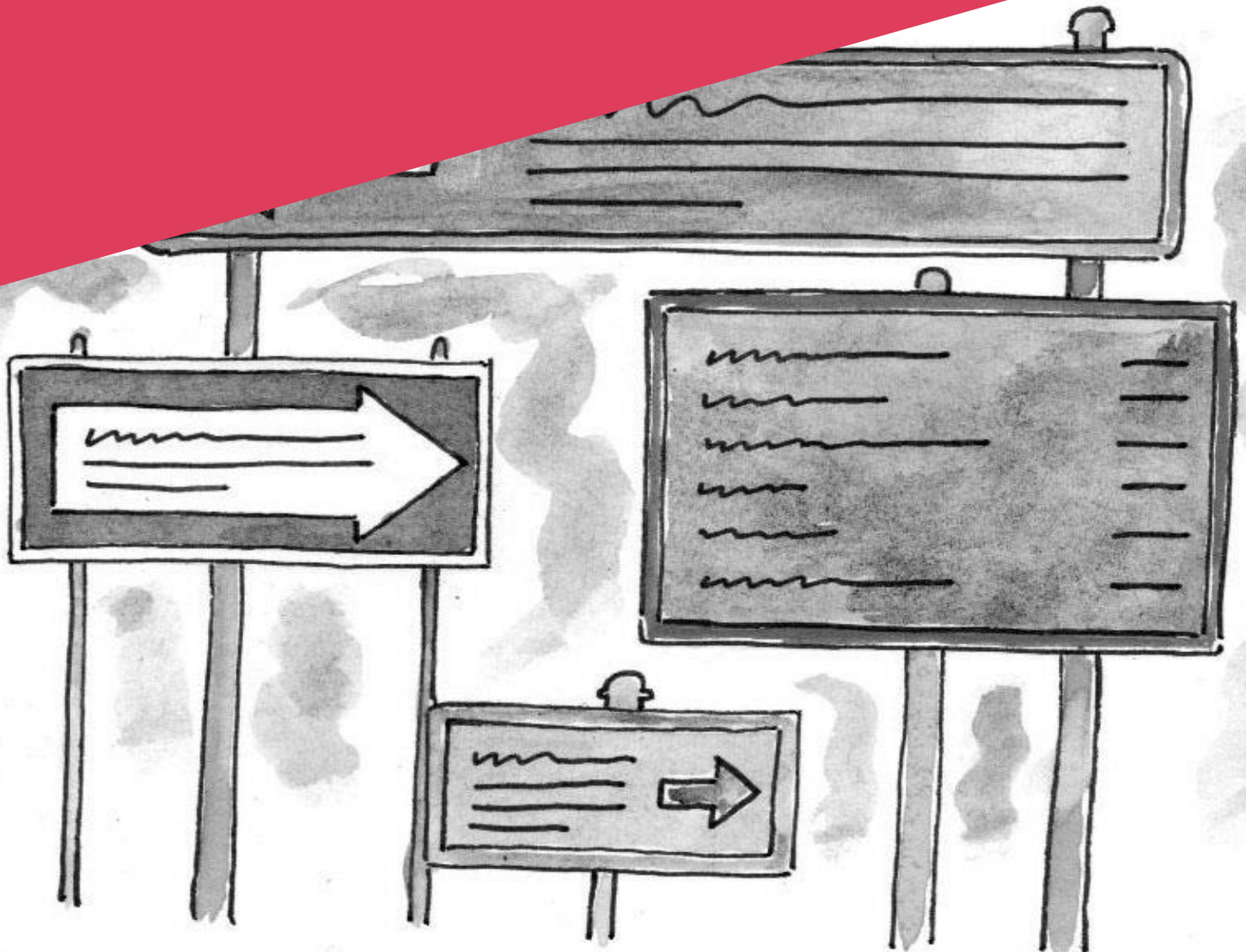


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# THE MISSING LINK:

## Information Architecture

Governing the success of your content

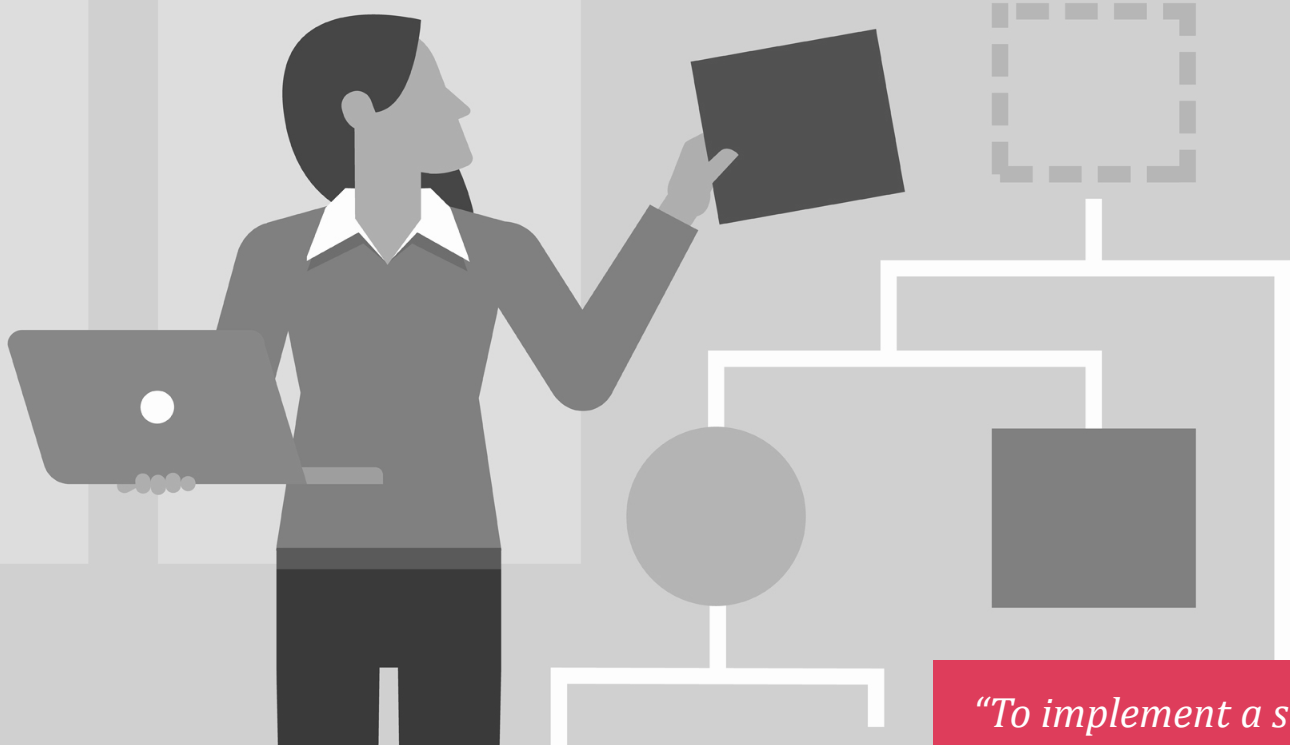


The Business Case for an Information Architect

**TurningPoint**

*TurningPoint Global Solutions*  
software services company™

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## Introduction

It is still commonplace to see fragmented work and responsibilities, even with access to countless technologies that promote centralization, integration, and cohesion. And without a sustainable strategy and framework, these technologies only become more arduous to adopt and maintain.

The pain points of managing information and content are many:

- Organizations are drowning in information.
- Knowledgebase is kept in team members' minds or personal silos.
- Resources are trapped in existing assets.
- The organizational culture does not encourage knowledge or resource sharing.
- Legacy tools and technology are not aligned with current needs.
- Duplication of effort and decreased productivity abound.
- Organizational training has been replaced with “do-it-yourself” approaches.
- Information is still being disseminated using multiple methods.
- Content is maintained in multiple systems.
- And so on...

*“To implement a successful content management system, we have to go beyond business process and technology and understand how the organization, as an organism, interacts with and uses its content.”*

**Masood Nasser**

User Research, Experience  
Leader

**Information quickly loses its value if you cannot find it or manage it.**

The conventional “quick fix” is to purchase or implement tools and technology without first considering the architecture or organization-wide implications of using them. For example, scenarios like these have too narrow a focus and are often coupled with an unrealistic outcome:

- Our developers will create forms that managers and authors can use to update content online (and everyone will live happily ever after).
- We will use XML [or fill in a tool you currently use that is not working], and everyone will live happily ever after.
- We will buy **this** software from **that** vendor (off the shelf) and authors will use **this** to update content (and everyone will live happily ever after).
- We will customize these options to match our requirements (and everyone will live happily ever after).

**Simply throwing technology at the problem is not the solution.** And in many cases, this approach only exacerbates the situation — especially if the proper foundation has not been laid.



## Rationale

Information chaos is hindering organizations; we all are having trouble keeping up and keeping track. Organizations that do not have its diverse information management capabilities under a unified strategy and architecture inherently invite chaos.

### Information is a fundamental asset of an organization.

TPGSI, like many organizations, has systems with overlapping functionality and workloads. Usability of certain systems is self-selected, and user adoption is unpredictable. As a result, TPGSI is contending with information chaos and reduced efficiency using existing system.

While business processes and technology are vital pieces of the puzzle, it is also important to understand and account for the architecture of the organization’s information. Three components already exist (i.e., the players, the data, and the management).

But there is a fourth element — the missing link — that may not have been considered. This “missing link” focuses on the users; how they experience and interact with the organization’s information ecosystem.

### The Missing Link

Information architecture to determine who uses the content and how, when, and how often they use it

???

| The Players   | The Data   | The Management   |
|---|--|--|
| <p><b>Content professionals who develop the content</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation Managers</li> <li>• Document Owners</li> <li>• Business Analysts</li> <li>• Developers</li> </ul> | <p><b>Mission-critical content and information</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DEDs</li> <li>• Documentation</li> <li>• Agendas</li> <li>• Meeting Minutes</li> <li>• Other Associated Content</li> </ul> | <p><b>System and processes for quality assurance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• QA Team</li> <li>• Reviewers</li> <li>• Approvers</li> </ul> |



## The Solution

This business case proposes instituting an overarching governance to drive the success of TPGSI's information ecosystem via information architecture (IA). IA is the art and science of organizing, structuring, and labeling content in an effective and sustainable way. (Ref: Usability.gov)

### IA connects people to the information they are looking for.

As the amount of information available to us grows, IA becomes increasingly essential. And the more information there is, the harder it becomes to sift through the noise to find what you need. Good IA helps people navigate the vast sea of information, ignoring what is irrelevant (to them), to locate what they need. To do this, it is necessary to understand how the pieces fit together to create the larger picture, how items relate to each other within the system.

#### A seasoned information architect knows how to accomplish this, and can:

- Help an organization define how work and responsibilities can be integrated.
- Inform the organization's content strategy.
- Conduct user research and analysis, including stakeholder and user interviews.
- Help users understand where they are, what they've found, what's around, and what to expect.



#### How does the architect accomplish these objectives?

The short answer is through organization and standardization, using a combination of the following practices:

- Naming conventions
- Libraries, files, and folder structure
- Consistency (in brand and writing)
- Templates, forms, instruction guides, checklists
- Workflows, automation
- Classifications, hierarchies, taxonomies
- Wayfinding, navigation, search

Implementing these practices will require more in-depth discussions, strategizing, and planning to flesh out more concrete steps and actions.

# BENEFITS



- |  |        |  |
|--|--------|--|
| <b>OPTIMIZE</b><br>business processes      | ✓<br>✓ | Automate workflows, eliminate bottlenecks<br>Save costs through efficiencies   |
| <b>INCREASE</b><br>productivity            | ✓<br>✓ | Improve findability, accessibility, portability, and collaboration<br>Increased user adoption; enable mobile and telework    |
| <b>INCREASE</b><br>quality                 | ✓<br>✓ | Manage information/content consistently and cohesively<br>Improve information reliability; increase information availability |
| <b>IMPROVE</b><br>customer service         | ✓      | Improve response times, communication, and customer engagement   |
| <b>REDUCE</b><br>costs                     | ✓<br>✓ | Reduce complexity and costs of IT systems and errors<br>Reduce dependency on multiple products and vendors                   |
| <b>INTEGRATE</b><br>enterprise information | ✓<br>✓ | Eliminate duplication of information and systems<br>Ensure information reliability; facilitate enterprise search             |
| <b>MITIGATE</b><br>risks                   | ✓<br>✓ | Ensure stronger information security and business continuity<br>Retain corporate knowledge                                   |

## NEXT STEPS

*It's a big task. But with IA, a little can go a long way. This task can be implemented as both an initial jumpstart project and an ongoing program.*



### Immediate-Term

**Implement to create immediate results.**

Identify and implement small, yet powerful immediate-term activities to encourage business continuity and collaboration among team members.



### Mid-Term

**Prepare for long-term sustainable success.**

For example, developing a content strategy that focuses on the planning, creation, delivery, and governance of content.

Ensuring that TPGSI has useful and usable content, that is well structured and easily found, is vital to improving user experience and adoption.

### Long-Term

**Successfully maintain information ecosystem.**

With the foundation laid from the immediate-term and mid-term activities, the TPGSI IA moves to an ongoing operations and maintenance program.

User adoption increases with strategic training.

