



WILL TOP MANAGEMENT BE WELL INFORMED?

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As businesses run in overdrive, **how will savvy C-Level executives and members of the Board make sound strategic decisions?** Would the audit, financial, operating and risk functions provide comprehensive, relevant and timely data to support such top-level decisions? Would the reams of information feeding executive decision-making processes become clear, credible and actionable?

According to a recent global study released by IBM Corporation(*), Chief Financial Officers (CFOs) are finding “substantial gaps” in areas such as professional skills and information integration. Given such endemic lags, the information bubbling up to the top may lack a much needed strategic punch.

Well beyond the financial management confines, companies will be increasingly swarmed by real-time data feeds, electronic transactions, mobile and social networking interactions. And a live breed of unstructured feeds such as digital video and voice, and location information will compound the issue. Interdependencies across multiple functional dimensions of customer, product, interaction channel, and associated risks will augment the complexity and intensity of the information exponentially.

Constraints from the physical world will exacerbate the information challenge. Such as the Olympic example of high-speed ice skaters who find it difficult to occupy the same spot in space and time, particularly on a tight curve. If one skater pushes the other, he or she runs a tangible risk of getting disqualified. As the information overrun gets out of control, **most C-level executives will have a tough time making sense of overlapping, redundant, late, and oftentimes inaccurate data.** Lackadaisical data may result in flawed decisions or damaging indecision.

So how will top-level executives stop spinning their heads amid a storm of imperfect and freewheeling data? The mentioned IBM study suggests that CFOs should become “the new value integrators.” True, strategic CFO initiatives will be instrumental to a modern and workable enterprise. And **top management must also take ownership** and invest in structural improvements to model, gather, analyze, enrich and integrate a purposeful array of internal and external data.

The ultimate competitive advantage will hinge on planning ahead more granularly and thoroughly around a strategic vision. Companies must proactively think through the disruptive changes that haunt the business dynamics and information flows. And a flexible, multifunctional information framework should support decision-making throughout the enterprise. **Then the top will stop spinning...**

(* **Note:** Publicly Available information provided by IBM can be found at

<ftp://ftp.software.ibm.com/common/ssi/pm/xb/n/gbe03282usen/GBE03282USEN.PDF>