



Behavioural Insights : Information Management – Recommendations Report

Prepared for:

Information Strategy & Management Section

Environmental Resources Information Network Branch |

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About this Document

The Behavioural Insights project was sponsored by the Information Strategy and Management section within the Environmental Resources Information Network branch, with the intention of identifying and leveraging factors that encourage staff to store, retain, retrieve and manage information in a consistent, effective and compliant manner.

This document is the result of an appreciative inquiry into the subject of what facilitates and enables staff to demonstrate workplace behaviours compliant with information management/record-keeping obligations of the Department of Environment and Energy.

- This report starts with providing the **context and background** that led to the commissioning of this piece of work, and its importance in the current and future record management initiatives within the Department and portfolio agencies.
- The next section details the **Approach** taken, including:
 - *the Scope of the project, and*
 - *the Methodology* used to arrive at our findings and recommendations.
- The next section reviews the hypotheses, and provides **observations for our conclusions**
- The final section then goes on to suggest **recommendations** as to other things that can be done to facilitate consistent, desirable behaviours on the part of staff. Our recommendations are based on the 'tiny tweaks principle' i.e. focusing on small changes that can be easily made, that will have a substantial cumulative impact on desired staff behaviour and overall Departmental outcomes.

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I. Context and Background

The Information Strategy and Management section within the Environmental Resources Information Network branch is responsible for ensuring the Department is compliant with its information management (recordkeeping) obligations, and for supporting staff to handle and manage information in ways that makes it easily available, accessible, interoperable and reusable.

The Information Strategy and Management section has recently developed an Information Strategy for the Department. It sets out a plan to transform the organisation from one that uses disparate information in an ad-hoc manner to one that optimises its use of well-managed and high-quality information. The Chief Data Officer (CDO) in partnership with the Chief Information Officer (CIO) are leading the strategy.

Previous assessments recorded in the Digital Records Transformation Initiative (DRTI) Sourcing Strategy Discussion Paper, have found that while current electronic tools have recordkeeping functionality, they are not easy-to-use and in many cases, not used at all. This has resulted in mismanagement of government information, which poses a risk to government business, e.g. loss of evidentiary material from email and lost productivity or high costs associated with discoverability of poorly managed information. While technology can provide part of the solution, a fundamental component of good information management is staff behaviour. Recent discussions with other CDOs and CIO across the portfolio have highlighted that there are similar challenges within a number of agencies, regardless of the current approach to electronic information management.

A working group led by the Information Management team has been put together to contemplate this challenge, and explore potential approaches to achieve desired behaviours. This working group postulated the following two hypotheses:

1. Making our electronic information management systems easy to use and targeted at the way people like to interact with information will help increase compliance with our recordkeeping and information management obligations.
2. If people use the systems because they like to and it meets their needs, compliance (i.e. keeping and classifying official records) can be achieved using technology in the background.

Bendelta's Role:

Bendelta was charged with the task of gathering data and concluding whether or not these hypotheses could be validated. Additionally, Bendelta was charged with providing a report detailing recommendations and suggestions for reinforcing desired behaviours, to achieve consistent and sustainable outcomes. The expectation is that project will lead to improved capability across the Behavioural Insights and Information Strategy and Management teams (and other similar teams across the portfolio) to engage with staff to understand what drives them and change/influence their behaviours, and establish the behavioural norms around information management and valuing information as an asset.

II. Approach

This section clarifies the approach we took that has resulted in this final recommendations report.

It outlines the scope, data sources, methodology used to arrive at our recommendations and deliverables.

a) Scope:

The Information Strategy and Management section wanted to gain a better understanding of how people want to interact with the information they create and use in their day-to-day work. This includes not just how people manage their information now (which may be constrained by existing systems and technologies), and why they do it that way, but also how would they like to do so in a modern EDRMS with more options.

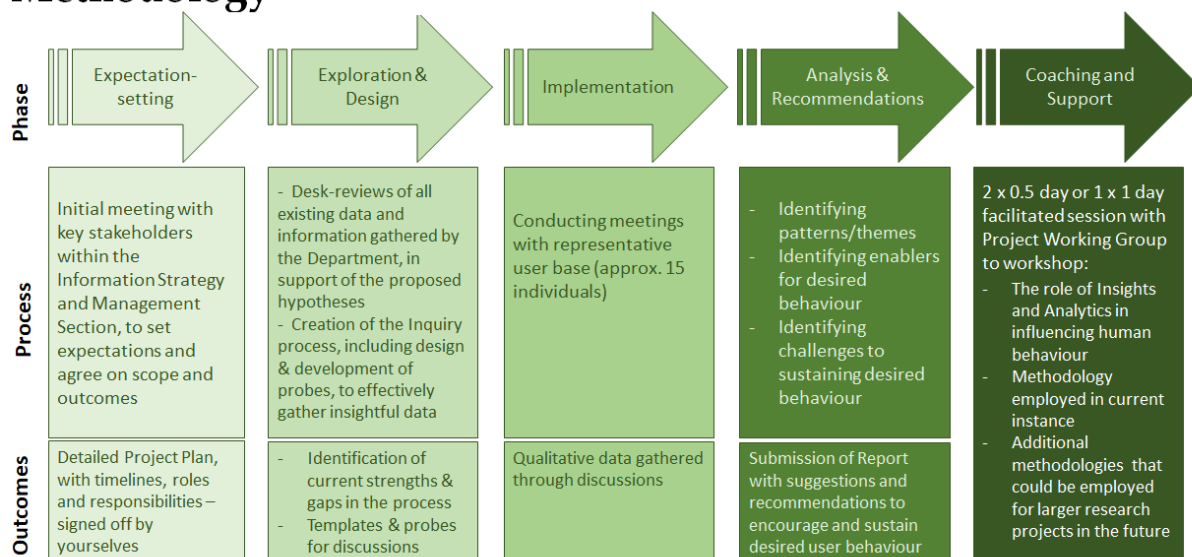
The scope of this project included:

- Obtaining empirical and anecdotal evidence of diverse end users' experience with data management and record keeping systems
- Making recommendations that would further instil desired behaviours within staff
- Upskilling the project working group to conduct a similar exercise in the future to gauge the impact of initiatives undertaken

b) Methodology:

Bendelta and the Information Management team, agreed on the following methodology:

Methodology



A range of end users was identified, constituting a representative sample of staff with diverse needs, geographies, backgrounds, knowledge/experience/expertise with technology.

A Bendelta consultant met with 10 representatives within the Department, to gain a deeper understanding of challenges and enablers that impacted the optimal use of record-keeping.

In some cases, representatives were able to demonstrate live, how they used their systems.

The following is an example of the probes/questions asked to generate and capture insights.

Behavioural Insights – Probe Sheet

The following probes may be used as a guiding framework:

- Name of interviewee
- Tell me a little bit about your role. If you manage a team, your team's role
- As part of your/your team's job responsibilities, how do you engage with information/data?
- Are you largely information / data generators or consumers? Please explain
- Do you need to share/receive/send data within the department only, or do you engage with external agencies too? What and with whom are your current dependencies? Please elaborate.
- How do you do that? (emails/cloud/websites?)
- How/where/how often do you need to store data (desktop/SPIRE filing system/other?)
- How regularly do you need to retrieve it?
- What about the current way you store, save and retrieve data works for you?
- What if any, are the challenges with the current system?
- What would an ideal information storage/management system look like for you?
- The last time a new system was implemented, what were some of the factors that enabled your comfort levels?
- What more could have been done to help/support you make a smoother transition?
- What were some of the challenges in transitioning that made compliance difficult?
- If it had to be done over again, what would you recommend?
- What role do you think you/your team can play in the design stage, that might help you later?
- What might be some of the reasons people don't rigorously use centralised systems?
- How might we encourage people to be more meticulous in their usage of centralised systems and processes?
- What other comments/recommendations can you make to help people see the value in information as an asset, and the importance of ease of accessibility and sharing?

We used an Appreciative Inquiry approach. Gervase Bushe describes the process as follows:

'Appreciative Inquiry advocates collective inquiry into the best of what is, in order to imagine what could be, followed by collective design of a desired future state that is compelling and thus, does not require the use of incentives, coercion or persuasion for planned change to occur.'

In using this approach, we minimised the opportunity for interviewees to be constrained by their existing reality and limitations, and invited them to be creative in thinking about what would work for them, without raising any expectations that all ideas would be implemented.

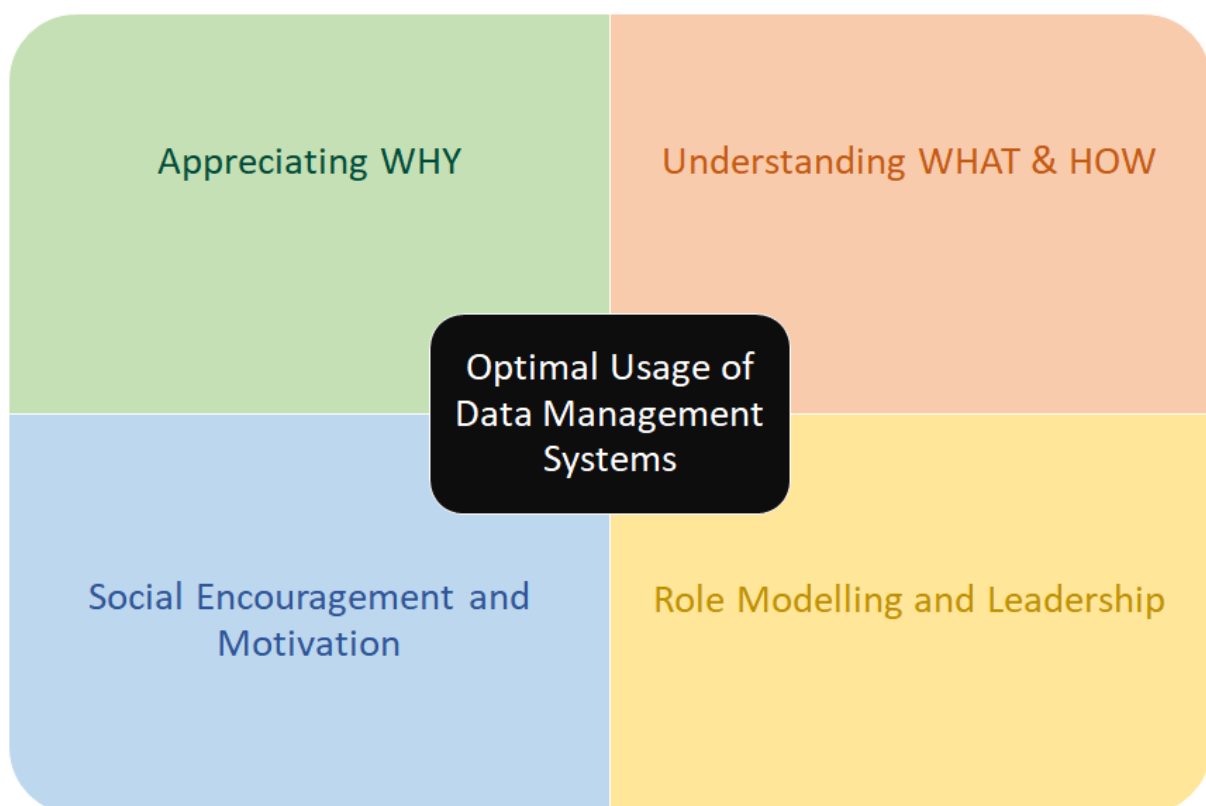
III. Observations and Conclusions

In the process of meeting with, and interviewing a number of end-users, a number of different concerns, challenges, and opportunities were raised, specifically with regards to the current system – Spire.

While some of these points may be unique and specific to the technical aspects of Spire, most data/information collected was user-related, and therefore would recur/exist with any existing or future system. These are the issues we have attempted to highlight.

After being studied on their individual merit, these issues have then been classified into themes, for ease of future consideration and action.

The following themes emerged:



1. Appreciating WHY:

- **Orientation**

Most interviewees we met with, were tenured staff, and did understand why it was important to be consistent and methodical in the way data is stored, managed and retrieved.

However, there was a common agreement that new joiners into the Department, and indeed younger entrants into the public service, lack formal, consistent and impactful communication about why it is important to archive and manage data, and what the APS policy for record-keeping and data management is.

- **Culture of Collaboration**

Users understand that Spire was designed to promote collaboration, by enabling shared access to data. However, there certain attitudes exist, where individuals become possessive about their data, and prefer to not share.

Overcoming this attitude requires a deeper cultural shift, where existing (real or perceived) silos within the Department are dissolved, and staff see the importance and the benefit of collaborating.

- **Consequences**

Some people we interviewed cited anecdotes detailing the consequences of data not being available or traceable. However, there is a general consensus that many users (especially those not in legal or policy areas) do not appreciate the long-term consequences of poor record keeping.

They are not aware of Departmental and/or government obligations with regards to records management.

Even in the short term, the absence of any existing supervision or audit process, inadvertently reinforces the thinking that adherence to Departmental record-keeping procedures is 'optional'.

2. Understanding What and How:

- **System Capability & Technology**

Developing a deep understanding of the records management system emerged as a key factor in how effectively people use it.

While everyone we spoke to was aware that the system of nomenclature was key to storing and retrieving files on Spire, there was a noticeable difference between those who were able to effectively do so, and those who weren't.

Some examples:

- *while a lot of staff felt seriously constrained by how long the system took to launch and find files, there were others who had found workarounds, and were able to access the system without too much wait-time.*
- *The inability to save files from emails directly on to Spire, was seen as a time-consuming roadblock by most users.*
- *Not everyone is aware of the version control capability within Spire. This results in multiple versions of the same file being saved, and retrieval becomes almost impossible.*

Geographical differences also exist in terms of system speed and stability. For instance, the state / territory offices, and staff located in distant posts experience slower speeds than those we interviewed in Canberra.

- **Training**

When Spire was launched, there was a great deal of communication around how the system worked, and what the users' role was, in securing files accurately.

Formal training was scheduled and provided. Some people we spoke with still remembered their training, and even retained their visual aids and tools (laminated instruction sheets) to navigate the system.

There was a consensus that while refresher trainings would be very useful, no one was aware of any refreshers being scheduled/offered.

New entrants today, learn by observing their peers, and often this results in many of them picking up 'bad habits'.

There were also geographical differences in how and when training was provided. For instance state and territory offices often cannot manage to release staff for training, even if/when training is scheduled.

- **Support**

Most staff (especially those who don't consider themselves 'tech-savvy'), often find themselves feeling 'stuck' when things go wrong, or when they don't know what to do. Most of them were not aware of a help-line or a support team they could call for advice. While some were fortunate to have colleagues whom they could ask for advice, not everyone knew what their options were. This resulted in them relying on saving important files on their personal drives.

3. Role Modelling & Leadership

- **Communication**

Most people we spoke with said that there wasn't regular direct or indirect messaging around the importance of adhering to recordkeeping practices.

While there was a powerful communication strategy at the launch of Spire (which most people still recall), there seems to be little or no communication now.

- **Leadership Reinforcement**

It was very obvious that the expectations communicated by leaders determined compliance within the team. Leaders of compliant teams demonstrated behaviours that role modelled and reinforced good practices (for instance insisting on sending and receiving Spire links to files, rather than file attachments in emails).

There did appear to be a stark contrast in the usage of Spire, between teams where leaders insisted on compliance and where they didn't.

4. Social Encouragement and Motivation

- **Social Engagement**

What seemed to be missing was a 'social buzz' around the importance and process of information management. There seems to be little or no conversation among peers in terms of information sharing and/or best practices.

'Compliance' is seen as the concern of the Information Management team, and individuals don't see themselves as partners in the process.

- **Fun and Motivation**

Conversations around record keeping and compliance are seen as necessary but tedious, and are usually avoided, unless absolutely necessary.

Much progress can be made by making this very crucial topic part of regular conversations, so that it becomes part of the culture of the Department.

How do these findings relate to the two hypotheses?

Following our discussions and findings, we are able to fairly conclude the following:

1. *Making our electronic information management systems easy to use and targeted at the way people like to interact with information will help increase compliance with our recordkeeping and information management obligations.*

While the existing system does have its limitations, evidence shows that where people have found workarounds, they are more likely to continue using the system diligently. Simplifying the user interface, and increasing systems speeds even marginally (where possible), will increase compliance.

2. *If people use the systems because they like to and it meets their needs, compliance (i.e. keeping and classifying official records) can be achieved using technology in the background.*

While this does seem to be intuitive, we were unable to find many instances of people actually liking using the existing system. However, the converse was true. Where people disliked using the system (because they felt it didn't meet their needs, or that it was too time consuming), usage was low.

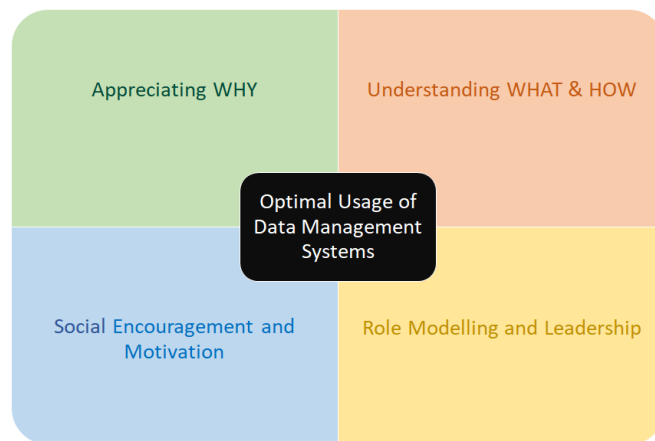
Having said that, in spite of 'disliking' the system, people still tended to comply, if there was Leadership oversight, and role modelling.

Leadership is perhaps one aspect of compliance that we must factor in, if we are to increase compliance.

IV. Recommendations for Enhanced Impact

Based on the wealth of information, anecdotes, experiences, feedback and suggestions received from all participants, stakeholders and contributors, Bendelta would like to make some recommendations for increasing systems usage and compliance.

The following recommendations are aimed at impactful messaging for enhanced ownership, clarity and outcomes. The recommendations have been classified into the following categories:



1. Appreciating WHY:

There is need for a positive narrative that explains the importance of information management and record-keeping for the Department. The messaging should be such that it:

- is timely and recurrent
- highlights the importance of each individual's role in achieving the Department's objectives and obligations
- gives individuals a sense of personal ownership and responsibility for managing information resources
- explains the present and future benefits of record keeping for the Department, and where possible, articulate benefits for individuals and teams.

Some suggestions to do that, might include:

- A *compelling message from the Secretary* (audio/video, written or both) highlighting the importance of information management and record-keeping.
- A *welcome/orientation kit* sent to all new joiners introducing them to the *why, how and what* of the Departmental record-keeping practices.
- A *briefing pack for SES / Managers* seeking their engagement and commitment to support and encourage their team's use of systems and processes for optimal information management.

- *Interim check-in/emails/messages to staff*, at regular intervals, sharing anecdotes, data and updates around Information Management in the Department.
- *Reinforcing a Culture of Collaboration*: This is a deeper issue, but strengthening bonds of collaboration between divisions, branches and teams will create an environment where staff will be more open to seeing systems such as Spire as tools of collaboration.

2. Addressing the WHAT and HOW:

There is an urgent need to increase knowledge, understanding and capability to optimally utilise the record management system that exists within the Department.

Some suggestions to do that, might include:

- **Formal Training sessions for new joiners:** While training does happen within the Department, these sessions may be most effective if they are mandatory, and done face to face. This will not only provide new joiners with the know-how, but will also give them an opportunity to know who the experts are, and reach out to them, should they need help going forward.
- **Targeted Refresher Training Sessions:** Scheduling and communicating a calendar of refresher training sessions. Keeping these sessions short and sharp (an hour or so each), with each topic focusing on specific aspects of the system/process, might increase participation and value to attendees.
- **Champions and Best Practice Sharing Forums:** It might be beneficial to re-establish 'Champions' from each Branch, and position them as experts. These Champions can meet regularly to share challenges, solutions, and best practices, and they can promote optimal utilisation of systems within their own teams.
- **Help Desks:** Create an email id manned by a systems expert, where people can write in with queries/challenges, and seek help and support.
- **Revisit System Capability:** If possible, it may be useful to explore how the system functionality (of Spire) may be enhanced, so as to increase convenience or usefulness to end users. This might require vendor involvement, and may have budget considerations.
The Champions may be able to provide valuable input to suggest system enhancements.
- **Install a system of Checks and Balances:** While it may not be possible or feasible to set up a stringent monitoring system, there may be value in exploring a periodic (annual) audit system to reinforce compliance. This could be done formally through the internal audit function, or informally, using Champions as auditors.

3. Role Modelling & Leadership

Role modelling and leadership influence is perhaps the most important factor contributing to compliance with record keeping procedures and systems.

We recommend a top-down reinforcement of the message that record-keeping and compliance with data management procedures is everyone's responsibility.

It would further add value if each and every leader of a team demonstrated and invoked compliance at every given opportunity.

When leaders hold their teams accountable, staff members will start holding each other accountable as well.

4. Social Encouragement and Motivation

We recommend exploring opportunities for staff to engage with each other socially, and have opportunities to have conversations about information management and record keeping. Some suggestions:

- creating and rolling out a calendar of events incorporating fun activities like quizzes, contests, BINGO etc, that are linked to information management and record keeping
- Information Management team members' attendance at morning tea or stand-up meetings in different branches, as 'guest speakers' to reinforce this very important topic.
- creating communities of practice, or social media style engagement groups, where people can have conversations, raise concerns and share ideas.
- Publish quarterly newsletters with updates, anecdotes and other ideas incorporating the theme of Information Management.

These ideas are quick and easy to incorporate, and may be done through Champions who would need to commit a few hours a month. The impact of a social campaign would reap rich returns in terms of keeping the conversation alive, around the importance of information management and the Department's record keeping obligations.

V. Next Steps

Based on the appreciative inquiry process, this report has suggested a number of recommendations to influence user behaviour to be more compliant.

We recognise that it may not be feasible to implement all recommendations, and some may not be deemed suitable at this time. However, we do encourage you to consider at least two or three initiatives that you deem practicable, and start implementing them, to start seeing positive results.

Bendelta will be happy to continue this conversation, and work with your project team to implement them, should you need us to. Bendelta can also advise how to collect *evidence of impact* as well as *evidence for impact* of these initiatives, should you be so inclined.

As part of the scope, Bendelta has conducted 2 x half day workshops with the working team, to build capability to conduct similar probes in the future.

Bendelta would be happy to continue providing support and coaching to the project team, as a token of our commitment to our partnership with you.