

In This Issue: – We don't need no stinking rules  
Update on Information Management & Lab Informatics

eOrganizedWorld  
the Online Information Management Newsletter  
for Information Professionals  
from Charlie Sodano

### We don't need no stinking rules

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One of my earliest run-ins with a set of written rules (policies, procedures, methods, etc.) occurred when I had to follow some Standard Operating Procedures for a particular kind of chemical analysis that I was running. After reading through the long multipage document that supposedly told me what I should be done before, during and after the analysis, I sought the assistance of a chemist who had been on the job a lot longer than I. He verbally explained what I had to do in less than a minute. So why didn't the SOP tell me what he did? I asked my boss why the SOP was written in this way and he replied that it was necessary because of the FDA. Hmm, so the FDA supports the composition of long, boring, poorly written documents? This doesn't make a lot of sense. I would think that an FDA inspector would be kind of like me, a new employee who wants to know how to do it.

I've heard this explanation many times since, except the FDA was replaced by; "that's how this company does it" or "that's how everyone does it". If you spend the time to write up a rule, why don't you write it up so it really helps people to:

- Eliminate confusion
- Get the job done faster and better
- Increased understanding or comprehension
- Make the job easier
- Reduce errors or waste
- Reduce frustration
- Comply to the law

People just want to know what it will do to them or for them. They don't give a rats ass about what the FDA thinks.

So how can you write good rules that most everyone can read, understand and find useful? It's not really that hard. Assuming that you are skilled in the subject matter relating to the rule, your first step is to jot down in any order what the rule concerns and things associated with it. Do NOT start with an ordered list or outline. This will pretty much assure that you will produce a boring, unreadable rule. You can group items together later. Write short descriptions on paper or use a software tool or both. When you think that you have captured all items, begin to put together your outline and flesh it out so it's readable.

Next show it to a few men/women on the street who would be impacted by the rule. Not your boss or colleagues. Ask them if it would help them with one of the areas listed above. If not, you have more work to do.

Your final task is to reduce the length as much as possible without losing sense. It's difficult to get people to read more than one page/screen of anything these days. So the shorter, the better.

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Contact us ([consultants@eorganizedworld.com](mailto:consultants@eorganizedworld.com)) for additional information about getting your records management program started. We'll give you more free advice and explain how we can continue to work together.

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**What's new?**

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**INFORMATION MANAGEMENT**

According to a recent Gartner survey, across the demographics, screen reading is now virtually on a par with print consumption. Survey data showed that younger age groups are happier to read on screen than older respondents, with the 40 to 54 years cohort least satisfied with their screen reading experience. In terms of gender, men typically reported screen reading easier than women, but both sexes said screen reading was generally the same or harder than reading printed text.

Gartner analysts said the shift from paper to screen-based consumption is not a straight substitution of one medium for another. There is no single paradigm for screen reading, because reading a short piece of text on a mobile phone screen is a different proposition from the reading experience with an e-reader.

**LAB INFORMATICS**

Accelrys, Inc. announced that its subsidiary, Accelrys Software Inc., has acquired privately-held Contur Software AB. Based in Stockholm, Sweden, Contur is an emerging leader in cost-effective Electronic Laboratory Notebook (ELN) software solutions which enable scientific organizations to document their research and development processes and to capture their intellectual property (IP). Contur is a leading provider of such ELN capabilities via a Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) model.

PerkinElmer has acquired Labtronics, an Ontario-based company that provides procedure-based electronic laboratory notebook (ELN) solutions for laboratories performing routine analysis in multiple industries.

The addition of Labtronics' solutions extends PerkinElmer's ELN and data-integration software offerings into laboratories following strict routine procedures such as regulated and nonregulated QA/QC, late-stage product or method development laboratories, and environmental and food testing labs. Labtronics' tools can be applied to any procedure-based problem including laboratory analysis, equipment calibration and validation, and cleaning validation, notes PerkinElmer.

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