



White Paper

The making of the Business Information Management Manifesto

Business Information Management* Manifesto

We are:

the business' co-worker,
not their service provider

We connect:

business processes and IT services
business management and information system users
information policy and its execution

We value:

business process knowledge over technology knowledge
people and collaboration over contracts and procedures
optimal solutions over maximal solutions

** BIM is an organizational capability that helps enterprises to realize short-term and long-term business goals by obtaining access to, and ensuring effective use of, valuable information and IT*

Mark Smalley, 22 February 2016



Inception

During the ASL BSL Foundation's 'Business Information Management Competences' meeting in Utrecht on October 30th 2015, the topic of values arose. The working group discussed how the Agile manifesto (Utah, 2001) captured values and principles that resonated with the community and started a 'movement' that still continues to improve the way software is developed. Similar initiatives are DevOps (Toronto, 2008) and the Service Management Congress (Nashville, 2013).

Given that IT service management is about how the IT service consumer and IT service provider interact and co-create value, the working group would be amiss not to consider the values that help the IT service consumer be a competent IT dancing partner. This is the domain referred to as Business Information Management (BIM).

The first exchanges between members of the working group resulted in a list of values, the most popular being:

- Focusing on business benefits over technological features
- Focusing on information over IT services
- Responding to diversified demand, not pushing standard IT supply
- Preferring workable solutions today over perfect solutions tomorrow
- Being the business' trusted partner, not their order-taker

Community Engagement

The working group decided to involve more members of the ASL BiSL Foundation and asked for opinions on their initial findings in a session on November 23rd in Amsterdam. They scored the list (with one or two additional items) as follows:

- Focusing on business benefits over technological features
- Being the business' trusted partner, not their order-taker
- Being proactive over reactive
- Taking overall responsibility, not blaming IT
- Collaborating with IT, not working in silos
- Taking the lead instead of just following procedures
- Focusing on information over IT services
- Responding to diversified demand, not pushing standard IT supply



- Preferring workable solutions today over perfect solutions tomorrow
- Taking considered action, not impulsive action
- Preferring effective solutions over efficient solutions
- Keeping people informed about progress
- Preferring convenient solutions over comprehensive solutions
- Aligning with power, not org charts
- Positioned as part of the business, not IT
- Responding to change over following a plan
- Preferring simple solution over difficult solutions
- Focusing on services over IT
- Debunking

Expert Refinement

The next step was to discuss these results in a workshop at the ASL BiSL Foundation's annual conference in Bussum on December 10th. This productive session that included many of the 'movers and shakers' in the field of Business Information Management, resulted in additional insights:

- Part of the business, not part of IT
- Longer term business interests over shorter term concerns
- Effectiveness over efficiency
- Organizational capabilities over constructs
- Business representative in IT teams
- Co-worker, not service provider
- Located in the business
- Actively engaged with the business, not behind a desk
- Integrates people and things
- Business experience over IT experience (staff selection)
- Owner over manager
- Trust over skills
- Manage business information at corporate, business process and information system levels
- Manage demand and supply
- Take the lead
- Connect business processes and IT services, and information policy and its execution
- Connect business operations and business management
- Provide clarity in role as IT's customer and point of contact



First Draft

Based on these results, a first version of the BIM Manifesto was shared amongst the movers and shakers and the working group members for improvement.

Business Information Management Manifesto

Business Information Management helps the enterprise to make better use of more valuable information and related technology by connecting demand for, supply of, and use of information systems

BIM is part of the business,
not part of the IT supply function

BIM connects business management and users,
business processes and IT services,
information policy and its execution

BIM actively engages with people,
rather than passively managing processes

BIM values trust more than skills,
ownership more than management,
results more than procedures

BIM is more of an organizational capability
than a construct such as a role or function



Final Cut

During January and February, this version was revised about 10 times, evolving into the first formal version of the BIM Manifesto on March 1st 2016 (see page 1).

For a better understanding, some of the content is explained in more detail.

“BIM”

BIM manifests itself as:

- a domain of activities related to other activity domains such as business processes, application management, IT infrastructure management
- an organizational function executed by people with roles, responsibilities, knowledge, skills, values etc.
- an organizational capability: the ability of the organization to manage business information, fulfilled by a dynamic configuration of human, physical, financial, logical, and informational resources – partial ref: www.takingserviceforward.org

“Business goals” – balancing the success of the organization on the longer term while ensuring continuity on the shorter term

“Obtaining access to, and ensuring use of” – emphasizes demand and use, rather than supply of IT, and positions BIM primarily in the business, not in the IT function, although the IT function also plays an active role in co-creation of value during demand for, and use of, IT services

“Use of information” – collection, use, control (incl. security), dissemination and disposal – ref: BIM Function, Smalley, 2014

“We are the business’ co-worker, not their service provider”

This statement not only reinforces that BIM is part of the business, on the side of demand and use of IT, rather than the supply side, but it also makes an important point about the relationship between the people who fulfil BIM roles, and the business co-workers with whom they interact. Whereas a service consumer-provider relationship is a common way of regarding the relationship between the business and the IT service supply function (in which the business is an ‘order giver’ and the IT function is an ‘order taker’), BIM works together with business managers and business operations to formulate needs and to interact with the IT function on behalf of business managers and users.



“We connect”

“We connect:

business processes and IT services

business management and information system users

information policy and its execution”

These statements about connection describe the main areas that BIM addresses, ensuring that:

- IT services reflect the needs of the business processes, and that value is derived from the information that the IT services and information systems enable
- both top-down and bottom-up concerns are considered while managing information systems
- management and use of information systems is executed in the context of the information strategy, balancing operational and tactical concern with longer-term interests

“We value”

“We value:

business process knowledge over technology knowledge

people and collaboration over contracts and procedures

optimal solutions over maximal solutions”

The core part of the manifesto is the set of values that guide the choices that people make. These pairs of values are formulated in the same way as in the Agile manifesto: “while there is value in the items on the right, we value the items on the left more”.

“We” – anybody who fulfils a BIM task, whether in a dedicated BIM role or as part of a business management role, user role, or IT role.

BIM practitioners need only a limited understanding of technology – enough to be able to interact effectively with their IT partners. Their added value is derived from an in-depth understanding of the business context in which information systems are used. They have often fulfilled roles in business operations or business management. Having a background in IT can be a handicap if they are predominantly supply-oriented thinkers.



“people and collaboration over contracts and procedures” is a compromise of various pairs of values that were considered:

- the BIM practitioner’s ability to foster trust over their ‘technical’ BIM skills
- actively engaging with people over passively managing processes
- taking responsibility and ownership over managing processes
- achieving results over following procedures

“optimal solutions over maximal solutions” started life as “workable solutions today over perfect solutions tomorrow”. This addresses the pitfall of focussing on creating a utopian solution that will take a long time to create and that may even be too ambitious to actually realize. Better to decide to have a ‘minimum viable product’ quickly, and to improve it incrementally. Seeing as “workable” had too strong an association with a poor compromise, “workable-perfect” was replaced by the more generic “optimal-maximal”.

Acknowledgements

The ASL BiSL Foundation is grateful to almost a hundred members who supported the inaugural phase of this initiative by expressing interest and by actively contributing to the content. This first version is intended to stimulate BIM practitioners to think about how they fulfil their role. If they use the manifesto to improve their way of working, the Foundation hopes that they will share their experience with the broader BIM community and the Foundation. This, in turn, will lead to new versions of the manifesto and a movement of engaged BIM practitioners who help enterprises to realize their business goals by better use of business information and IT.

