

Information Management: Getting to the Future*

Dr. Renaldas Gudauskas

Coordinator of the TEMPUS Project 09062-95/97 and
Dean of the Faculty of Communication, Vilnius University
Universiteto g. 3, 2743 Vilnius, Lithuania
www.kf.vu.lt
Tel. 768 953; Fax. 768 957
E-mail: renaldas.gudauskas@kf.vu.lt

Generally applicable principles no longer exist. Whatever is of value today may well prove to be useless tomorrow.

(Person of no importance)

Magnificence,
dear colleagues,
dear guests.

I agree with the project contractor Prof. Peter Blumendorf – in general our project “Education for Information Management in Lithuania” has been successful. I also think that his personal impact to our “happy end” was enormous. Congratulations, Peter, and many thanks.

I will try to present you the general idea of *Information Management* and its possible impact to our Future.

As we started the Project 3 years ago we were lead by the idea of Peter Drucker, that the basic economic resource is no longer capital, nor natural resources, nor labor. It is and will be knowledge. The leading social groups of knowledge society will be knowledge workers – knowledge executives who know how to allocate knowledge to productive use – just as the capitalists knew how to allocate capital to productive use.

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We were trying to broaden the limits of our possibilities by creating rather ambitious future scenarios for the Faculty of Communication, strengthening our strategic position in the academic market by developing research in communication and information science, by establishing new, prospective and competitive study programs. One of them was MA program for Information Management. In this case we were lead by integrated approach to information and communication. It means, that libraries, archives, information centers, information systems, mass media are the vital parts of the communication processes in society.

At that time the Faculty of Communication with a big number of staff members and students participating in TEMPUS mobility programs, becomes a virtual Faculty where communication of ideas and innovation is a crucial factor. We also are recognized as a pilot faculty for the Vilnius University decentralization reform. The role of our faculty is to acquire competence in faculty administration and management and then communicate this knowledge to other faculties. In this context the mission of the Faculty of Communication is to act as an agent of change and innovation for the whole Vilnius University. So, we are going to become truly transdisciplinary, we want to continue strengthening our competitive position and become highly competitive in the world.

The definition of just what is "*information*" is one of the most crucial in the Information Management idea. Before the Information Management concept started to emerge, "information" was defined by each of the information disciplines and professions in a narrow sense to apply to just that discipline. But the concept of Information Management is universal. It applies to all information, whether data or information or knowledge, whether internal or external, whether manual or automated, whether an information source, a service or a system. Organizations should address their responsibilities for information assets in the same way as for other assets, such as property or plant.

The aim of the MA program for Information Management is to train professionals who are qualified to establish, manage, operate and evaluate user oriented information systems and services, to coordinate available internal and external information flows in order to facilitate both work and decision-

making process in the organizations. They possess a broad range of capabilities to meet information needs in different organizations, combine expertise in strategic management of information resources, of information technology, communication, information and computer science.

The key questions now faced by managers are no longer easily answered by traditional Business schools. These include: What is the competition? What are the technologies? What are the issues? What are the key factors for success? What decisions does the company have to make in order to become more competitive? Modern Information Management schools are constructing new knowledge, methods of research and technical approaches. They are more oriented towards managing international diversity, fulfilling a broader social role, thinking on long-term lines and combining a world outlook with global strategies.

Of course, it is all too easy to confuse data with knowledge and information technology with information. That's why we are trying to be ready for education of a new breed of senior managers, who go by the title of "chief knowledge officer", "chief learning officer", "director of intellectual capital" or "director of intellectual asset management". Some global companies as *Coca-Cola*, *General Electric*, *Scandia* and others have already instituted the role. These are senior, wide-ranging positions. In the nearest future companies will increasingly try to differentiate themselves through knowledge – the new source of competitive advantage rather financial capital or natural resources.

According to Vanessa Houlder (*Financial Times*) "the chief knowledge officer is about creating, using, retaining and transferring knowledge – not just data but intellectual capital as it is embodied in people's minds and published work". In our case intellectual capital of organization can be defined as the competence and capabilities of its employees, together with databases, software, manuals, trademarks and organizational structure. As we get even clearer about the pace of transition from the industrial economy to knowledge economy, the chief knowledge officer's position will become a prevalent position for a senior executive in many organizations.

"Since knowledge involves more than IT, the presumption is that companies need a thinking, coordinating role to pull the different aspects of human resources, IT and strategy together", says Michael Earl, professor of Informa-

tion Management at London Business School. He also thinks, that the best chief information officers already do the job of chief knowledge officer. The area of Information Management is indeed broad and difficult, and it opens hidden values that are not visible in traditional organizational management.

The fundamental activities of an information-centered organization are gathering, processing, using, and disseminating information. The leaders of information-centered organization see all organization functions as information-driven. They increase organizational effectiveness by increasing the speed and improving the quality of information use by the people in the organization. Top managers obtain more timely information and use it more quickly. They also reduce system's overload by reducing unnecessary data and increase system response by training organization members to use information properly.

To construct the right strategies for the future, organizations need to know what is happening across changing social, political and economic climates. They also need to be able to formulate hypotheses about the expected future to develop their own strategies. That's why organizations should screen and select mainstream and fringe information, including signals, trends and assumptions about the world a client inhabits today and the factors that will shape it tomorrow.

Information Managers monitor the most dynamic industries and create possible future scenarios. These scenarios, may help decision makers to understand the forces that could impact their business in the future. Strategic change takes place within the context of the external competitive, economic and social environment, and the organization's internal resources, capabilities, culture, structure and systems. In general, the *Integrated Information Management* elements are also aimed at preserving the organization as a whole, committed to the institutional mission.

What of the future? The central economic concern of every nation should be the capacity of its economy to upgrade so that firms achieve more sophisticated competitive advantages and higher productivity. At present our country as a whole has the wrong skills in relation to where our economy should be going in the 21st century. We must fundamentally change the education and training system. The general conclusion is: we must develop Information

Management skills needed to transform Lithuania from commodity-based to knowledge-based economy. In the future we must build a knowledge-based society in which we seek a better quality of life for our citizens. We can do this by creating an environment for competition and integrating Lithuania into the global information society. Our success depends on information backbone we build.

Today's battles are information battles and competitiveness must be our overriding aim. Improving education and training for Information Management at all levels, looking beyond Europe to global markets and allocating resources to information and knowledge we can achieve world-class efficiency and make real progress. Only nations with more advanced information policy and infrastructure will enjoy a critical competitive advantage in the global economy for the next generation.

Informacijos vadyba: kelias į ateitį

Santrauka

TEMPUS projektas padėjo organizuoti Vilniaus universitete visų lygių informacijos vadybininkų mokymą, atitinkantį Europos ir pasaulinius standartus, rengti specialistus, gebančius formuoti ir realizuoti valstybės informacijos politiką, plėtoti informacinę infrastruktūrą, integruoti Lietuvą į pasaulio informacijos visuomenę. Informacijos vadybininkų rengimas yra svarbus Lietuvos ekonomikos plėtotei, jos įsiliesimui į pasaulinę rinką, įvaizdžiui ir ateities pažangai.