

ing committee is also a hallmark of successful RIM programs as it provides visibility into the program to senior management and brings senior-level authority to support the program.

The success of portfolio management is based upon well-defined, rigorously enforced processes that allow the organization to identify change events and respond to them in a rational way that is measured from initiation through implementation. RIM programs also rely heavily on well-defined processes to enforce policy and manage information throughout its life cycle, from creation through disposition.

Some insight is then given into

the challenges associated with initially implementing and then maintaining a portfolio management office (PMO). Many of those challenges, such as gaining senior management support or maintaining a PMO when budgets shrink due to economic or other factors, are similar to the challenges faced by RIM programs.

Taming Change is an excellent introduction to portfolio management concepts, with a number of interesting facts, concepts, and processes that may be of use to RIM professionals. The book is aimed at a senior-level audience (e.g., chief executive officers, chief financial officers, and chief information officers), as it characterizes

implementing portfolio management as a strategic initiative that requires commitment from all levels of the organization.

The authors assume the reader possesses a fair amount of business management (e.g., managing demand versus capacity and process flow diagrams) and project management knowledge (e.g., familiarity with project scheduling and work breakdown structures). For these reasons, RIM practitioners may find parts of the book a difficult read at times. **END**

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Death to Zombie IT Systems

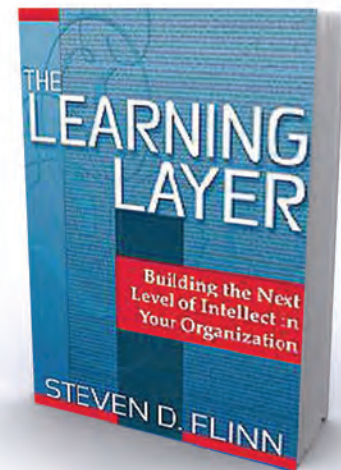
Irene Gelyk, CRM

The *Learning Layer: Building the Next Level of Intellect in Your Organization* by Steven D. Flinn explores, in very compelling language, how to transform an organization's "zombie" IT system into an adaptive and dynamic expertise network. The author describes a means by which businesses can harness the entrepreneurial creativity of individuals and systematize it. Most impressively, the book provides a framework for how to address challenges by integrating learning into the very "fabric of business" in effective and measurable ways.

The first two sections of the book introduce and expand upon the idea of the *learning layer* – "a merging of people and systems that automatically learns [and] evolves..." – through analogies with how the human brain functions and learns, and it shows how Flinn's theory can be applied to IT systems. The third part of the book

addresses issues within an organization and introduces the idea of a business fabric framework to incorporate strategy, capabilities, and culture. The final section outlines how to weave the learning layer into the fabric of the organization.

The author labels current corporate IT systems as zombie systems. In his own words, "Imagine for a moment that you existed in a society in which absolutely no one responded to you unless you directly commanded someone to do something or asked someone a very specific question. And their responses to you are invariably direct – doing or saying nothing more or less than required, not being able to infer or identify with any of your intentions, desires, preferences, or feelings. You would feel like you are in a bad zombie movie! But this 'Night of the Living Dead' is exactly what we have come to accept with regard to our systems."



The Learning Layer: Building the Next Level of Intellect in Your Organization

Authors: **Steven D. Flinn**

Publisher: **Palgrave Macmillan**

Publication Date: **2010**

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Flinn's method to slay these zombie systems is to add the learning layer on top of the organization's existing networks so they can become socially aware through the use and development of "fuzzy networks and fuzzy relationships where nothing is forced into an unnatural hierarchy."

According to Flinn, "The key is to create an automatically evolving system, like our brains, by applying the preference inferencing capabilities of the socially aware system to generate not just adaptive recommendations for users of the system, but to perform some programming judo and direct recommendations back onto the system itself."

Flinn provides easy-to-understand explanations of this theory and how to apply them. Much of what he proposes is already being used daily by some organizations. Consider that Google, Amazon, Facebook, and Twitter all use some form of an embryo learning layer to discover, analyze, and make informed recommendations based on what they have gathered and are learning about behavioural patterns and profiles.

In that context, organization's will

need to achieve something similar by adding an evolving learning network that would also be able to make informed decisions over time about information, documents, records, data, and users.

Records and information management (RIM) professionals will find these theories to be a helpful tool for managing the life cycle of their organizations' information and records. "The system itself will take care of reconfiguring the network to ensure that the right content is most easily accessible to the right person at the right time," says Flinn. "It will take care of the annoying, and usually indefinitely postponed, administrative task of archiving content no longer valuable or relevant information, and do so with a more deft touch than is practically possible manually. The adaptive system will ensure that less useful content will just fade into the background of the learning network over time."

It is boggling trying to understand all the possible implications of how RIM professionals can make use of, apply rules to, and influence the learning layer to more effectively cap-

ture and manage their organizations' records and information.

There are still some unanswered questions, including how organizations will protect their customers' personal information. Flinn says, "You must always be in complete control of tracking and storage of your own behavioural information, and it must be easily and transparently controlled." Facebook is a good example: Only through social pressure has Facebook modified its privacy settings as part of its clients' profiles.

This book comes highly recommended. Flinn is the founder and CEO of ManyWorlds Inc., a strategy and intellectual capital design firm that delivers strategic advice and research, content solutions, and adaptive software and processes to the world's leading businesses. As a result, Flinn writes with the business executive in mind, but the book will be of value to practitioners in the fields of IT, knowledge management, RIM, and content management. **END**

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