it for them.
- 2. Establish a dedicated Change Management Unit.** Assign a project management office (PMO) for migrations and upgrades to make sure that content is both transferred and available to customer specifications. This PMO should meet with the customer, develop business requirements and success criteria, and shepherd the process with customer input through to completion.
- 3. Be clear on both the “why” and the “how.”** Educate potentially stressed individuals on why changes need to occur. Especially when automating, it is important for the individuals to understand how the information management solution will improve their work environment by eliminating tedious tasks in order to gain their support. But don't stop there. Once you have established the reason for change, be very clear on how and when it will evolve.
- 4. Be explicit about the C-Suite support you need.** Bring enterprise-wide initiatives to senior executives before investing any time in implementation. Give them a countdown of activities that are expected so there are no surprises. State explicitly: “This is what we need from you.” Do not assume they will know what you expect them to do.
- 5. Invest in “story-telling” and the mechanisms to tell those stories.** It is not enough to talk about the technical reasons why a particular change is being made or why a new system is being implemented. Think like a marketer; actively market what you are doing. We didn't launch an awareness campaign on records and information governance until just a few years ago. Looking back, I wish I would have done that sooner; I had an opportunity, so I ran with it. And now we're in our third year of that program. It's really been amazing how many people are paying attention now; I wish I had done this earlier.
- 6. Do change management by the drink, not through a firehose.** Communicate the change early, and provide training opportunities and time for feedback. Introduce change in small increments and be inclusive with the business users who will be impacted by the change. Break down the issue into steps/pieces and align each piece with a complete understanding of the technology.

Final Thoughts – Building an IIM Strategy



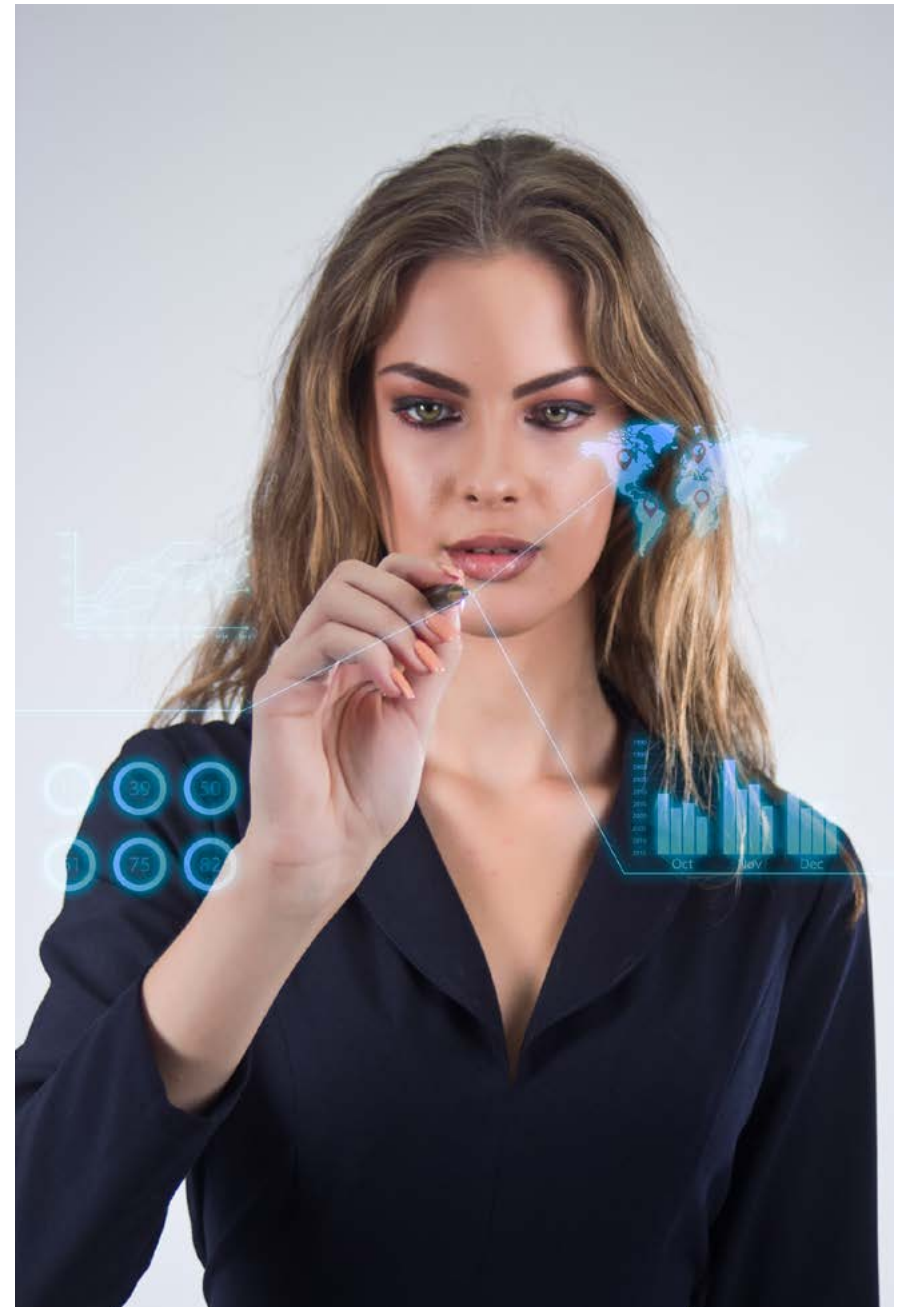
Final Thoughts – Building an IIM Strategy

Developing a project roadmap is a key element in building an overall IIM strategy. Individual project roadmaps must be tactical enough to be achievable, and yet tied to strategic business objectives – and also integrated across individual projects.

The CIP Expert Panel has decades of experience in this complicated task. As a final set of recommendations, we asked them to identify, “What do I know now that I wish I knew then.”

Here are their recommendations.

- 1. Understand that we are in the disruption business.** The biggest piece of advice I give people is to recognize that what we do is disruptive and hard and never really succeeds very well without carefully considered change management plans. What we do in IIM – because it involves people and how they work – is THE most disruptive technology you can implement in an organization.
- 2. Think strategically about the pace of change.** Harvard Business School types can make glib statements like, “the only constant is change,” but the reality is that the pace of change is an order of magnitude faster in the cloud than it was on-premises. How are people supposed to keep up? You can’t just stop day-to-day activities while you figure things out. We often want to push through things at lightning speed. But you might just need to take a breather for five seconds to do a little bit of cleanup before you try to keep moving forward, full steam.
- 3. Fail fast. Really fast.** How can you encourage the organization, or a whole business unit, or the IM team, or the IT group to be more “agile” – accepting failure, dealing with it, and moving on to the next attempt rapidly – without recriminations? If a leader or strategy or solution is failing, admit it. Replace who or what is not working and move on, quickly. Ask for forgiveness rather than permission.



4. **Engage users “where they live.”** We started a program called 30-60-90. When new employees join the organization, we do a meeting at 30 days, at 60 days, and at 90 days, in which we focus on how they are using our information systems, how they’re storing their data, and the pain points they are experiencing. We do this whether they’re fresh out of school or a lateral hire. We’ve demonstrated that we’re willing to listen to what users need and do the things that we can do to bring them the things they want.
5. **Hone and personalize your C-Suite elevator pitch.** Our company had been surviving for nearly 70 years with no formal records management program, when the board of directors suddenly directed us to get one. I ended up on the elevator one day with our president and had to have that elevator conversation of “Who are you, and why are you here?” And I had to tell him who I was and why I was there and try to get him excited about records management. I played off the fact that he was an avid art collector; whenever I saw him, I would always point out a piece of art and ask him to tell me the story behind the piece. That led into conversations comparing an art management system with a system for managing other assets – like records. I always look at records management as being part evangelist/salesman.
6. **Do not underestimate the power of a seat at the table.** Information governance now has a seat at the vendor intake process within our organization. We are now involved from the outset in assessing a product and understanding exactly what types of information that product is going to be touching, managing, using, and storing. And then we can identify all those risks and all the controls that need to be put in. Getting to that point was not easy. It’s definitely a several year journey; it takes a lot of work, a lot of people asking a lot of questions, and you start connecting and talking to people and eventually get all your answers.




Conclusion

In conclusion, 2021 is shaping up as a year of reckoning for many organizations in building out their information management strategies. The long-term trends driving information chaos – increasing volumes and varieties of information – are accelerating. The pendulum that swung so wildly in the direction of remote working as a result of COVID will certainly swing somewhat in the other direction this year. But it won’t return to where things were before COVID, which means that the pressures for integrated IIM strategies that treat information as a critical asset will remain. And it’s time for organizations to act upon those pressures and capitalize upon the innovations that were made under duress in 2020.



A Wake-Up Call for Organization Leaders - 9 Key Recommendations


1 The C-Suite is failing to align business and technology strategies.



1.73

The average business alignment grade is a C-minus – **1.73 on a 4-point scale.**


2 When organizations grade their efforts at business/technology alignment –




46%

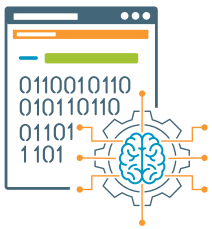
Almost half grade their efforts at business/technology alignment either as “needs improvement” or “poor.”

3 Senior executives are overly optimistic about business/technology alignment –

55%  rate their efforts “good” or “excellent” vs. only...

23%  of directors and managers.


4 Organizations are losing the battle against information chaos –




1.64

The average organization scores its efforts as **1.64 on a four-point scale.** The choice? Fall behind or double-down on your IIM investments.


5 The two most important information challenges remain;


25%  digitizing, automating, and integrating processes;

24%  managing information throughout it's lifecycle.

6 The two most mature IIM competencies reflect the unique challenges posed by COVID:




On a four-point scale:

 **2.44** Information privacy and security, and...

 **2.04** digital workplace.

7 Organizations are lagging in building the leading-edge competencies critical to automation information management practices.


On a four-point scale:

 1.46 Intelligent Capture	 1.20 Machine Learning	 1.08 Robotic Process Automation
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...are the least mature of ten key IIM competencies.

8 What barriers do organizations face in deploying IIM technologies?

 **26%** At the top of the list is money – “lack of budget and resources”.

 **24%** This is followed by “lack of a true strategy for managing information assets”, and...

 **18%** “an immature culture”.

9 Most important element in a successful IIM deployment?



30%

Developing clear, consistent, and prioritized business requirements before you start talking to vendors and buying any technology.

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2021 Belongs to the Information Stewards

As you read in this report, Information Management will look very different in 2021! In many ways, that's a relief, but it also means new challenges to overcome, like:

- Supporting remote-based and work flexibility
- Aligning business and technology strategies
- Creating a framework for information value

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Here at AIIM, we believe that information is your most important asset and we want to teach you the skills to manage it. We've felt this way since 1943, back when this community was founded.

Sure, the technology has come a long way since then and the variety of information we're managing has changed a lot, but one tenet has remained constant — we've always focused on the intersection of people, processes, and information. We help organizations put information to work.

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