PRISM™ – Performance, Risk, and Information Strategy Model

Executive Summary

Every organization depends on information. Yet surprisingly few organizations can objectively answer a simple question:

How healthy is our records and information governance program?

Most organizations can point to policies, retention schedules, training materials, or technology platforms. Some can identify regulatory requirements they must satisfy. Many have invested significant time and money in implementing governance initiatives. Yet when executives ask whether those investments have resulted in a stronger governance program, the answers are often based on anecdote rather than evidence.

Records and information governance have evolved beyond a compliance function. It has become a strategic business capability that supports operational efficiency, regulatory compliance, cybersecurity, litigation readiness, digital transformation, artificial intelligence, and organizational resilience. Like cybersecurity, finance, or quality management, governance cannot be effectively managed without meaningful measurement.

PRISM™ (Performance, Risk, and Information Strategy Model) was developed to address this challenge. Rather than treating governance as a collection of isolated policies or periodic audits, PRISM provides an objective framework for evaluating governance capabilities, identifying priorities, and measuring continuous improvement over time.

The Visibility Problem

Executives routinely receive dashboards measuring financial performance, cybersecurity posture, customer satisfaction, operational efficiency, and project performance. These dashboards influence investment decisions by transforming complex information into understandable business intelligence.

Records and information governance rarely receive the same treatment.

Instead, leadership often hears statements such as:

"We updated the retention schedule."

"We completed annual training."

"The audit went well."

While each may represent worthwhile accomplishments, none answers the larger question:

Is the governance program becoming stronger?

Activities measure effort.

Executives manage outcomes.

Why Traditional Approaches Leave Gaps

Most governance programs evolve organically over time. Policies are developed to satisfy regulatory requirements. Technology is implemented to solve immediate operational challenges. Training is delivered when regulations change. Audits occur when required.

These individual efforts are valuable, but they often remain disconnected.

A records policy may exist without executive accountability.

Retention schedules may be current while disposition practices remain inconsistent.

Technology investments may improve storage without improving governance.

Organizations frequently possess all of the individual pieces without ever seeing the complete picture.

A puzzle scattered across a table contains all the necessary pieces. It is still not a finished picture.

The same is true for information governance.

Governance Is A Business Capability

ISO 15489 defines records not merely as stored information, but as evidence of business activity and organizational assets that support accountability, decision-making, risk management, and legal compliance. The standard emphasizes that effective records management requires recurring analysis of business activities, defined responsibilities, monitoring, and continual improvement.

That perspective changes the conversation.

Governance is no longer simply about storing documents correctly or complying with retention schedules.

It becomes an organizational capability. Capabilities can be evaluated. Capabilities can be measured. Capabilities can improve.

This shift—from compliance projects to measurable organizational capability—forms the foundation of PRISM™.

From Standards to Strategy

Organizations across different industries operate under different regulatory expectations.

Federal agencies must satisfy requirements established by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). Healthcare organizations operate within the framework established by HIPAA. Financial institutions may incorporate SEC or FINRA requirements. Other industries bring their own regulatory, contractual, or accreditation obligations.

Although these environments differ, the underlying governance principles remain remarkably consistent.

Effective governance requires accountability.

It requires documented policies.

It requires protection of information.

It requires appropriate retention and defensible disposition.

It requires monitoring, training, and continual improvement.

PRISM is built upon these enduring principles while allowing evaluation criteria to incorporate the regulatory and operational requirements most relevant to each client's environment. The methodology remains consistent; the evaluation benchmarks are tailored to reflect the realities of the organization being assessed.

Rather than replacing recognized standards, PRISM integrates and normalizes them into a single, coherent evaluation methodology that executives can understand and use to guide decision-making.

Seeing Governance Clearly

The name PRISM is intentional.

A prism splits a single beam of light into the spectrum hidden within it.

Organizations often view governance as a single challenge.

In reality, governance consists of multiple interconnected capabilities, each contributing differently to overall program health.

PRISM separates that complexity into seven measurable evaluation domains, providing an objective assessment of organizational strengths, vulnerabilities, and opportunities for improvement. Rather than producing a pass-or-fail audit, the framework creates an executive-level picture of governance performance.

Each domain is evaluated independently using transparent scoring criteria grounded in recognized governance standards and regulatory guidance. Individual scores are then combined into an overall program assessment, allowing leadership to understand both current performance and organizational priorities.

PRISM does not invent problems.

It reveals them.

From Measurement to Action

Measurement alone creates little value.

Its purpose is to make better decisions.

A PRISM assessment produces more than a report. It provides an executive dashboard, prioritized recommendations, and an implementation roadmap aligned to organizational objectives. Leadership gains the ability to answer questions that previously depended upon opinion:

- Which governance capabilities present the greatest organizational risk?
- Where should limited resources be invested first?
- Which improvements will produce the greatest organizational value?
- How has governance improved over the past year?

The result is a governance program that becomes measurable, defensible, and manageable.

Governance Should Never Stand Still

Perhaps the greatest misconception surrounding records and information governance is that it represents a project with a finish line.

Organizations change. Technology evolves. Regulations are revised. Artificial intelligence introduces new opportunities and new risks.

Governance must evolve with them.

For that reason, PRISM was designed as a continuous improvement framework rather than a one-time assessment. Organizations establish a baseline, implement prioritized improvements, reassess performance, and demonstrate measurable progress over time.

The conversation changes.

Instead of reporting on completed activities, governance leaders report on organizational capability.

Instead of describing effort, they demonstrate outcomes.

Instead of asking whether governance exists, executives understand how well it performs.

Conclusion

Organizations measure financial performance because finances matter.

They measure cybersecurity because risk matters.

They measure operational performance because efficiency matters.

Information governance deserves the same level of executive visibility.

Modern organizations cannot afford to manage one of their most valuable strategic assets through assumptions, isolated audits, or anecdotal success stories. Governance should be evaluated with the same discipline applied to every other critical business capability.

PRISM transforms governance from a collection of disconnected activities into a measurable management system. By integrating internationally recognized standards with industry-specific requirements and presenting the results through an objective, repeatable framework, it enables organizations to see governance clearly, prioritize improvement confidently, and demonstrate measurable progress year after year.

Because, in the end:

Governance should not be measured by effort. It should be measured by progress.

Learn More About PRISM™

A PRISM evaluation provides:

✓ Executive Dashboard
✓ Seven Domain Assessment
✓ Prioritized Improvement Roadmap
✓ KPI Framework

PRISM™

PERFORMANCE, RISK, AND INFORMATION STRATEGY MODEL

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