

# Mastering Information to Empower your Enterprise

## A Maturity Model for Enterprise Information

**Authors:** Bram Wessel, Gary Carlson, Rob Richardson, Julie Pepper, Erica Chao, Amy Wilcox, Louis Spinelli, Sara Ingham, Jennifer Long, Charlene Quach

**Contact:** info@factorfirm.com

How mature is the information in your enterprise?

To begin to answer this question, indulge us in a thought experiment. Imagine walking into a library where there was no structure, organization, or card catalog. All the books were randomly placed on shelves without any regard to their subject matter, author, etc. You might have fun browsing, but it would be difficult (if not impossible) to find a specific book you had in mind. Thank goodness for librarians, right?

Think of the information, content, and data your organization possesses as a bunch of books thrown in a random bin in the library. They exist, but people may not know they exist, nor how to find them.

For example, in e-commerce, we often repeat the expression, “customers can’t buy what they can’t find.” Usually this poor findability comes from lack of standardized terms for both the type of data (or attribute) and the associated values. Think of a product page form where you select size or color from a pick list (or dropdown menu). If the terms in that list vary from product to product, then you’ve got a findability problem.

The information that allows you to find a book or a product doesn’t get there by magic. There are people, systems, processes, and technologies involved. And each requires thoughtful and strategic planning.

A lack of high-level information strategy, governance processes, and inadequate technology, lead to myriad issues.

Enterprise organizations have many highly specific taxonomies and controlled vocabularies. But they are often controlled and applied in an inconsistent and ad hoc manner. Database schemas may be created for new systems with no consideration for the people and processes required to maintain them.

Eventually, customers can’t find products, analytics are nearly impossible, inefficiency abounds, and you’re unable to keep the pace in our rapidly changing digital landscape.

Factor has helped move organizations towards information mastery, from a wide range of starting points. While each client has its own unique challenges, common themes have emerged over the years. We hope that by laying out these themes in a maturity model, organizations and information architects can better assess their current state and the amount of effort required to master enterprise information.

## Stages of enterprise information maturity

1 Accidental	2 Grass Roots	3 Emerging	4 Established	5 Mastery
Information, processes, and business goals exist in <b>silos</b> .	Pockets of <b>enthusiasm</b> and <b>empowerment</b> have emerged, mostly driven by personal <b>heroics</b> at a department level. But there’s <b>no coherent view</b> of how to move forward.	Initial success synchronizing information leads to <b>optimism</b> , but a unified information strategy is still <b>elusive</b> .	Organizational <b>alignment</b> , adoption and compliance have solidified.	Information is a <b>strategic organizational</b> asset that has quantifiable equity. It is core to the organization’s identity, business strategy, and operations.
Integrating information across boundaries only occurs via time-consuming <b>ad hoc processes</b> .	Opportunities are recognized and projects may become defined, but there is limited traction.	Executives may see the benefits of unifying information and <b>eager teams</b> are developing capabilities, but <b>organizational transformation is still nascent</b> .	An <b>enterprise-wide information model</b> is in play. A capabilities, technology and resourcing <b>roadmap</b> exists.	As a center of excellence, the organization is <b>continuously improving</b> .
Personalization, cross team collaboration, analytics, etc. are almost impossible due to <b>lack of consistency</b> of information across our organization.	Many stakeholders feel <b>skeptical</b> and <b>frustrated</b> .		<b>New capabilities</b> can be onboarded efficiently. There is a rational, orderly <b>governance framework</b> .	Information is available as an <b>always on real-time digital service</b> .

## Characteristics of each stage in enterprise information maturity

	1 Accidental	2 Grass Roots	3 Emerging	4 Established	5 Mastery
<b>Information Strategy</b>	Information strategy is missing or wishful. Decision-making is hyper-localized and immediate.	Strategy is inconsistent and siloed due to lack of a roadmap. Opportunities are seen & projects defined, but there is limited traction.	A need for info strategy is becoming apparent or problematic. Pockets of success, but aspiration exceeds capabilities.	Strategy is fully embraced and driven by a roadmap. IA projects are fully funded. Specialty expertise is fully utilized.	Information is integral to business strategy. Confidence and commitment have an impact. Leadership is actively engaged.
<b>Understanding Users</b>	No user research or personas as they aren’t valued. No behavioral analytics. Many unfounded feature requests.	Some recognize that user research is important, but can’t articulate why. Early research experiments.	Research is valued, but there is an over-reliance on quant. qualitative research is under-appreciated.	User Research is valued as a core competency (part of the operative process). Findings are fed back into modeling.	User information and behavior is well understood, consistently used, and researched.
<b>Readiness &amp; Alignment</b>	Organic taxonomies proliferate, but there is no organizational awareness of best practices or IA.	Enthusiasm, but lack of empowerment leaves frustrations. Early efforts to form a community.	Communities emerging; IA, UX advocates or team exists, but they have limited access or influence.	IA team, community of practice exists. Change management practices are implemented and observed.	IA is Staffed, resourced, and prioritized. Organization is fully aligned and priorities are clear.
<b>Technology</b>	Systems are fragmented, disconnected, and non-strategic. No clear pathway to integration.	Information problems are viewed as IT problems. Resources thrown at tools rather than underlying info.	Major business capabilities have systems. Progress toward integration, but manual processes still exist.	Technology is deployed *in service to* the greater information strategy. Pervasive integration.	Real-time on-demand information as a service. Full integration leads directly to insight rather than engineering outcomes.
<b>Optimization &amp; Insight</b>	Processes are reactive, tactical, and manual. No collective will or community around information.	Stakeholders are communicating and generating lots of data, but little actual insight.	Demand has increased - people “knocking on the door.” Emerging capabilities are exciting, but heroism and luck still rule.	Business impacts are evident and measurable, but information demand still exceeds capacity.	The right/relevant information is getting to the right people at the right time - every time.