

A Solution to Business Problems Caused by Poor Communication

IMI WHITE PAPER SERIES



INFORMATION MAPPING

Overview

Introduction

This document describes

- the business problems caused by poor management of an organization's knowledge, and
 - Information Mapping's solution for resolving them.
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Problem

Currently, organizations need to generate and efficiently administer the knowledge that their personnel need to do their work.

As the quantity and rate of change of information increase

- the capacity of the organization to document and distribute knowledge among its personnel becomes a critical factor seen in the quality of its effort and the success of its results, and
 - the traditional methods and procedures for generating, administering, and using documents cease being effective.
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What Information Mapping does

Information Mapping is a company dedicated to resolving business problems caused by the poor communication of knowledge.

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Business Problems Caused by Poor Communication

Introduction This topic describes the business problems caused by poor communication and their causes.

The situation All of us, in every organization, use more information each day to do our work.

In different ways, we receive information about products, processes, systems, internal and external requirements, clients, vendors, and results.

The knowledge base The information that we use to do our work

- is constantly generated, distributed, and acted upon, and
- forms the knowledge base of our organization.

Inasmuch as the quality and the efficiency of our work depends more and more on information, the **knowledge base** becomes one of the **most important assets** in an organization.

Communication problems In spite of its importance, an organization's knowledge base is frequently discounted as an asset. When people need information to take action or make a decision, they find that the information

- does not exist
- is not in the right place, medium, or time
- does not say what they need to know, and/or
- is difficult to find and understand.

In the end, people act and decide without the necessary information, or they spend too much time (theirs and that of others) gathering and processing the information.

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Business Problems Caused by Poor Communication, Continued

Business problems

Poor management of an organization's knowledge generates business problems. Some examples of these problems are listed below.

Operating errors and inefficiencies

- regional, departmental, and individual "styles" vs. "McDonalds"
- defects and non-compliance
- poor security and control
- repetitive activities

Too many resources dedicated to processing information

- consultants and experts
- use of training to resolve all problems
- excessive irrelevant information in daily operations and in the execution of projects

Poor service

- in telephone support centers
- in product demonstrations
- in distributor networks

Products poorly marketed-sold-serviced

- by external sales forces
- when there are many or very complex products
- with ineffective proposals

Non-compliance with regulations

- internal
- from clients
- from governmental regulatory organizations
- from international organizations

Poorly substantiated decisions

- credit
- purchasing
- investment
- assignment of resources

Inability to respond to new market and environmental requirements

- new, more complex products
- demands of the work environment
- increased competition

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Business Problems Caused by Poor Communication, Continued

The causes Some causes of poor communication described in this topic are listed below.

The information does not get to the users because

- there is no formal process for generating, administering, and using documents (or those that exist are ineffective)
- documents do not get to the final user (they stay in the file cabinet of some administrator), and/or
- the documents are not integrated into an accessible and organized system.

The information gets to the users, but they do not use it because

- the users prefer other methods (questions, improvising)
- there is no control over the receipt and use of the documents
- the users do not take responsibility for the use of the documents, and/or
- the presentation method is not adequate for the reading conditions.

The information is used, but it does not resolve the problems of the user because

- the organization of the information does not meet the needs of the reader
 - the information is not segmented for use (everyone receives everything)
 - the information is difficult to find and understand
 - the available information is not current
 - the necessary information is dispersed in several documents, and/or
 - there are no mechanisms for incorporating the experience of the users into the documents.
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Information Mapping's Solution

Introduction This topic describes Information Mapping's solution to the problems caused by poor communication.

Traditional solutions It is common for organizations to respond to their communication needs with isolated actions. Some frequent examples are:

- adopting computerized tools (hypertext, intranet, and so on)
- training personnel in documentation techniques
- issuing policies and standards
- implementing individual or departmental initiatives without consensus in the organization, and
- addressing all problems with training programs.

All the above examples *are* part of the solution, but none will resolve the whole problem by itself. Taken in an isolated manner, they generally produce frustration.

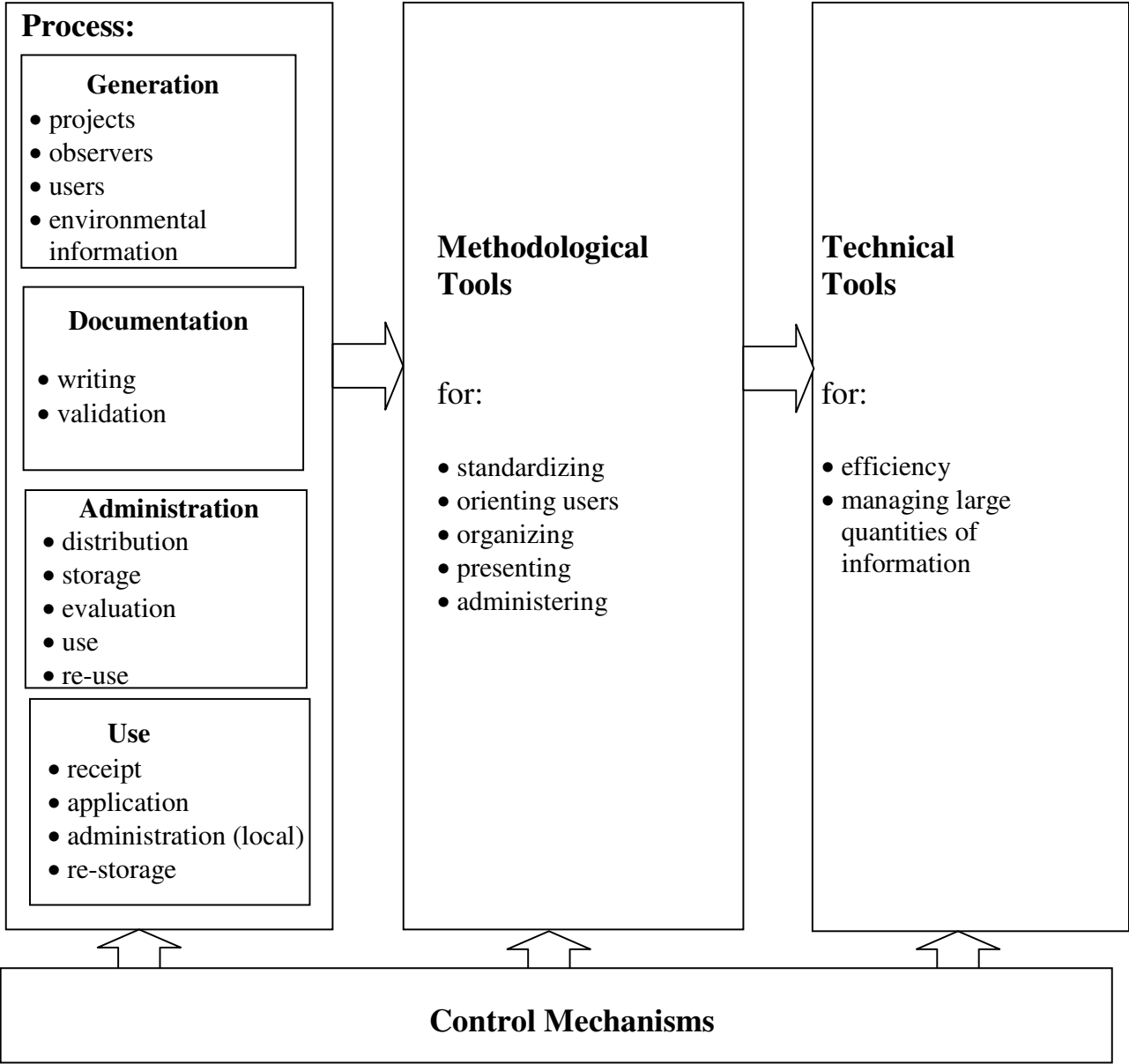
Information Mapping's solution Information Mapping's experience with the largest organizations in the world shows that successful communication projects share an **integrated solution**, even though the scope of specific projects may be limited. The integrated solution always includes the following elements:

- a **formal process** for generating, documenting, administering, and using organizational knowledge; the process functions as the spinal cord of the solution and is anchored to the operation of the business
 - **methodological tools** for completing the activities of each stage of the process in a consistent manner oriented to the needs of the users
 - **technical tools** to maximize the efficiency of each stage of the process and make it possible to manage large quantities of information, and
 - **control mechanisms** to assure that each stage of the process complies with its purpose.
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Information Mapping's Solution, Continued

Diagram The diagram below describes the elements of an integrated solution.



The following pages describe each of the needed stages of the process and the methodological and technical tools required.

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Information Mapping's Solution, Continued

Generation

During the generation stage, the process is separated by

- a systematic response to events and business operations
- the execution of projects (for example, implementation of processes and systems), and
- specific activities to identify requirements.

Methodological tools are used for

- analyzing communication needs, and
- planning projects.

Technical tools are used for obtaining and registering the organization's information and that of its environment.

Documentation

During the documentation stage, the knowledge required for implementation is

- gathered, recompiled, and documented in a clear, accessible form
- validated, and
- made official in ways that it can be acted upon and used to make decisions in the organization.

Methodological tools are used for

- analyzing information based on the purpose for the readers (what information they need and how they will use it), and
- organizing and presenting information in a clear, accessible manner, and in appropriate media.

Technical tools are used for

- producing documents in consistent formats and media, and
 - controlling and distributing versions and copies during the validation and editing cycles.
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Information Mapping's Solution, Continued

Administration During the administration stage, the documents are

- integrated into the knowledge base
- distributed to the readers and checked for their adequate use in the organization, and
- continuously updated.

Methodological tools are used for

- administering the knowledge base modularly at the level of groups of documents, individual documents, and fragments
- distributing in a segmented way (to anyone and everyone who needs it)
- presenting consistent information for different uses and in different media, and
- evaluating the effectiveness of the information.

Technical tools are used for

- storing information in a structured form
 - recording and maintaining information about the documents, and
 - recording and maintaining information about the use of the documents.
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Use During the use stage

- the knowledge is applied to make decisions and take action, as a routine part of daily work
- the documents are administered (locally) at each site, and
- the experience of the users is incorporated into the knowledge base.

Methodological tools are used for finding and understanding the information.

Technical tools are used for

- finding information
 - navigating to the information from where it is needed (for example, from the systems with which the readers are working)
 - exploring related information
 - reusing information in other ways, and
 - channeling experiences to the knowledge base.
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How to Implement an Integrated Solution

- Characteristics** To be successful, the implementation of the solution described in this document must
- be oriented to the solution of well-defined business problems that have a significant impact
 - be anchored to business processes in order to guarantee its continued, systematic functioning
 - transfer knowledge about the process and the procedures of the organization
 - consider the integrated solution, in the terms described in the previous section, and
 - happen in a gradual (iterative) manner in distinct applications (areas, processes, projects) to bring about incremental improvements.
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- Process and products** The implementation process and the specific products that this solution generates cannot be defined in general terms, because they
- depend on the specific circumstances of each application, and
 - are defined in a requirements exploration process that Information Mapping and its clients complete together at the start of each engagement.
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Benefits to Business

Benefits of the solution

Some of the benefits of Information Mapping's solution are

- the communication process is the center of the solution, assuring that it succeeds in a formal and repeated manner
 - the communication process remains anchored to business processes, assuring its continued effectiveness and that alignment the objectives of the business
 - the tools are defined as a part of the process, assuring that the organization buys only what it needs, and uses them correctly
 - the definition of the formal process, the standardization of the documents and tools, and the integration of the knowledge base assures that isolated forces converge in an accumulation of organizational knowledge, and
 - the knowledge is defined by the business processes, assuring its application to diverse purposes (operations, ISO 9000, evaluation reports, and so on).
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Benefits of the implementation method

Some benefits of the way Information Mapping's solution is implemented are

- it reduces the risk of wrong decisions by gradual (iterative) implementation
 - the organization commits its resources as the implementation cycles generate results, allowing it to make improvements, and
 - knowledge is transferred to personnel in the organization.
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Benefits of the provider

Listed below are some of the benefits derived by working with Information Mapping.

- You can count on the experience of an international organization that has worked with the largest businesses in the world, through a local provider familiar with the culture and the environment of local businesses
 - the company does not represent any vendor of technical solutions, which assures the neutrality of the selection of adequate tools for each application, and current knowledge of leading edge technologies, and
 - the company has gained experience in the implementation of this type of solution in some of the largest companies in the country.
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About Information Mapping, Inc.

Information Mapping, Inc. is the leader in Information Life Cycle Solutions, delivering Information Mapping® learning programs, consulting services and technology solutions to organizations worldwide. For over four decades, the company's structuring, creating, and managing of business communications has helped organizations bring order to the complexity of corporate information.

For more information, go to www.infomap.com or call 800-INFOMAP (800-463-6627).