



Business assurance is established through effective governance of business terms and definitions

A large university establishes a data governance strategy that recognises the central role of business language management in effective communication, collaboration, transfer of corporate knowledge, efficiency and minimising risk associated with staff turnover.

A large Australian university, let's call them SmartUni, had defined the need for quality data governance as a strategically important factor in successful long-term operations. They embarked on a project sponsored by the Executive Office of Strategy & Quality and the CIO that established a Data Governance Working Group to improve university-wide communication, break down siloed working environments, assist the on-boarding of new staff, eradicate inefficiencies caused by misunderstandings and to reduce the risk they faced with the potential loss of subject matter experts when staff left SmartUni's employ.

The unique nature of SmartUni's approach

When organisations determine they need to develop a better governance of data, typically the project remains focused solely on the IT processes around capture, storage, security and quality of data.

SmartUni's approach recognised that unless the organisation's business functions were included in the development of data governance processes, those processes risked being ineffective, unworkable and potentially developing bottlenecks or blockages in the business's use of the data.

Beginning with business term definition writing meant that the business staff and the IT

staff were communicating clearly and developing governance processes that were based on a thorough understanding of what the data meant to the business and how the business needed to use it. This ensured the success of the governance project and increased long-term, organisation wide efficiency.

History before Intraversed's engagement

SmartUni had planned a two-phased approach, with the first phase dedicated to choosing a glossary tool and implementing its use throughout the organisation. A major ITC vendor's business glossary tool was selected and implemented, as per their plan.

The second phase was undertaken some time later, involving the engagement of an implementation partner to help develop governance and standards around the glossary, to assist in writing business term definitions and to develop a conceptual data model for the enterprise and deliver training on data modelling to Business Intelligence staff.

Intraversed were selected as this implementation partner because of our expertise in establishing common language in complex organisations and our unique approach to business information management.



A business-driven approach

Intraversed understand that business information needs to be managed as a valuable resource rather than a valuable asset (much like people). Our business descriptive approach begins with a solid taxonomy and ownership of business language. This complements IT asset ownership and allows for alignment with governance and organisational strategy.

Intraversed applied their Intralign definition writing standard and method in order to complete the large number of definitions required and to adequately represent the requirements of the forty-two stakeholders involved – 176 terms were identified and 88 were defined using the definition writing standards. Applying this structure streamlined both the writing process of the core definition writing team and the approval process of all stakeholders.

Through this process, the Data Governance Working Group took ultimate accountability for the approval of definitions and the process outcomes lead to the alignment of the university's policies to relevant term definitions.

What can you learn from SmartUni's experience?

The extensive scope of the business term definition writing project highlighted that effective continuation of business term governance required more resources than SmartUni had initially estimated to ensure it became established as a business-as-usual function.

It also became apparent that selecting a glossary tool before the full extent of the definition writing process was established meant that SmartUni had a tool that did not meet all of their needs. While it was sufficient to use, and work-arounds could be developed, understanding the life cycle and governance processes of the business terms prior to software selection would have likely resulted in SmartUni experiencing a greater functional ROI for their software investment.

Business term definition and glossary development, while often a large project to undertake, can not only assist in creating clarity across an organisation but can have follow-on benefits of clearer general communication, building great collaboration across departments, reduce wasted time, money and effort and safeguard organisations against loss of corporate knowledge in the future.

Are inconsistent business term definitions affecting your information management capability?

[Take our free assessment at intraversed.com.au](https://www.intraversed.com.au), we'd love to show you areas you can address for early benefits.



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