

How to Develop, Deploy, and Maintain a Business Classification Scheme (BCS)

In general, one of the best ways to organize and manage information is to simply put closely related items together in groups or collections. The task then moves to labeling and relating each of these groups and collections into a master arrangement that makes the most sense for the organization of business to which this information belongs or is important. The creation of such a classification scheme is key for helping organizations organize knowledge. With a well-defined classification scheme, information is made more accessible and can be searched with greater ease. Business classification schemes can be considered a form of taxonomy and are often associated with categorization.

A business classification can bring a level of standardization to the way information is identified and managed, thereby making it easier to manage the information overall. For instance, providing access permissions to the information the individual needs to perform tasks can more easily be provided. This is made easier by applying those permissions to the grouping or collection defined in the classification. Classification may also help reduce the risks in your organization by ensuring that all pieces of information “have a place” to live. Properly developed classification schemes can also help determine and apply the appropriate retention periods and disposition procedures in accordance with the regulations and guidance for your organization.

This toolkit will walk you through the process for developing a business classification system for your organization. If you already have a business classification scheme available, you can use this toolkit to review it and make any changes, if necessary.

Step 1: Identify Stakeholders

Your classification scheme is a core business element and, as such, should be afforded the same levels of forethought and enduring diligence to ensure success. Identify key stakeholders for your business classification scheme. These should include the project sponsor, business unit managers from the areas that will be using the business classification scheme, information architects, and IT. This group of experts will form the project team for developing and deploying your business classification schema. It is also important that the line of business information workers who classify information are involved in this process.

AIIM Tip

Tap into all relevant stakeholder communities and subject experts to ensure your list of terms is complete and accurately describes the collections. You should also note potential areas where you may encounter resistance or obstacles.

For more information:

- [Electronic Records Management Course](#)
- [How to Achieve Records Management Best Practices](#)
- [Data Privacy - Living By New Rules](#)
- [What is a Stakeholder? How to Identify, Analyze and Manage Project Stakeholders](#)
- [Trust: The foundation for Information Governance \(Part One: People\)](#)
- [5 tips on identifying the right project stakeholders](#)
- [Getting Started Identifying Stakeholders](#)
- [Stakeholder Analysis Winning Support for Your Projects](#)
- [Identifying Project Stakeholders](#)

Step 2: Determine the Purpose of the Business Classification Scheme

The project team should clearly define or identify the purpose of the business classification scheme. The purpose established will affect the structure of the business classification scheme, the approaches used to categorize the information, the metadata, and other factors. This purpose should be readily available to all interested parties throughout the development, implementation, and enforcement or codification of the scheme. This will serve as a guide and reminder for the value of well-organized information.

AIIM Tip

Outlining the purpose may also help identify the types of aids that will be required to map the business classification scheme to the metadata model, and other business classification schemes or assist users in using the business classification scheme. Keep the purpose visible through the process.

For more information

- [IG Policy versus IG Reality - Bringing Your Wild Content Under Control](#)
- [Finding the Right Information in your Stockpiled Content! \(Webinar\)](#)
- [Using Analytics - automating processes and extracting knowledge](#)

- [Using a Business Classification Scheme \(BCS\)](#)
- [Information Governance: Too Important to Be Left to Humans](#)

Step 3: Determine the Approach

The scope and purpose of the scheme will also define the approach you employ – you may use a hierarchical based scheme that shows the relationships among the groupings and collections. Another approach could be ~~or~~ a taxonomy/thesaurus based scheme where key terms or phrases used to describe the information is leveraged. Your decision may be affected by current business needs and other organizational initiatives.

Another important decision point to consider early in this process is to determine whether the organization will take a “big bang” approach and attempt to install major portions of the classification immediately, or if a more incremental delivery approach makes more sense for them.

AIIM Tip

Research to determine if an appropriate classification scheme already exists that could be modified or repurposed to meet the current business needs. Don't reinvent the entire wheel if possible.

For more information

- [Comparison and Contrast of Classification Schemes](#)
- [Classification Schemes \(and When to Use Them\)](#)
- [Image Gatekeeper: document classification](#)
- [Auto-classification - Where's the confusion?](#)
- [Know What You're Capturing: Document Classification](#)
- [Capture Anywhere-to-Process: The Need for Auto-Classification](#) (Webinar)
- [How to Determine the Right Type of Taxonomy for Your Business](#) (Toolkit)

Step 4: Collect Information

Now, you will need to gather the information we will need to create the business classification scheme. As a source, we may use the information/record inventory. If you don't have one,

develop one. You will also likely conduct interviews and surveys, and the notes and results of these will be invaluable to determining how to structure the scheme. Make sure you review existing schemes and job aids, manuals, and similar instructive materials to ensure that you understand any existing schemes and how individuals in your organization use information. This will help you to conceptualize the business classification scheme.

AIIM Tip

You may find some existing schemes in your information gathering exercise. It is valuable to review existing schemes to gain useful insight into how users structure and group information.

For more information

- [Content Analytics: Automating Processes and Extracting Knowledge](#)
- [How to Get Started with Content Analytics](#) (Toolkit)
- [Organizing Knowledge: A Knowledge Manager's Primer to Taxonomy](#)
- [The Latest Trends in Document Classification & Extraction](#) (Webinar)

Step 5: Develop the Business Classification Scheme

With the information gathered and an approach identified, it is now time to develop the business classification scheme that is information architecting. Begin at the top-level with the most important areas. Once the top level is identified, the scheme can be fitted within those levels. If there is a top-level category that nothing fits into, you can safely eliminate the category. If you have items that can fit into multiple categories, you may need to review and revise the scheme so they are easily identified into one category. Try to develop the BCS around business functions rather than using unit names directly from the organization chart. This keeps the BCS relevant even when the organizational units change or are renamed. The goals of the scheme are to be as clear and intuitive as possible, with enough detail and structure to cover the entire scope of information to be categorized, but with nothing extra or irrelevant that could lead to ambiguity or unusable branches or dead ends.

AIIM Tip

Once the top-level categories are established, continue to work through the next level or areas until the entire scheme is developed.

For more information

- [Taxonomy and Metadata Course](#)

- [Do you know the 9 Principles of Classification?](#)
- [9 Ingredients to a Successful Taxonomy](#)
- [How to Develop Taxonomies](#)
- [How to Automate Records Capture and Classification](#) (Toolkit)

Step 6: Pilot the Business Classification Scheme

Once you have created the business classification scheme, it is time to test it to ensure it reflects the organization's needs, types of information, and general work culture. Select an area to pilot the business classification scheme and the users within that area to run the pilot. When the pilot is deployed, make sure the scheme is used for classifying and retrieval of information.

AIIM Tip

As a marker, try and get to the point where 90% of their information, 90% of the time. Reaching this point indicates that the business classification scheme is successful. Failure does not mean you need to abandon the whole business classification scheme. Rather it means that some of the top-level and second-level categories may need to be revised. User feedback will be important in determining area(s) for improvement.

For more information

- [Auto-classification - will cloud vendors get there first?](#)
- [What Questions Would You Ask When Purchasing an Auto-classification Solution?](#)
- [Auto-classification and metadata - the missing link](#)
- [Conducting a Pilot May Be the Best Bet for Project Success](#)
- [Tips and Recommendations for Successfully Pilot Testing Your Program](#)
- [Conducting Effective Pilot Studies](#)
- [How to Conduct a Pilot Project](#)

Step 7: Deploy the Business Classification Scheme

With the pilot completed and any significant issues identified and addressed, it is time for full deployment of the business classification scheme to those who will be using it. For the deployment to be successful, the team should focus on:

- Creating finding aids, references, and thesauri to minimize the learning curve
- Creating metadata templates, rules, and structures in related systems
- Training the users on the business classification scheme

AIIM Tip

The goal of the scheme is to make sure it is easy and understood well enough so that the organization will use it. Wherever possible, automate the process and validate the business classification scheme's application.

For more information

- [Auto-Classification for RM - beginning to see it as possible](#)
- [Easing the Burden of Records Management: Automating Records Capture](#)
- [Tap the Hidden Value of your Information with Better Classification and Taxonomy \(Webinar\)](#)
- [Best Practices for Data Classification Deployment](#)
- [5 Easy Steps for Implementing a Classification Policy](#)
- [Implementing Information Classification Within the Enterprise](#)

Step 8: Gather Feedback

After your business classification scheme has been in use for a while now, gathering feedback on it is the next step. You can do this through a variety of methods including simple surveys, interviews, or facilitated workshops. Generate reports and statistics on usage, such as how many documents were classified, who classified them, where the documents were classified, how many of them need to be reclassified, etc. Make sure to address any significant issues or gaps in a timely manner.

AIIM Tip

Make sure the team understands where changes in the business classification scheme need to be made and where their efforts should be focused for the next version. The work of the team is not done, so constant communications about changes and improvements is critical – especially in the long run as the scheme ages and information management needs evolve and change.

For more information

- [The 7 Best Ways to Gather Customer Feedback](#)
- [How to Use Customer Feedback Effectively](#)
- [4 Tools to Gather User Feedback](#)
- [5 Best Ways to Get Feedback from Your Customers](#)
- [How to Ask for Feedback as a Project Manager](#)
- [Education Project Evaluation - Plan an Evaluation](#)
- [Direct and Useful Project Feedback](#)

Step 9: Maintain the Business Classification Scheme

To be effective, the business classification scheme must be updated to reflect the organization changes while remaining coherent and consistent. It should also be audited on a continuing basis. The items in the business classification scheme that should remain constant and consistent include file names, class structure, descriptions, and metadata. Major organizational changes such as re-orgs or mergers and acquisitions are obvious times to reconvene the team and assess the impact to the scheme. Just as significantly, though, can be a steady stream of low-impact changes that add up to big changes in information governance needs.

AIIM Tip

Do not think maintaining the scheme is a trivial task. It is a significant, ongoing, and important task. Make sure that your organization has a good governance system including policies, procedures and processes in place. Build mechanisms that can trigger reviews by the project team when the front line users want it, such as in a help desk scenario. Or, look into ways of automating the review requests when a threshold of misfiled items is reached or the frequency of overall filings drops.

For more information

- [9 Ingredients to a Successful Taxonomy](#)
- [Information Governance Course](#)
- [Data Classification: Why it is important and how to do it](#)