The Expert's Opinion

Donald A. Marchand is dean of the School of Information Studies, Syracuse University—one of the leading university centers in the United States for interdisciplinary research and teaching in information management, information technology and information and communications policy in business, government, libraries, and education. In addition, he is a professor of information studies and an internationally known researcher, teacher, lecturer and consultant on information resources management and the strategic uses and impacts of information technology in business and government.

Interview conducted by Mehdi Khosrowpour

IRMJ: What is your assessment of information resources in comparison to other mainstream corporate resources?

Marchand: Information resources as a management function is really quite young when compared to other corporate resources such as human resource management or financial management.

IRMJ: Do you feel that information resources deserve the same high level of recognition as other corporate resources?

Marchand: This recognition is an evolutionary process. Financial management for example, went from a support function, such as bookkeeping, through several historical stages to evolve into a more serious and obviously important management activity. Marketing, personnel management, and other areas have also gone through similar evolutions. The management of information resources has emerged not only into a management function with senior vice president or executive vice president status, but also into one that is recognized as more important by users. I think that is probably the more significant development. In recent years companies have begun to think more seriously about the role of information management throughout the company, not just as a support function area within the company. It is being viewed in the same light as personnel and financial management, where it is not exclusively limited to those professionals who manage personnel and financial matters directly.

IRMJ: What is your assessment of the role of information resources in corporate growth and success?

Marchand: It is evolving very quickly into an area that is going to impact every other functional area of the firm. Information management is an activity that’s interconnected to research and development, manufacturing, distribution, marketing, sales, and business planning, and as a result it will become a significant priority within each functional area.

IRMJ: What do you find to be the organizational problems in management of information resources?

Marchand: I think the biggest problem is addressing the key strategic decisions about how the information resources and technologies are supporting the mission of the organization. Whether you are a government agency or a private corporation, the issues of how you organize, how you plan, how you procure the necessary resources, and how you invest in this area, are critical to the significance that information resources will have for the business. In many organizations, managers and IS executives are not really prepared to deal with the broad ramifications of answers to strategic questions. In many other organizations, people
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