



Achieving Perfect “PITCH”

By Sue Rock, CRM

Introduction

Imagine you are sitting with a panel of records experts, in front of a group of keen Data Architects, and you have just 10 minutes to present the value of a retention schedule. And, you can't use any visuals. How would you strive to achieve the perfect pitch?

The theme for this article focuses on a case study of how the long-established fundamental of records management, the records retention schedule, was pitched to a group of Data Architects.

The Opportunity

An opportunity was extended to present, among a panel of records managers, the topic 'Retention Policies and Legal Considerations' to the Alberta Data Architecture Association (ADA)¹ in “10 minutes or less”.

ADA indicated in its outreach that it expected an informal, information sharing session, followed by a social. The invitation specified expectations as illustrated in Figure 1. Stringent as the time allotments were, it was encouraging that the group's leadership had developed an ambitious plan to receive an overview of records management. Three records managers responded enthusiastically to the invitation.

¹ Alberta Data Architecture Association <http://albertadataarchitecture.org/>

The Agenda

	Timing	Topic Outlines
1	10 mins or less	Records management Background & Intro & general aspects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Paper vs. Disk Considerations - Indexing & Ease of Retrieval - Workflow (WF) & WF History and Accountability - Storage, backups & Security - Retention Policies and Legal Considerations Summary: RM is not only about conservation but also about value. Records are expensive to gather and the full value within is often left un-harvested and/or inert.
2	5 mins or less	The state of Records Management in Calgary
3	5 mins or less	Trends in Records Management
4	5 mins or less	Cool Record Management Stories
5	5 mins or less	Record Management Challenges
6	5 mins or less	Any other topic
7	5 mins or less	Records Management Go-To Resources in Calgary and path forward for first steps
	40 mins or less	Total speaker time
	20 mins or more	Q&A, Discussion, Debate
	1 hour	Social

Figure 1 ADA meeting agenda, developed by ADA leadership.

The Challenge

The first step to prepare for a verbal presentation is to define the receiving audience. Which nuggets of retention scheduling would best meet ADA's expectations? The following definition outlines the general scope of Data Architecture practices.

*Data architecture defines the collection, storage and movement of data across an organization ... Information architecture refers to the development of programs designed to input, store and analyze meaningful information whereas data architecture is the development of programs that interpret and store data.*²

² Data Architecture vs Information Architecture: What's the Difference? October 2018 Leventhof, Alon <https://www.bmc.com/blogs/data-architecture-vs-information-architecture/>

Secondly, what are the records management 'go-to' resources (Figure 1, Agenda item 7) to share with verbal offerings?

An immediate and useful ARMA resource is the free, five-page document called The ARMA Information Governance Implementation Model (IGIM) which, in November 2019, remained in the BETA publishing stage. Among the seven models which attempt to connect the various stakeholders of Information Governance, the 'Architecture' references were displayed within the SUPPORTS function.

The visual bullet points in Figure 2 helped describe the ADA receiving audience - specifically, the terms Taxonomy and Metadata draw records management closer to the realm of Data Architecture. The path to achieving a perfect pitch of retention schedule value became clearer.

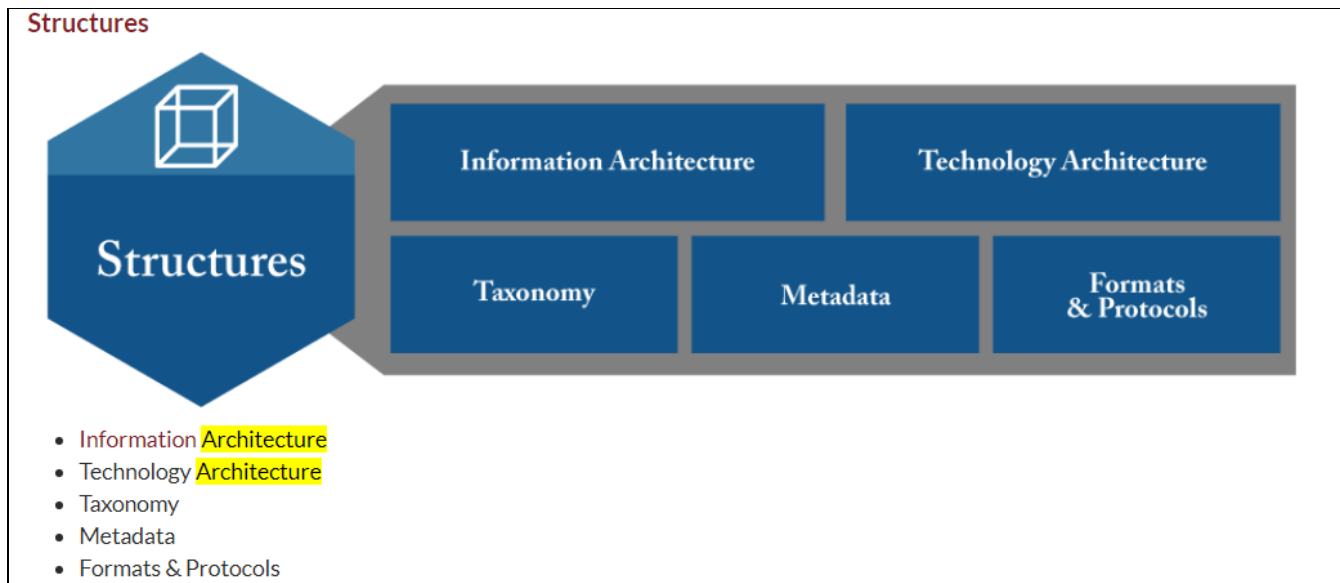


Figure 2 The ARMA Information Governance Implementation Model (IGIM) - excerpt - Structures

Having located 'Architecture' among the IGIM diagrams, further examination of the diagrams led to the role of records retention located under Capabilities within the IGIM model, shown in Figure 3.

Figures 2 and 3 are examples of the type of resources immediately accessible to records managers to share with information management disciplines interested in understanding alignment opportunities.

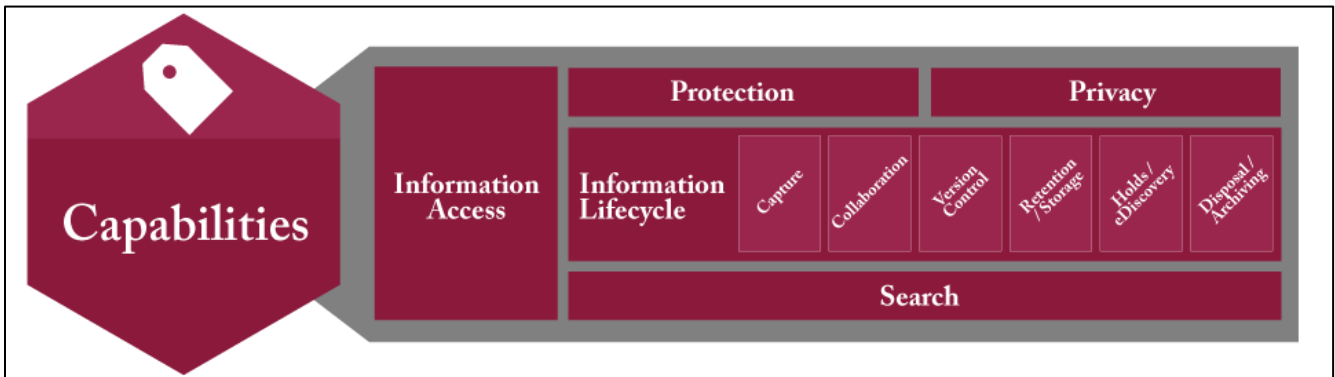


Figure 3 The ARMA Information Governance Implementation Model (IGIM) - excerpt - Capabilities

The Presentation

Although an agenda had been distributed, the presentation itself was quite 'fluid'. The audience numbers were small; those present were actively engaged. The ADA Chair took on item 1 of the agenda "Records management background" in the allocated "10 minutes or less", ending on a high note of *"RM is not only about conservation but also about value. Records are expensive to gather and the full value within is often left un-harvested and/or inert."*

Three ARMA Calgary Chapter members represented Records Management in Calgary. Within the allotted 5 minutes, the Chapter President deftly addressed the content records management assisted by a gigantic wall chart which very visibly illustrated the record lifecycle. There had been no explicit exclusion of wall charts as visuals within the agenda!

Another RIM practitioner whose banking company fully and aggressively supports Enterprise Content Management entertained the audience with 'cool stories' (Figure 1, Item 4) - how their RIM forays and triumphs were achieved using creative technology solutions. His presentation garnered more than 5 minutes, most likely because everyone uses banking services. The audience asked many technology-focused questions, and this bank in particular continues to lead in its implementation of user-oriented technologies which are truly 'cool'.

The segue from cool technology to records retention was a challenge. Why would a retention schedule be of interest to Data Architects?

A method of setting an audience at ease is to emphasize alignment, in this setting between Data Architecture and RIM practices. This portion of the presentation began by a quick review of Data Architecture's governance scope, followed by a Records Retention Schedule governance scope to illustrate the parallel.

The presentation began with a question: *"Does Data Architecture require governance to track elements such as?"* ->

- ✓ Ownership
- ✓ Security/permissions
- ✓ Legislative requirements such as privacy
- ✓ Legal requirements such as
 - Trade secret contractual obligations
 - Copyright permissions/restrictions;
 - Project management contractual obligations
- ✓ Approved data collection sources both internal and external
- ✓ Data transactions within the system
- ✓ System integration with other systems
- ✓ User agreement statuses: current; expired
- ✓ Data distribution agreement statuses: current; expired.

It continued energetically with a summary of how a retention schedule is a governance tool for all business information. It addresses key issues such as:

- ✓ Who owns the records (by business role; department; etc.)?
- ✓ Where are the records located (links to legislative requirements)?
- ✓ What are the legislative requirements, including privacy permissions/restrictions?
- ✓ Are there business legal requirements such as product licensing restrictions, copyright?
- ✓ Who is permitted to use records; who is not permitted to use records?

Having established a point of intersection/alignment, measured by receptive nods and ah's, the presentation proceeded to explain how aspects of a retention schedule can help Data Architects achieve fundamental objectives.

The ADA agenda timer was on his job! It was urgent to pitch how exactly a records retention schedule could positively support the requirements of Data Architecture.

A well-documented, management-approved retention schedule paves a path forward for Data Architects to exercise its governance requirements which include:

- ✓ Govern and manage data as a strategic asset
- ✓ Protect and secure data
- ✓ Promote efficient use of data assets
- ✓ Build a culture that values data as an asset
- ✓ Honour stakeholder input and
- ✓ Leverage partners

The audience was clearly salivating for more rapid-fire value statements. The presentation pressed forward in response!

Here's where a retention schedule can deliver quick hits for Data Architecture:

Authorize redundant data destruction:

- ✓ *VALUE*: Eliminate the damage voluminous outdated data can cause to a system's performance.

Increase system performance:

- ✓ *VALUE*: Capture business decisions to permit off-load of outdated data to less costly storage solutions.
- ✓ *VALUE*: Retain frequently accessed data on-line or near-line.

Separate wheat from the chaff:

- ✓ *VALUE*: Not all data is created equally; some require stringent business rules and resources.
- ✓ *VALUE*: Understand when data has been assembled into documents of evidence,
- ✓ *VALUE*: Documents can be relocated into an RM-DM system to live out retention requirements.

After these hard-hitting facts were delivered, the presentation reduced its pace to a conversational conclusion, explaining how:

- These illustrations of how a retention schedule can inform Data Architecture practices rely on populating the retention schedule with salient data about the data. The retention schedule is organic. As descriptive information is added, it becomes a dynamic operating tool that positions a Company to leverage its data assets for future opportunities.
- The action of aggregating data governance rules into a retention schedule will position a Company to understand the value of enterprise-wide data governance. Even elementary actions as defining data into buckets such as program data, statistical data, and mission support data will help a Company assign appropriate value and resources to its data.

The presentation concluded with a rousing statement: *“In short, a retention schedule is a dynamic operating tool that positions a company to leverage its data assets for future opportunities.”*

Tip - Be Prepared for a Perfect Pitch

Records Managers have often been advised to prepare an ‘elevator speech’ - a 30 second sound bite which describes the records role in a business setting. One would employ this speech should an opportunity arise, such as shoulder to shoulder with someone in an elevator.

*Philip Crosby, author of The Art of Getting Your Own Sweet Way (1972) and Quality Is Still Free (1996) suggested individuals should have a pre-prepared speech that can deliver information regarding themselves or a quality that they can provide within a short period of time, namely the amount of time of an elevator ride for if an individual finds themselves on an elevator with a prominent figure. Essentially, an elevator pitch is meant to allow an individual to pitch themselves or an idea to a person who is high up in a company, with very limited time.*³

There are many pitches one can prepare for, such as one's current position and value-statement. For the purpose of interacting with Data Architects, or any IT discipline, a method of preparation could be by imagining a RIM role within an IT discipline - that is, by using business language common to both.

Some IT practitioners use the terms 'Records Management' and 'Document Management' interchangeably. The following excerpt from a recruitment notice uses solely 'document management'. Since it refers to 'company-wide ... framework', records managers would astutely point out the correct term would be 'records management'; however, does the distinction matter at this level of conversation?

Reporting to: Manager, Technology Strategy and Architecture.
Objective: Create a standardized company-wide document management framework to demonstrate to regulators and other stakeholders *a consistently applied process for managing and controlling documentation*.
Responsible for: Developing an information management and document control strategy and roadmap that supports strategic as well as tactical initiatives. ⁴

Remain focused on the big goal - continuous dialogue with other information management professionals to ensure records management principles are applied as *"a consistently applied process for managing and controlling documentation"*.

³ Elevator Pitch, Background Information and History https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elevator_pitch 2019

⁴ Contract position "IM Expert" www.agilerecruiting.com 2017

The following position description contains exciting language to memorize for an elevator speech. It has passion, potential and agile descriptions of how records managers contribute to the overall management of information resources. Here is a list of the position's responsibilities:

- Work with business stakeholders, IT management team, Architecture and Portfolio Managers to further the objectives of overall information management practice;
- Assist the business, IT management team and Architecture team in developing, communicating and promoting key information management principles, standards and practices that govern the current state, and define the future state of IT;
- Work with Business and IT stakeholders to build a holistic view of the corporation's information assets, and documents this using multiple views that show how the current and future needs of an organization will be met in an efficient, sustainable, agile, and adaptable manner;
- Help IT teams gather information management needs and demand in a structured manner and translating that demand into IT roadmaps;
- Promote and participate in sessions with business stakeholders and IT team to ensure policies are supported by the information management framework and standards while identifying the need for establishing new standards and practices.

In Conclusion ...

What seemingly started quite informally, an invitation to present 'what is a retention schedule to an audience of Data Architects, led to a reflection on being prepared to deliver a perfect pitch. Constraints such as verbal only -- no supporting visuals; no 'take away' posting of presentation materials for the audience; and limited time are common to all situations - for example, an elevator!

To present verbally on a topic reasonably unfamiliar to an audience requires not only solid knowledge of subject matter, but also a colloquial delivery style which establishes rapport and confidence. To distill the components of a retention schedule into auditory consumable "bytes" is a challenge. Finding common ground among mutual information management-based disciplines seemed a positive path forward.

Are records managers prepared, on the spot, to convey principles in a sound-bite manner? As business language evolves, the use of phrases such as "must have" have outlived their audience

tolerance. Measures are good; however, speaking about saving terabytes of space, or applying retention destruction to gazillions⁵ of documents is equally unmemorable.

A recent ARMA Calgary workshop focused on policy writing⁶. What could be new? The examination of the language used in current policies was deemed 'in the past'. Newer language states facts in simple, assertive statements such as "We protect records."

Through research, presentations, and writing, records managers assert their future by embracing continuous education, change, and challenge.

Biographies

Sue Rock, CRM, is the owner of The Rockfiles Inc. and an operating partner of Trepanier Rock®. She is an active supporter of ARMA. Sue believes she is the only Certified Records Manager who proudly displays her credential as a tattoo in Celtic font on her right wrist!

⁵ Definition of 'gazillions' c/o Merriam Webster <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/gazillion>

⁶Writing Effective IM Policies with Lewis Eisen, November 19, 2019 <https://www.facebook.com/events/955252324836003/>