Industrial Experience Report:
BiSL as driver for innovating business information management in the Dutch police organization(s)

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Abstract: BiSL is a process framework that aims explicitly at the field of business information management. The BiSL model-driven improvement program that was run by the Dutch police is presented.

1   Introduction

Information is vital for police work. Information is gathered during crime investigations, it is used to determine where and when police are needed and information is used to be able to take appropriate actions in encountering situations or people. 20 years ago, within the police there was hardly any management attention for information and information systems, whereas nowadays information is regarded more and more as a primary production factor.

Like many other non-police organizations Dutch police face the challenge of aligning and concentrating their organization. Police was in need of a shared approach to handling information issues. BiSL®[1] (Business Information Services Library), the framework for business information management, turned out to be a valuable instrument for this transformation.

2   BIM and BiSL

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, organizations struggled in their role as commissioner of IT-projects and IT-suppliers and today they are still struggling with business governance of IT. This has led to many questions in the field that nowadays is known as Business Information Management (BIM)[1]. Since these questions were not addressed sufficiently by existing models, they were taken up and combined with best practices in this field. This resulted in BiSL, a


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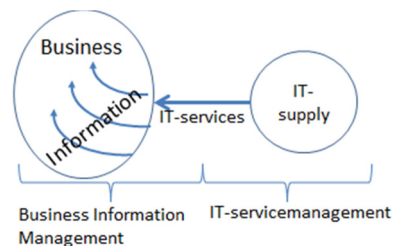
[1] BiSL® is a Registered Trademark of ASL BiSL Foundation

framework for business information management. BiSL (Business Information Services Library)[2] is a generic framework for business information management. BiSL describes the essentials of BIM. Underlying is a set of principles:

1. BIM is responsible for the alignment between business and IT;
2. BIM roles and responsibilities must be in place for every (business) process that is relevant to an organization;
3. BIM governs IT from a business point of view;
4. Focus may be on three levels: business process, complex and generic information system and the level of the entire organization;
5. Operations and strategy as well as business and IT should be aligned;
6. A business process owner (system owner) must be appointed and acting as such;
7. Focus is on run as well as on build of business and information.

BiSL defines several process clusters, each focusing on a particular area of interest:
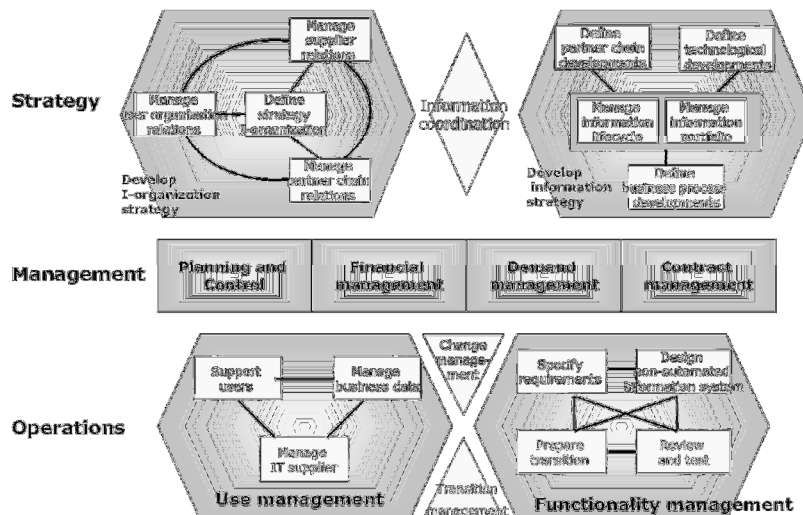
    — **Use management:** securing execution of the daily business processes;
    — **Functionality management:** focus on changing the processes and the support;
    — **Connecting processes:** ensures smooth transitions between run and build vv.;
    — **Management processes:** control information and IT for the medium term;
    — **Develop information:** governs the information portfolio in the long term;
    — **Develop I-organization strategy:** organizational development of the I-domain;
    — **Information coordination:** ensure alignment of I-organization and I-strategy.

All processes are described in the BiSL book by means of goals, inputs, transition activities, outputs and the relations with other domains in business and IT. By doing so BiSL provides structure, checklists and a platform for exchange of experiences.
BiSL is concerned with the content of BIM as such. As an add-on to the framework a selfassessment[3] was developed conform ISO/IEC15504-2[4]. Process capability levels are defined, which are used for continuous process improvement. With the publication of the BiSL book in 2005, BiSL was brought forward into the public

domain and adopted by the ASL BiSL Foundation. The foundation is a.o. committed to internationalization of the BiSL framework.

3   BIM-Challenges for Dutch Police Organization

One major challenge for the police in the late nineties was the concentration of over 200 independent, autonomous local police departments into 26 regional organizations. This meant that an enormous legacy of different ways of working and ways of supporting processes were brought together in 26 organizational entities. This initial fragmentation hindered proper information exchange; it cost a lot to maintain all different applications and to integrate all different data. The need for restructuring the information portfolio was felt heavily.

In the course of the integration, all regional IT departments were concentrated. This meant that every independent region had lost direct control over its own IT supplier and had to do business with an external provider that supplied IT for several regions. This meant that besides dealing with the legacy and the need for cooperation on process and information content the newly formed regions had to adept to their role as an IT demand organization as well.

However, scale arguments lead to further concentration yet. Of course, on the one hand the required span of police action increases, mainly due to ever expanding criminal networks. On the other hand it is expected that further concentration of control will lead to a more efficient and effective organization. For that reason, the next transformation (which is going on right now) is the transition into one central police organization. This may have even larger impact. There will be a single police entity under central command. One of the departments of this entity coordinates information management for the entire force.

During both transformations of the organization(s) police sought a shared way of working for daily police operations and a shared set of process support and information model. Being involved in thinking about a structural approach for BIM resulted in an early adaptation of BiSL for setup of BIM organization and processes.

4   Use of BiSL and the Results

BiSL is successfully applied as a base for the development of processes and organizational roles. The principles of BiSL were put into practice and the process descriptions were used to create a common understanding. As a first step, a central unit for BIM was formed to establish a common language and approach and to define a set of activities that lead to a more effective and efficient governance of Information and IT:

- All personnel involved in BIM tasks were invited to a program of education and certification in BiSL. During a 5 year program over 2500 employees participated.
- The model was used to illustrate to the higher police echelons the importance of BIM to the performance of their unit and how to play an active role in this field. This led to a number of initiatives to rationalize IT assets, even in the period that the 26 regions were governed independently.
- BIM processes were organized according to business domains (i.e. Intelligence)

rather than applications. One of the results of this activity was that employees who considered themselves "police people" (in contrast with "IT people") claimed roles in information management and have been fulfilling these roles successfully.

- Using a common language and shared job descriptions enabled BIM workers to share and exchange practices and knowledge and even combine similar tasks between regions. An inviting common platform was established and this formed a basis for further professionalization of BIM.
- The roles that interacted with IT suppliers were encouraged to develop a joint approach to realize more efficient use of funds.
- A common development plan for the information asset portfolio was defined in a regular interregional alignment per business domain.
- Barriers for sharing information in daily police operations are set aside.
- Besides internal professionalization police also sought alliances with other organizations: a magazine, a yearly congress and BIM get-togethers facilitate police and their partners in a structural improvement path.
- Information has established itself as a topic for management. Governance of information and IT is performed in a structured and comparable way over all different police organizations. With this, a solid foundation has been laid for further development towards one single national police organization.

5   Next Steps and Conclusions

Proper business information management has yielded a shifting focus from technology towards real value of information. This focus on police business process improvement will continue and in turn will lead to higher expectations of BIM in the future. Hence, further growth in the BIM process capabilities will be inevitable. BiSL offers sufficient possibilities to reach a higher level of maturity.

Dutch police have become an enthusiastic ambassador for the use of BiSL. Several initiatives developed, where new use of the framework was introduced. An example of such an initiative is the development of a governance organization for IT components that are used not only by the police, but also by other law enforcement agencies. Successful use of the model led to further adaptation and professional improvement of BIM in other government organizations.

6   References

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