Beyond Seamless Teamwork

Chapter 12 of Seamless Teamwork

This is chapter 12 of "Seamless Teamwork: Using Microsoft SharePoint Technologies to Collaborate, Innovate, and Drive Business in New Ways", written by Michael Sampson and published by Microsoft Press (2009). It introduces ways of gaining the right balance of control and flexibility in order to extend SharePoint for collaboration in the enterprise. It is an online-only chapter, and is available free to people who have a copy of the book.

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CHAPTER 12

In this Chapter, you will:

- Gain insights on how to make your burgeoning SharePoint deployment successful
- Gain insights on who to involve, when and why.
- Understand the importance of sustainable information design, and key do's and don'ts
- Learn about the different ways you can help people find information in SharePoint

Roger and Kelly surveyed the piles of documents on the conference room table before them. They'd been locked in a fierce discussion about how to extend the use of SharePoint for collaboration throughout Fourth Coffee, and had repeatedly come back to the conclusion that more high level thinking was needed to do so. The documents on the table were all of the reports and articles they'd collected over the previous couple of months about making SharePoint work in the enterprise.

"So if I've got this right", said Roger, "we need to set the rules and guidelines on how SharePoint is used here. Is that your sense?"

"Yes, that's the next step as far as I see it", replied Kelly. "We've been doing some of this in an informal way, but with our growing dependence on SharePoint across everything we do, it's time to make it more formalized."

Roger laughed. "I supposed we should have done this from the very beginning. We've made some costly mistakes in the past couple of months, and I don't want to repeat any of those going forward."

"Yes we have", said Kelly, "but in the scheme of things, we're okay. We've just to get this right now, at least for the next 12-24 months. And then we can revisit our underlying assumptions, and make any further changes to better align the governance work with what's happening at Fourth Coffee."

"Okay, I'm good with that", said Roger. "Let's get Gareth on the phone and get IT's perspective—they have to provide and possibly strengthen the infrastructure for the growth in use."

"While we are at it", said Kelly, "let's bring in Jill Shrader from recordkeeping. I'm getting a sense that people are sharing important business knowledge and information more and more through SharePoint."

Contents

Beyond Seamless Teamwork

The first 11 chapters of Seamless Teamwork outlined a pragmatic project- and people-focused approach to using SharePoint for collaboration. There are some hints in those chapters regarding wider disciplines to embrace for the effective use of SharePoint, and this chapter amplifies those hints into a fuller discussion.

Lots of people want to use SharePoint. With its ability to spur sharing of documents and artifacts, self-help setup, and the capability to limit site access to certain people, SharePoint can support the rapid roll-out of collaborative capabilities to business teams. But with that power comes risk. SharePoint can just as quickly become home to information chaos and anarchy. For example:

- Copies of documents are spread across multiple sites, with no sense of which is the master copy.
- There are lots of SharePoint sites with no apparent ongoing value.
- People are unable to find the piece of content they are looking for, even though they themselves posted it a week ago.
- SharePoint sites are spreading virally, many of which are different from each other but are supposed to support common business processes.

What started off as a great informal way for people like Roger Lengel to work with his colleagues on one project can become a real problem if hundreds of people do their own thing with SharePoint. This is what got Microsoft Access—and Lotus Notes—a bad name in the 1990's despite how enabling the technology was.

While project teams are able to find information and documents in *their* project sites—due to repeated use and internalized expectations—if teams set up their sites differently, it rapidly becomes difficult to find information across the organisation. So in essence we have conveniently replaced holding documents in file shares that are hard to manage and find, with documents held in ad-hoc ways in SharePoint that are hard to manage and find.

Is this progress?

To compound this problem, "collaboration" isn't just for team projects. Document libraries, to-do lists and news are just as valuable for the Marketing Department to organize their work and support joint collaborative action on a day-to-day basis.

Fortunately there are answers and ways of retaining the free spirit and flexibility of a SharePoint approach along with structure and discipline, when it really adds value.

What This Chapter Is About

There are three disciplines that create an approach to SharePoint that delivers business value over the long-term: Stewardship, Information Design, and Managing Content Over Time. All too often, these disciplines are not well understood by those using SharePoint or giving SharePoint technical advice.

Stewardship creates the right combination of control and flexibility, so users thrive in the SharePoint information and knowledge environment they and their colleagues have created. If we do this right, we don't have a SharePoint system, we have a SharePoint movement that spearheads ongoing business improvement.

Sustainable Information Design is not about server specifications, server farm configuration, and a host of three letter acronyms. It is about the "simpler" stuff: What metadata fields and pick lists should we create? What options do we provide to allow people to find information? What does our overall site structure look like when we have hundreds of sites? Is anyone able to design the structure of a business site, or are there standards and templates for sites?

Finally, **Managing Content Over Time** ensures that valuable content created during collaboration remains accessible and findable over time. Successful management also covers weeding out content of transitory value from that which has longer term value. Business drivers satisfied here include record keeping, e-discovery, knowledge sharing and spurring innovation.

This chapter could be a book. There are a lot of ideas in this chapter spread over a range of diverse topics. And the view is at a fairly high level—think of the difference between looking at the trees in a forest from a helicopter as compared to walking at ground level. Before moving ahead with the ideas that this chapter offers, you will need to do further research and investigation. This chapter provides a starting point.

What This Chapter is Not About

This chapter is not about the technical work of the IT Department. While it's tempting to try and cover all aspects of SharePoint, our sense is that the following IT-focused topics are already well catered for through books, Microsoft MVPs, courses and consulting services:

- **Technical Configuration**. How to figure out how many servers are required to support SharePoint, how they should be configured, how SharePoint integrates into the rest of the IT infrastructure, and how to support to disaster recovery. These themes are really important and someone within IT needs to take a close look at them.

- **Ongoing Management**. How to set up and maintain permissions on sites, when to run backups, and what administration processes are required. Again, these are very important and IT needs to manage them.

- **External Access**. How to allow external people to use SharePoint. There are a handful of ways this can be achieved, but the discussion quickly becomes very technical. Organizations can also consider hosted services for SharePoint as a convenient and reliable way to support cross-organizational collaboration.

Why Co-Authored? Introducing Grant Margison

When the manuscript for Seamless Teamwork was almost complete, Grant Margison of Information Leadership offered to read it and provide feedback. One of the comments he made was that it needed a "Chapter 12", to talk about the wider issues when using SharePoint for team collaboration in the enterprise. My expertise, interest and consulting focus on supporting business teams to be effective with online collaboration using SharePoint and other products. Grant's expertise, interest and consulting focus on stewardship, information design, and managing content over time. And so it made incredible sense to make this chapter a collaborative endeavour—combining what I'm good at with what Grant's good at—and ultimately leading to a chapter that is of higher quality for readers of Seamless Teamwork.

To learn more about Information Leadership, see www.informationleadership.com.

The Plan for Chapter 12

There are three sections in Chapter 12, each one addressing in turn the three main areas that we highlighted above: Stewardship, Information Design, and Managing Content Over Time.

Stewardship: Balancing Control and Flexibility

One of the key drivers of adoption of SharePoint in organizations is its user friendliness and flexibility. While too much flexibility leads to information anarchy and chaos, too little flexibility leads to users being switched off from using SharePoint, and a command-and-control mentality putting the brakes on business improvement. Hence a balance point must be found. Consider this cautionary tale:

> ***No Good Deed Goes Unpunished: Giving HR What They Want***
>
> *HR requests a new metadata field for tracking the qualifications people have, when they apply for a new job. Sounds reasonable. Let's go one stage further and create a content type for recruitment CV's. While we are at it, let's have specific metadata for offers of employment and reference checks. Wonderful, the HR people are going to be really happy!*
>
> *Before we start the celebration, we need to realise that we have just let the genie out of the bottle. Word soon gets around and now 49 other business activities apart from recruitment want their own metadata fields and content types. After all their needs are quite different, and, well, unique. So now we have 200-400 metadata fields and one hundred content types—this is a real growth industry!*
>
> *Have you spotted the problem? When a user goes to advanced search, they will need to select from 200-400 metadata fields. They end up searching for the metadata to search! Before long, you have reinforced the siloed way of working and made it next to impossible to find information based on metadata.*
>
> *Was there a silver bullet we missed? Yes. The first thing to say to HR is "yes" we can meet your need. In this particular case, we can set up the keyword field that is already in our standard design, and for the recruitment document library, or possibly the CV library, we can have keywords being qualifications. The best designs then minimize unique metadata use by reusing a small number of multi-purpose fields, as well as using document titles and narrative effectively.*

Such a cautionary tale doesn't just happen in our nightmares! We are confident that this gruesome story is being replayed across the world many times a day. In a recent hands-on training event run by Information Leadership, we gave each of four teams the same assignment: "Set up a project site and create some content in it." After the teams had finished, we used a simple third party tool to look at the content across the four sites, and hardly anything matched! Some teams used one library for all documents, while one team used a library for each part of the project's lifecycle. Some teams used

folders, and others didn't. All teams used metadata, but with a different number of fields and pick list items.

The key is control (to get the most from SharePoint) AND flexibility (to get the most from SharePoint). This balancing act is what good stewardship is all about—or what others frequently call "governance". This means delivering on:

- **The Hard Stuff**, like guidelines, rules, policies, templates and procedures that are put in place to make something work. We live under governance situations all the time—bylaws about buildings on our properties, speed limits on our roads, emission limits for our factories, and more.
- **The Soft Stuff**. We don't want just a SharePoint "system", we want a SharePoint ***movement***. This is how we energize the use of SharePoint and keep it as a driving force of business improvement, as well as a key mechanism for daily delivery of information, know-how, peers and expertise at our fingertips.
- **The Folding Stuff**, which is about getting and maintaining sufficient funds and resources to fuel SharePoint as a source of business improvement.

Information Partners

In Grant Margison and Sarah Heal's "Flapping to Flying" book on information management, they coin a phrase called "Information Partners". The idea behind information partners is that in using a technology like SharePoint, a wide range of needs beyond just IT need to be catered for. See Figure 12-1.

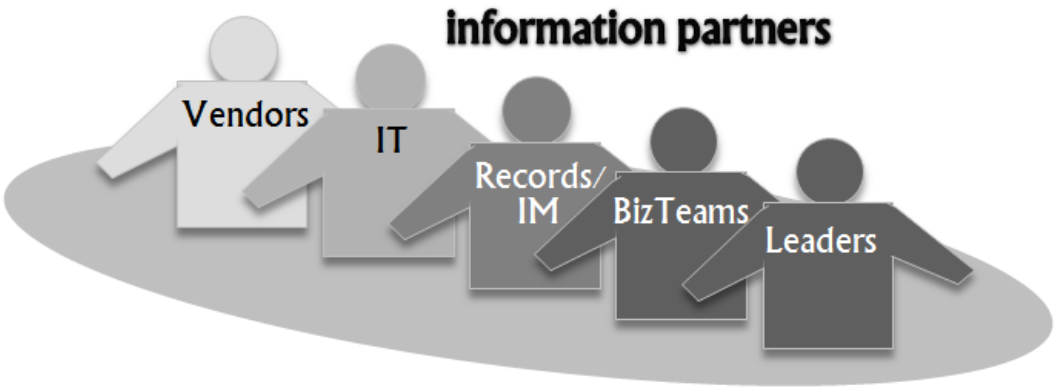

FIGURE 12-1 Information partners are the many people who are involved in a system

The information partners usually consist of:

- **Vendors and consultants**, who help get the strategy and detail right.
- **Internal IT Professionals**, who operate the infrastructure and keep it fast, reliable and secure.

- **Recordkeeping and Information Managers**, who help ensure that the documents and lists that have ongoing value can be accessed over the long haul, and the clutter of transitory material is regularly cleaned up.

- **Business Teams**, who need to understand the potential of SharePoint and how to avoid using SharePoint for activities that would be better accomplished using another technology. They need to take accountability for how their people use the information assets created.

- **Business Leaders**, who finance the development of the infrastructure and use SharePoint as a means of implementing cultural change. E.g., facilitating easy sharing of information and knowledge (to bring new people up to speed and breaking down silo barriers), giving people access to information, know-how, peers and experts (so they can make better decisions), reducing face-to-face meetings and the burden of email by using SharePoint sites, and bringing together business performance measures and escalations in simple and meaningful ways (to create focus and transparency in the organization).

- **SharePoint Strategy and Steering Group.** A subset of the information partners need to be responsible for setting how SharePoint is exploited and controlled in the organization. Key themes for this group include setting the business vision for SharePoint, securing funding, determining the fit between collaborative work and the wider enterprise content strategy, and energizing the SharePoint movement. Other themes—that we'll address in subsequent sections of this chapter—are recordkeeping and managing knowledge, and creating and maintaining an information design.

Resourcing and Budget

As with any system, Microsoft SharePoint introduces numerous initial and ongoing costs—both financial and behavioral—to an organization:

- Upfront fees payable to Microsoft for SharePoint server software and user licenses (e.g., the Enterprise CAL for end users), along with ongoing maintenance and support charges.

- Initial consulting fees payable to external SharePoint consultants for the implementation and deployment of SharePoint. Customization and integration work in the future will incur additional costs.

- Ongoing salary and overhead for new employees hired to take responsibility for the day-to-day operations of the SharePoint environment. In many countries, experienced SharePoint staff are difficult to find and afford, and if it's not possible to find suitable staff, then your organization will need to invest in training current staff to manage SharePoint.

- The behavioral costs associated with requisite changes in work practices from every employee in the organization that is henceforth required to use SharePoint.

These many costs—payable both immediately and in perpetuity until SharePoint is removed—are significant. Thus the absolutely first step when investigating SharePoint is to be clear on the business reasons for doing so.

Business Vision for SharePoint

The Strategy and Steering Group needs to articulate the business vision for the implementation and use of SharePoint.

Well-run organizations have explicitly stated business goals, such as the increase of revenue in the next 36 months. Against each business goal are a number of direct strategy initiatives, which SharePoint can enable directly or indirectly. For example, senior executives may have decided to grow revenue by expanding into new geographical markets, an initiative which SharePoint can enable through facilitating secure information sharing between the new remote offices and the head office.

Four additional common business goals, and an example of the role SharePoint might take within an organization toward the realization of these business goals are outlined in Figure 12-2.

BUSINESS GOAL	THE ROLE OF SHAREPOINT
To enhance the customer service experience	Employees interacting with customers can effectively share their new learnings about a specific customer's preferences with other employees—the level of personalized service received by the customer increases, which enhances customer loyalty.
To deliver new products and services to market faster	Project team members can share draft documents without using email and keep everyone on the same page with milestones and individual tasks—elapsed time for project work is reduced.
To improve productivity and effectiveness among knowledge workers	Knowledge workers are able to quickly discover other people within their organization who have expertise on a particular topic—productivity and effectiveness is increased. Work does not have to be duplicated.
To streamline the current IT infrastructure	Current infrastructure that is out-dated, unresponsive to current business needs, or composed of a complex collection of point solutions can be replaced with SharePoint—an integrated suite of tools for the next generation of business.

FIGURE 12-2 Link SharePoint to Business Goals

Key point to note: **The achievement of identified business goals over time is the critical measure of an organization's success with SharePoint**[1].

Fit between Collaborative Work and the Wider Enterprise Content Strategy

Collaborative work is only one part of content use in organizations. Looking at the lifecycle of content in organizations shows that the collaborative development of content happens in the early stages of the lifecycle, which gives way to publication for use and reference by others over time. During the collaborative development stage, people work together to create and refine a document or presentation. After the document or presentation is finished and published, other people access it. The system needs to manage access to the material and ensure that it is archived at an appropriate time.

Seamless Teamwork is mainly focused on how to effectively use SharePoint during the upfront collaborative development stage, although Chapter 9 does talk about how project teams should tidy up their project spaces at the end of a collaborative project and publish key content to other places for wider access. At a policy level—the focus of the Strategy and Steering Group—there needs to be a clear set of guidelines about these points of connection. This includes:

- Guidance on when team collaboration sites are set for closure.
- The key applications into which content is published, for wider access by others in the organization.
- The pre-requisites for publishing content into organizational spaces, such as the existence of particular metadata.
- The key applications in the organization that contain organizational know-how on projects and processes, and strategies for keeping these applications current and of high value.
- How to encourage connections between people who have needs for expertise and expertise to offer.
- The roles and responsibilities of site owners and site users. E.g., in Chapter 9 of Seamless Teamwork, the owner of the Inner Team site—Roger Lengel—was responsible for cleaning out the site at the end of Project Delta.
- The trigger for creating new sites. Can they be created ad hoc, or do they have to be tied to business projects?

[1] Setting the Business Vision for SharePoint is step one of the six steps in the SharePoint for Business research report, released May 2007. The material in this chapter on Business Vision was extracted from the SharePoint for Business report. See http://resources.michaelsampson.net/2008/02/sfb.html for the other five steps.

- SharePoint's role within the overall IT strategy for the business. This includes the elements of the IT strategy that SharePoint fulfils directly (e.g., team collaboration sites), as well as how SharePoint integrates with other IT systems.

Energizing the SharePoint Movement

Another subset of Information Partners champions the use of SharePoint as a platform for business improvement. The people in this group bring different perspectives to bear on how best to take advantage of the technology of SharePoint. This is a "community of passion", where those participating become the "go to" people for your innovation or issue. Super-users, business analysts and information architects form the basis of this group, with potentially some business leaders to encourage innovation through smart technology use. While this sounds like an informal group, it requires real budgets of time and money. This enables those involved to undertake key activities such as:

- Educating departments and teams on the potential of SharePoint.
- Tailoring and customizing the technology capabilities of SharePoint to the needs of business departments.
- Training and mentoring staff to use SharePoint effectively in their work—often at their desk.
- Examining the fit between current business processes and SharePoint, and implementing process change to either enhance the process due to capabilities offered by SharePoint, or to pull-back on the scope of the process based on limitations in what SharePoint offers.

Documenting "Our Way with SharePoint"

It is good to have a shared and common understanding of how an organization plans to make effective use of SharePoint, and a clear contributor to this shared understanding is a document that states the decisions made on the above roles, groupings, and underlying thinking. Since we're talking about "information and knowledge sharing", we can use a SharePoint wiki as a living document to state what was initially agreed, and track the changes made over time. This would include a section for frequently asked questions, news about SharePoint, people to contact for SharePoint questions, and other useful links.

The community of passion will use blogs and the resulting dialogue as ways of connecting ideas and people and keeping things moving. They can feature stories about how different business teams are using SharePoint for collaboration and other business purposes, thereby spreading ideas and encouraging the diffusion of innovation and learning.

Sustainable Information Design

Information design is a discipline that considers how to design places and spaces for information to be created, stored and accessed. And it's sustainable when the ideas are sufficiently robust to handle changing times. Sustainable information design addresses questions such as:

- What metadata fields and pick lists should we create?
- What options do we provide to allow people to find information?
- What does our overall site structure look like when we have hundreds of sites?
- Is anyone able to design the structure of a business site, or are there accepted standards and templates?

These aren't merely academic questions—there are actually answers, but they come from other disciplines that aren't usually associated with projects and collaborative workspaces. The first associated discipline is **record keeping**. The issues we face when we have more sites and libraries than employees are similar to what record keepers face in trying to figure out how to file information, how long to keep it for, and how to allow people to find it for different purposes in different ways over time.

The second associated discipline is information design usually associated with **electronic document and records management systems**, or EDRMS. Most people think of EDRMS as a rude five letter acronym—they are expensive, heavy duty systems for managing documents, that are not particularly flexible, and most are notoriously hard to use! But … the design principles you apply in implementing an EDRMS are exactly what is needed to stop a SharePoint implementation turning into spaghetti.

Drawing on our experience with these two associated disciplines, there are seven key themes when undertaking information design for SharePoint:

- Defining roles;
- Creating a taxonomy for sites and sub-sites;
- Setting up a small number of global metadata fields;
- Establishing a small number of content types, to differentiate information that has very different metadata;
- Designing a set of templates for business projects;
- Customizing templates and creating custom SharePoint applications; and
- Catering for different foraging styles and business needs through various findability tactics.

Let's take each in turn, although we'll deal with the final theme of findability in the "Managing Content Over Time" section.

Roles (Who Does What)

To get the information design right, it is useful to divide those involved into four categories

1. **Users.** The people who use the sites, lists and libraries. By this we mean their focus is on filing and adding more content, as well as accessing content. To start an analogy, they make toast using the SharePoint toaster. It has the odd knob and dial they use to personalize things, but on the whole they use SharePoint "as is, where is" to do their work. For Project Delta, this was people like Nancy Anderson, Robert O'Hara, Shannon Kempe and Gregory Verny.

2. **Super-Users.** The people who are enthusiastic about SharePoint and aim to get maximum benefit from it. This includes enhancements like adding views to personalize how information is presented or found, but it falls short of changing basic site or library designs. Super-users are also empowered to add template lists and libraries—that is the designs that have already been created and are treated like building block pieces. This describes Roger Lengel at the start of Project Delta.

3. **Business Analysts.** In addition to the changes a super-user can make, Business Analysts (BAs) are people that have the skills and experience to add custom lists to a site. A custom list is information already held in tabular form—such as a roster, an approved contractor list, or a list of books in the technical library. That is, the custom lists tend to be one-off information sources that are specific for a team or business activity, and are unlikely to have implications for sharing or aggregating content elsewhere. BAs are also good at understanding a particular business process or need and determining what combination of standard SharePoint templates and principles can be applied. By the end of Project Delta, Roger Lengel had started to play in this area. If the task-at-hand needs bigger changes—such as the writing of custom code or the development of SharePoint features—then the Business Analyst passes the requirements to the fourth level.

4. **Information Management Architect.** This is one person or a group that has an overall view of the information design in SharePoint. They are the guardians of responsible growth, and ensure that local customizations will not lead to downstream problems. They report to and are supported by the SharePoint Strategy and Steering Group.

While this four-level approach sounds sensible, there are a few "gotchas" to look out for:

- You can not merely give people a label and expect them to stick to it. The users will want to do super-user activities, who in turn will want to become Business Analysts, who in turn will want to make decisions that only the Information Architect can make. Thus you need to use a combination of SharePoint permissions to stop them from exceeding their level of empowerment as well as monitoring what configuration options are changed by whom.

- You need people with the right personas and expectations in each role, and you need to cultivate the right experiences for each. For instance, it's going to be a disaster sending a super-user or business analyst off to the annual Microsoft TechEd conference where they will learn to do the things the architect needs to do.

- You need to make the right compromises. For a gruesome reminder of getting this wrong, refer back to our opening tale about HR, metadata fields and content types.

Taxonomy

Taxonomy is a way of logically organizing business activities into a hierarchy—it's got nothing to do with the IRS or hierarchies of plant species in this case! For instance, your top two levels within SharePoint may look like the Fourth Coffee structure, as shown in Figure 12-3.

FIGURE 12-3 Create a taxonomy in SharePoint to enable sites, lists and libraries to be added logically and orderly.

A structure of this nature is very helpful, as it means that when Roger Lengel from Marketing wants a project site set up, it can be placed as a sub-site of "promotions", which is a sub-site of Marketing. Over time, additional sites and content are added. What starts off as the equivalent of an empty subdivision with all services available (e.g., the main streets of Marketing, Shops, and Support) becomes a thriving information resource that stays logically sound and easy for people to navigate.

The hierarchy usually doesn't end at two levels. For instance under recruitment we may have "case files" for each job being recruited, and/or a sub-site for each team, plus a place to hold our standard documentation. It may be that recruitment is controlled centrally—that is the advertising for a new job and the forms to fill out when requesting a new position—but the hard work is actually done in the local shops. So should recruitment be under the "Shops" area of the taxonomy, or under "Support"? You start to see the complexity here!

How do you decide what the taxonomy looks like for your organization? This is where record keeping and EDRMS skills can be helpful. They help you ask the right questions and test out your proposed hierarchies. Key strategies and tactics include:

- **KIS (Keep It Simple)**. Use words and phrases that are likely to have the same meaning over time. For instance, use "Recruitment" and not a buzzword like "Talent Acquisition" or "New Crew".

- **Test with Real Things**. Stand by the golden rule—there is a logical home for EVERY document and email. Building taxonomies is not a merely theoretical activity—you actually need to test them with real documents and real people.

- **Watch for Security and Audience Needs**. We could put all recruitment-related documents in one document library for the organisation, but how do we deal with confidentiality? A division of the Recruitment Document Library into a series of more focused libraries may be more appropriate. While document libraries can have very large numbers of documents, smaller libraries more tuned to particular audiences are usually a better way of going.

- **Remember the Exclusions**. You don't need to fit all descriptors about a document or list item into the taxonomy. For instance, all Document Libraries are likely to have a metadata field called "Document Type". Within that, use a pick list to differentiate different types of documents—e.g., report, meeting, presentation, or agreement. By using pick lists, you don't need taxonomy entries with these headings.

- **Approach Design from Both Ends.** Think "top-down" and "bottom-up". Top-down means how people see the business in plain language: We do this (set up stores) and this (operate them) and this (market them). "Bottom-up" means talking with teams about what they do and the documents they handle.

- **Negotiate with Real Items**. Building a taxonomy is a negotiation. When you have a disagreement, shift it away from conceptual arguments and ask to see the document that doesn't fit in the current taxonomy.

Metadata

The key to success with metadata is "Less, used more, is better than more". That is, if you force people to enter too much metadata they won't. When this happens no one—not even those that have been very conscientious—will benefit because people can't trust any views of the lists or libraries that are based on the incomplete metadata.

SharePoint allows you to create global metadata fields with standard pick lists. This can be great at gaining consistency in data entry, but there are traps to avoid. An example is you want a global pick list but need to have different default values in different places. SharePoint does not support this. You also need to be careful when using global lists that if you move an item to another location, if the global lookup is different, the data will be lost.

What is the right level of metadata to embrace? Here are some tips from battle-hardened experience:

- **Metadata Must Be Immediately Useful**. While this sounds obvious, many designs are filled with "Just in Case" metadata. E.g., contracts that have metadata for the start date, end date, parties, contract value, and more. If people will be using this metadata to filter, browse and summarize contracts, specific metadata fields may be helpful. But if you only need to see it once you've opened the document, the smart use of the document's title and narrative is a better approach.

- **Support Findability**. Focus use of metadata on how it helps us "find" items. For example, the Document Type field we talked about above is great, because when we are looking for a specific document, we almost always know it was a "report" or "agreement".

- **Support Long Term Value**. Focus use of metadata on how it helps us "keep" items. In Grant's consulting business the following works well. They use a "Business Value" field that allows a document or presentation to be tagged with one of four values: Housekeeping (remove after 12 months, e.g., rough notes), Normal (keep it for at last 3 years after the project has finished, e.g., file notes and working drafts), Long Term Value (keep it and manually appraise when it is not longer useful, e.g., formal agreements, final copies of reports), and Long Term Value—Strategic (keep it until it is deleted, and allow people to search for "Strategic", e.g., a keynote presentation or proposal).

- **Support Key Themes**. Use metadata to help with finding "theme" data that applies across the organization. This can be used for scoped searches or views, or reporting services online analysis. For Fourth Coffee this might include "State or Country", "Key supplier name", or "Shop ID number".

- **Simplify Metadata Creation**. Some metadata will need to be manually entered by the content creator. However, quite a lot of metadata can be inferred by where users put documents. For example, documents and images placed in the "Marketing Promotions" document library don't need to have "Marketing Promotions" as metadata created by users. This metadata can be inherited directly from the library.

- **Avoid Folders**. Avoid the use of folders in SharePoint; use metadata instead. The problem with folders is that the folder name can't be readily accessed unless you view the documents or list

items with the folder view turned on. For example, if you want to view a list of recently changed items across multiple libraries, then this will be sorted based on the modified date. The folder information is not available—thus eliminating key contextual information used to make sense of the individual documents. One legitimate use of folders can be to have a place to put more sensitive material. For instance a team leader can have a "Confidential" folder that only they have access to, while her colleagues can see all other documents in the library.

Content Types

Content types were introduced with SharePoint 2007, and offer a number of great functions including template distribution and workflow standardization. However, as is frequently the case with new technical capabilities, content types have been overused in initial implementations. Because each content type can have specific associated metadata, the complexity of the SharePoint implementation rapidly increases, and often with large numbers of metadata fields that business analysts think will be useful, but in practice are not. Some of their strengths and weaknesses are noted in Figure 12-4.

Content Types can have	Gives you	But watch…
Different metadata	Specific descriptors for a particular business process, form or activity	Overuse of this, resulting in hundreds of metadata fields
Defined template	Ability on "New" to open a predefined template	Not really a great template option if you have lots of them – the pick list and other complexities makes this hard to maintain and interact with
Defined workflow actions	Approval or other workflow on item creation	Too many of these…

FIGURE 12-4 Strengths and weaknesses of Content Types

We have three main suggestions with respect to Content Types:

- Have a master electronic Document content type and one sub-content type for Word, Excel and PowerPoint documents. This gives the user the convenience of starting a new file directly from a SharePoint library in each of the major Microsoft Office formats.

- Have a content type for email messages. With an add-on extension product like Colligo Contributor, you can automatically capture email metadata values—for instance, "To", "From", "CC", "Subject" and "Sent"—when you drag-and-drop the email into a document library in Outlook 2007. If you drag-and-drop email from Outlook to a document library without the use of Colligo Contributor, the original metadata is lost.

- If you are using SharePoint to support a business process with high volumes of documents, specific metadata requirements, and specific workflow rules, then set up a content type for it.

Standard Templates for Projects and Other Activities

To encourage people to use the capabilities of SharePoint in a common way, create standard templates. These should combine your decisions about taxonomy, metadata and content types into templates that are useful across the organization for projects and other common activities, such as Announcements, Useful links, Contacts, Issues Registers, and Document Libraries.

For projects, you can package a combination of these lists and libraries into say three templates—for small, medium and large projects (the site we created in Chapter 3 could become the small or medium-sized project template). In terms of common activities, Fourth Coffee is likely to need a standard template for setting up a new store. The template would have places to put information that will be collected during the activity, but also key know-how that those building, developing and opening the store can use to create more consistency across new store openings.

Here are some information design guidelines to consider in your development of standardized templates, particularly for larger and more complex projects:

- *Multiple Lists and Libraries of the Same Type*. Multiple lists and libraries of the same type will be set up within a given SharePoint site, oriented to different groups and users within the overall project. For example, multiple Document Libraries will be used rather than just one. Either one group will use one document library in the SharePoint site, and a second group will use a second document library, or different types of documents will be stored in different document libraries. This provides better alignment of metadata to types of groups or types of documents, easier setting of access privileges, and other benefits.

- *Sub-Sites in the Inner Team Site*. The Inner Team site that we created in Chapter 3 will have a set of sub-sites for different phases or components of the project. Therefore, rather than delivering a multi-phase project out of a single Inner Team site, the different phases have their own sub-sites and the associated group working on the various parts use that site for their work.

- *Greater Use of Custom Lists*. More Custom Lists will be created in the various SharePoint sites, to support different requirements for data gathering and analysis. Many valuable lists are to be found in Microsoft Excel spreadsheets and tables in Microsoft Word documents within your organization. These can be easily published, maintained and selectively accessed and edited across the total user base. List examples include rosters, approved suppliers, jobs or proposals outstanding, fees structures, lists of archived records, and technical journals available.

- *Cross-Site Aggregation*. Cross-site aggregation for a programme-level view of sub-projects will become more important. For example, project issues, risks and milestones will be created at a project level, with roll-up aggregation to give an overall view of status across multiple projects.

- *Knowledge Sharing*. Team members will want access to a body of knowledge about how projects are done, and the various stages involved in doing collaborative work. This enables access to

good practice ideas, as well as the identification of people that have expertise that can be tapped to support current project work.

- *Greater Use of Metadata*. Metadata will be used to a greater extent to classify both traditional documents and wiki pages. For example, a metadata column added to a wiki and its views enables the pages in the wiki to be sorted and grouped at a page collections level, rather than having to navigate through the wiki pages and its inherent navigation structure.

Guidelines for Custom Development

To get the most business benefit from SharePoint, you may want to consider custom development, or the use of third party extension products. One of the biggest problems that occurs with custom development, though, is the "hammer-nail" problem. If you are getting advice from an internal IT developer team or external vendor, and they have lots of software developers ready and waiting, then every problem ("the nail") you put to them looks like a job for their "hammer".

On far too many occasions, simpler solutions based on either better information design, the use of out-of-the-box functionality, or the purchase of a third party extension product is the way to go.

It is important to operate within the framework that SharePoint is a "platform" that you can leverage in your business, rather than an out-of-the-box product that you can put to immediate use. However, there is an overhead once you start customizing SharePoint templates and designing your own applications, as they then have to be maintained in perpetuity. Future upgrades of SharePoint from Microsoft may break what you have done, but regardless, it's up to you to keep the applications running effectively, and meeting the current and emerging needs of the people in your organization.

Four points of direction:

- *Create Guidelines for Design and Development*. Set organization-wide development guidelines so that all developers are working on the same design ideas.

- *Promote Reuse*. Re-use as many custom constructs as possible, to make future upgrades easier.

- *Budget for Ongoing Upgrades of Applications*. When you create a custom application in SharePoint, know that it has become your responsibility (or the vendors) to keep up-to-date and in line with current business requirements. You will need a plan and a budget line item for upgrading these applications over time.

- *Be Wary of Template Customization*. Template customization is a "last resort" option for the Information Architect's role or group to decide on. If you really need to customize one of the out-of-the-box templates, follow Microsoft's development guidelines for doing so.

Managing Content Over Time

When content is first created, the individual author or the group involved have a high awareness of the nature of the content, where to find it, and its value to the organization. As time moves on and the content is published internally and made accessible for wider readership, challenges of managing content over time becomes critical. How do you find what you worked on last year? How do others find what you worked on? This section looks at a number of ways for improving the management of content over time.

Findability

Many people think that a "Google box" would solve all of their problems with finding documents and information inside the organization. Google-style searches are good for when we are happy to "suffice"—in other words, to take a search result that is sufficient to our requirements, but not necessarily perfect. But "sufficing" doesn't meet all needs. If you are in a new city on business and want to eat Italian tonight, then a Google "suffice" type search makes sense. You would be able eat Italian from the first two pages of search results and it should be very good. But is it the best? Is it the closest? The most authentic? Maybe, maybe not—but it is good enough.

Now compare this to the normal problem in business when you are looking for something. Back at Fourth Coffee, Kelly Rollin wants to find the May 2008 management report for the Boston shop. Sufficing is not sufficient here—Kelly is looking for "the" specific report—not the report for another store, another date, or a previous version—she wants the latest approved report.

Grant Margison and Sarah Heal, in their new book "Info Overload to Info Power"[2] talk about the Findability Diamond and how an organization's information design must address all four areas. See Figure 12-5.

[2] See www.ageofnow.com to learn more about *Info Overload to Info Power*.

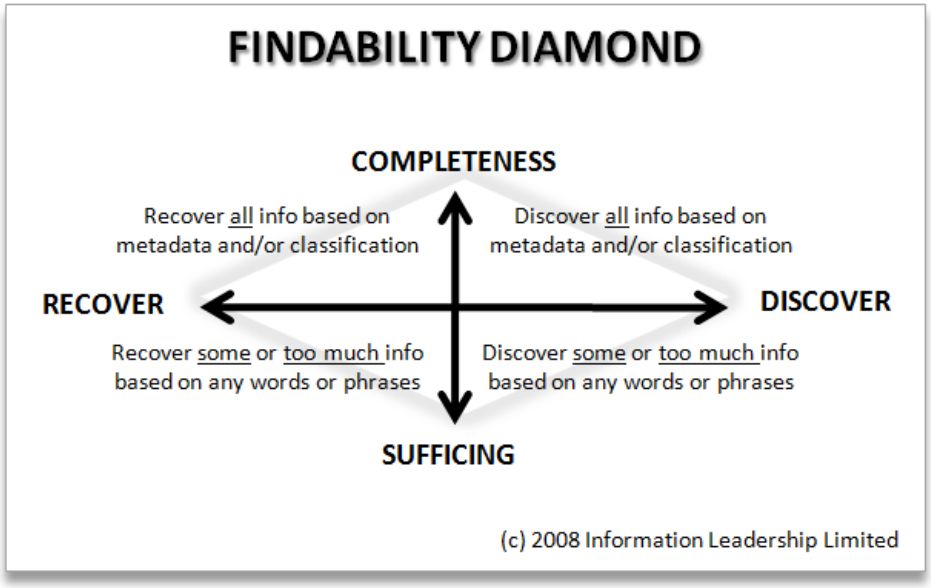

FIGURE 12-5 The four areas in the Findability Diamond

Finding something is divided along two dimensions:

1. **Recover vs. Discover**. When we know something specific exists and we want to recover it, versus when we hope something meeting our criteria can be discovered.

2. **Sufficing vs. Completeness**. When we can suffice, knowing that what is returned has to be just "good enough", versus when we want "completeness", that is, all information or authoritative information.

It is interesting to reflect that often sufficing arises not because of information shortage, but because of information overload—too many returns and no easy way of removing the ones that are irrelevant.

Combining these two dimensions gives us four combinations. For each combination, there are particular techniques that are better suited to the needs at hand. This is not to say that one technique cannot be used in all areas of the Findability Diamond, but rather that certain techniques, by their nature, work better than others for particular tasks. In practice, SharePoint or any another content technology needs to cater for all areas. Here is a summary of how SharePoint can be designed to allow this to happen (see Figure 12-6).

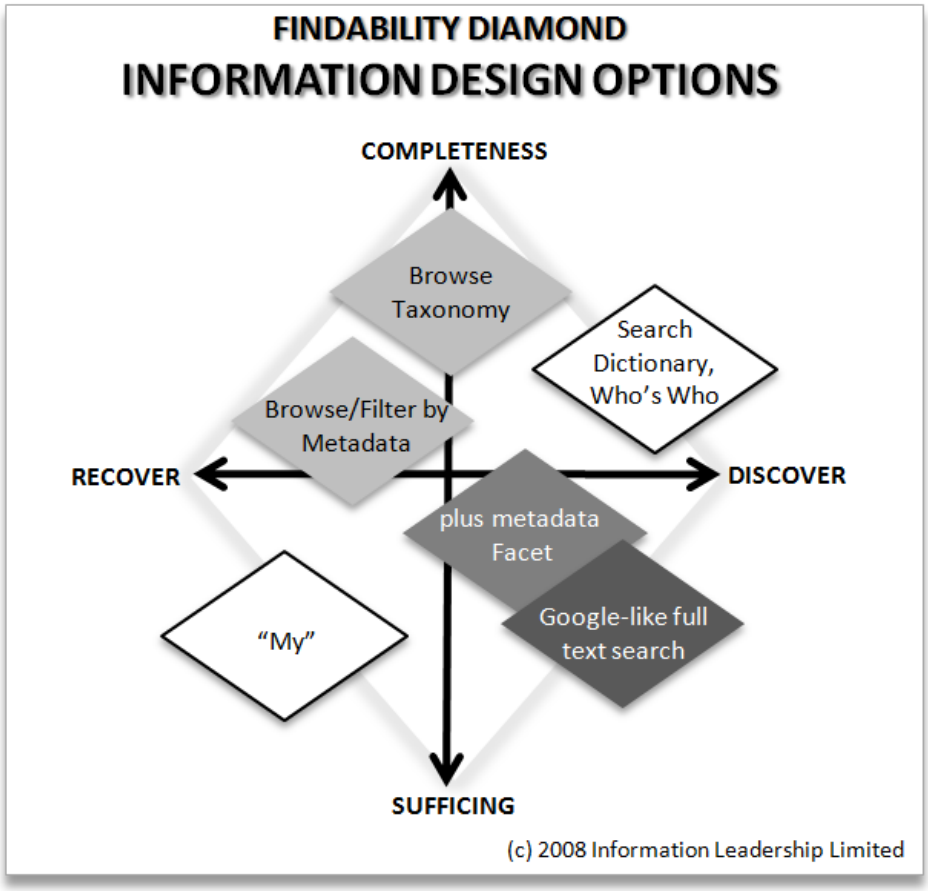

FIGURE 12-6 Information design options in SharePoint for the Findability Diamond

Let's consider each of these approaches.

Browse Taxonomy

The "Browse Taxonomy" option is achieved in SharePoint by using site and sub-site lists to logically browse to document libraries, and then use views within the libraries to find the appropriate document. The best use of this option is when completeness is required, whether you know that the content exists or not, and when you are not necessarily familiar with the structure of the organization.

This option is good for finding all authoritative information on a business activity or project, but is not so good for finding all references everywhere. For instance, to find the sales reports for a Fourth Coffee store, Kelly Rollin may step down the taxonomy hierarchy of:

Stores > North > Queensberry > Management > Reports

Search Dictionary; Who's Who

The "Search Dictionary; Who's Who" option is achieved in SharePoint by setting up lists or wikis with one row or one page per information asset, then allowing this information to be filtered, grouped, sorted, or scoped search. You can also use "Best Bets" search to capture keywords or phrases and take

users directly to authoritative content. It is best to use this option as a discovery tool, because it looks at the information asset level instead of the individual document level. People are likely to get complete results as this will point you to authoritative information and people who were involved.

This option is good for finding activities, projects or other information assets where the creator of the asset has described what the asset holds and who was involved. It is not so good for finding one-off documents of merit that are scattered around.

> *Chapter 3 in Seamless Teamwork talks about how to use the Announcements list in the "Everyone Else" site to provide insight into the purpose of the site. This could be done at a different level too. You could create a custom list in a specific SharePoint site for people to register new SharePoint sites, to describe the site's purpose, its business unit alignment, keywords, people involved, and more. This would provide a single rich view of the sites that exist in the organization, and allow people to browse and navigate through the list using the search dictionary approach.*

As an example, consider Denis Dehenne. Denis works for a global engineering consultancy. He is about to start a project on designing a new ventilation system for hospital wards. Denis accesses the "Dictionary" of project sites and searches on keywords "sustainable", "hospital", and "ventilation". This returns a list of projects around the world that have been done in the last five years. He reads the narrative of a number of these and then decides to review two projects. He also notes that Amy Strande has been involved in a few of the projects that sound relevant. He contacts her for advice.

Google-Like Full Text Search

A Google-like full text search can be achieved in SharePoint by using advanced search or a scoped search. These can be extended using faceted search options and other third-party search products. The best use of this approach is as a discovery tool because it can return results based on words in the documents. Faceting by metadata and ranking of search results improves the results that are delivered. People need to treat these types of searches as "sufficing", and then try multiple different searches to get more relevant cuts of the results.

This option is good for finding references to the search terms wherever they exist, but it's quite clumsy if you are trying to find your own documents. Other methods are better for that.

Building on the example above, Denis could search for "sustainable"; "hospital"; "ventilation" across all documents. When over 500 hits are returned, he can narrow this down by filtering on the facets that have been set up. One is the type of document. He chooses "Report" so the hits are now reduced to just the reports. He then chooses "Region" and selects "Pacific" to further reduce the hits returned. Denis now has 15 documents to scan.

"My"

The "My" pattern can be achieved in SharePoint through the use of the "My Links", as it provides quick access to recover commonly used material. The "My" option provides the ability to set up and maintain favorite sites, lists, libraries and individual documents, but it is not a good approach for returning all information.

Let's go back to Denis Dehenne. Denis is looking for work done on a project that he has been involved with. Using the "My" approach, Denis goes to his "My Links" area and browses to find, and then access the project.

Browse/Filter by Metadata or Tag

The "Browse/Filter by Metadata or Tag" approach is achieved in SharePoint by using views in libraries and lists. When information resides in multiple sites, these can be aggregated through third-party aggregation tools, or through a scoped search based on metadata, or by use of reporting services. This approach is best for returning complete browseable lists of information that can be easily grouped, filtered and sorted to find the specific item that you are looking for.

This option is good for finding authoritative content or content with similar metadata, regardless of where it is stored. But it does not make use of full-text search capabilities, so it will only work if the content required is in the document title or metadata.

Denis Dehenne is now after specifications of air conditioners made by a certain vendor. He accesses a query that returns a list based on Document Type equaling "specification", where the title contains the vendor's name (because that is the standard they have agreed at his firm), and where keywords include "air conditioner".

Record Keeping

Over time, a greater number of people will use SharePoint in your organization for a greater variety and number of business processes and activities. The content they create, share and exploit is not only of value to those working directly on it today. It also has value for peers today—how peers can speed up or reduce the risk in what they are doing—and for peers into the future. In some cases, the content may be required for compliance or to prove a particular point. In these cases, the integrity of the records and the SharePoint repositories is vital. In other cases the content holds know-how and valuable lessons that need to be re-used and easily accessible.

Fortunately, standard SharePoint libraries offer the base record keeping functionality—security, the ability to make records read-only, to access records in multiple views, to control versioning, to set metadata, for reporting on changes (auditing), as well as a range of findability approaches. Saying they "can do" this does not mean your design "does" this. This is where help from record keepers or consultancies with this information design speciality is very helpful to enable your designs to have these features consistently enabled.

Further recordkeeping functionality can be gained via:

- **SharePoint Records Center**. The Enterprise Edition of SharePoint 2007 offers integrated records management capabilities for the first time, in the form of the Records Center. Microsoft also offers an optional add-on that provides DoD 5015.2 compliance; the DoD 5015.2 standard for records management is widely followed by government organizations in the United States. Various Microsoft partners around the world have developed SharePoint-based records management solutions that address country-specific requirements.

- **In-Situ to the Current Site.** Content can be managed in the site in which records where captured or created. Workflows can be configured for document libraries. This is a complementary low complexity approach that allows content to be managed in-situ. In this model the document library holds not only the records themselves, but also the content type of the record, record keeping and user metadata, retention and disposal policies, and more.

- **Back ending into an EDRMS.** Most of the common EDRMS now have SharePoint webparts. This does not mean they are all useful—the fit often comes down to the usability of the solution. Some solutions hold the documents in the EDRMS and just show them in SharePoint, while others hold them in SharePoint until they are inactive. At this point at least the more important records are moved to the EDRMS.

The SharePoint Strategy and Steering Group needs to determine which method or methods to adopt. This will depend on the level of compliance functionality and recordkeeping convenience needed, as well as what they are prepared to pay for this functionality.

More on the Records Center

The SharePoint Records Center is a template that ships with the Enterprise Edition of SharePoint, to support regulatory compliance of SharePoint content and content from other systems that is copied into the Records Center. For example, emails from Microsoft Exchange Server 2007 can be copied to the SharePoint Records Center. In this model (as opposed to “In-situ” discussed earlier) SharePoint does not perform records management functions on records where they were generated or created; the content has to be copied into a separate records management repository.

The Records Center offers the following key functionality:

- *Records Routing*. Based on the content type of a document or other item, records can be routed to one of the Document Libraries in the Records Center. For example, “Contract” content types are routed to the Business Contracts document library. This routing is configured and maintained by the organization’s records managers.

- *Expiration Policies*. The Records Center supports the setting of expiration policies, based on Content Type. It will also track any changes to items in the Records Center, enabling auditing and versioning.

- *Legal Holds*. Legal holds can be implemented in the Records Center, accumulating items that are subject to a discovery request, and preventing the deletion of any items subject to that hold if their natural expiration date is reached.

There are some architectural challenges with the Records Center, and it will be interesting to see what direction Microsoft takes the Records Center in the next edition of SharePoint. For example:

- *Disaggregation of Sites*. The Records Center forces the disaggregation of content based on Content Types across different libraries. That is, it stores separate items from a SharePoint site, not a complete site. So at the end of a project, the very structure that held various pieces of content together—the site—is destroyed and the relevant content is extracted and scattered through various places in the Records Center. This is one of the key strengthens of the "in-situ" model instead of using the Records Center.

- *Separate Place*. Rather than securing and managing content as records in collaborative spaces, the design of the Records Center is such that additional copies have to be created (albeit often automatically) in the Records Center.

Email Messages as Business Records

Email messages are one of the biggest recordkeeping risks today! So much of current business is transacted by email. Be careful about getting email into collaborative spaces, as the two default ways of doing so using Outlook 2007—forwarding and drag-and-drop—destroy the original metadata on the email message, replacing it with the details of the person shifting it into SharePoint.

To move email into SharePoint from Outlook and preserve the original metadata at the same time, one option is to use the Colligo Contributor Outlook Add-In from Colligo Networks.

Managing Knowledge

The final topic we will address briefly under the topic of Managing Content Over Time is knowledge management. There are a number of ways where authoritative content can be managed and made available as required:

- Use approval workflows and metadata to separate out the more important authoritative content, which can then be returned on custom pages, through views, scoped searches or third party aggregation extension products.

- Use the "Send To" command on an item in a site to send a copy of a document to another SharePoint site, and maintain the link. If the original document or item is updated, there is an option to automatically update the sibling copies.

- Use wikis as living knowledge bases. Through the use of metadata, these wikis can be made searchable, browseable, as well as surfable.

- Use one or more of the findability approaches previously discussed to access dictionary lookup lists, who's who registers, blogs, lists and all other content as required.

Conclusion

Chapter 12 has provided a whistle-stop tour of some of the key issues involved in the effective stewardship, sustainable information design, and ongoing content management of SharePoint in organizations. There's a lot to do to get these right, and it's essential to the ongoing effectiveness of SharePoint that it is done right.

Let's recap the major themes in Chapter 12:

SharePoint can become a powerful business improvement platform for your organization, or just another out-of control content repository, like file shares, Outlook and Microsoft Access databases.

Stewardship creates the right combination of control and flexibility, so users thrive in the SharePoint information and knowledge environment they and their colleagues have created. This can create a SharePoint movement that spearheads ongoing business improvement.

Sustainable Information Design allows for growth in content and usage, by having logical ways of determining what site structures, metadata, views, templates and findability approaches to allow for.

Managing Content Over Time ensures that valuable content created during collaboration remains accessible and findable over time. Business drivers satisfied here include record keeping, e-discovery, knowledge sharing and spurring innovation.

Go for it! Start a SharePoint movement at your firm!

For More Information

Stewardship and sustainable information design of SharePoint are important aspects of any organization's strategy for success with SharePoint. The following resources may help you formulate your strategy and approach:

- Books, presentations and online resources by Information Leadership's (www.informationleadership.com) Grant Margison and Sarah Heal (www.sarah-heal.com/blog)
- The intranet frameworks and approaches of Step Two Designs (www.steptwo.com.au), Intranet Focus (www.intranetfocus.com), and NetStrategyJMC (www.netjmc.com).
- The SharePoint report from CMS Watch (www.cmswatch.com/SharePoint/Report/).
- Microsoft's online resources on governance with SharePoint[3].

Finally, if you are working with a Microsoft business partner on your SharePoint implementation, explore the ideas, frameworks and concepts they have to offer in this arena.

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[3] See technet.microsoft.com/en-us/office/sharepointserver/bb507202.aspx