Proposed Governance
For Enterprise Portal

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Table of Contents

1. Why Clear Governance for Enterprise Portal Is Important

Many organizations are making substantial investments to help their employees find and use the information they need to perform their jobs. These organizations correctly recognize that by making key business information easier to find, they can improve their organization's effectiveness and efficiency. Many have turned to enterprise portals (EPs) to accomplish these goals. While some organizations have reaped considerable returns from their investments, many are suffering from poor performance or are not as effective as they could be. Like other human resource and IT-oriented initiatives, they have long struggled to align themselves to the businesses they serve.

What determines the performance of these EPs? The literature offers many suggestions. Often cited are: a clear vision and purpose for the EP, alignment with strategic goals, management support, embedding EP function into business processes, an integrated technical infrastructure, an organizational culture that supports the sharing and use of information, and metrics for measuring program success.

While these factors are generally important, the document argues that they aren't the *cause* of a well managed EP, but rather the *result*. According to research, what really matters to the success of these types of programs is how they are governed. No known organization has enjoyed sustained benefits from its EP program without establishing clear decision rights for how decisions are made and resources are used.

This document defines EP governance and its purpose, and proposes a specific structure for governing the EP.

2. What Is Enterprise Portal Governance and What Is its Purpose?

We define governance as:

specifying the decisions that need to be made, and those who should make them, to maximize the benefits and efficiency of EP-related activities

The elements of the definition are given below:

- **Decision rights** – who can set strategy and objectives, and commit resources
- **Accountability framework –** how results are measured and responsibility assigned
- **Desirable behavior –** desirable behaviors embody the beliefs and culture of the organization as defined and enacted through not only strategy, but also mission statements, business principles, rituals, and structures.

The purpose of governance is to *both* empower and control. This document suggests that governance should encourage and leverage the ingenuity of the corporations' people and ensure compliance with the organization's overall vision and values.

Governance is different from management in that governance determines *who* makes the decisions, while management is the process of making and implementing the decisions.

Given these definitions, the document suggests that EP governance, when properly done, accomplishes the following:

- clarifies business strategies and promotes the role of the EP in achieving them
- measures and manages the amount spent on, and the value received from, the EP
- assigns accountability for the organizational changes required to create value from EP investments
- promotes cross-organizational learning, and the sharing and reusing of EP assets.

Effective governance has the following characteristics. It is:

- **Simple** – Mechanisms unambiguously define the responsibility or objective for a specific person or group.
- **Transparent** – Effective mechanisms rely on formal processes. How the mechanism works is clear to those who are affected by, or want to challenge, governance decisions.
- **Suitable –** Mechanisms engage individuals in the best position to make given decisions.

3. Recommended Governance for Enterprise Portal

The report posits five key decisions that must be made when governing EP. They are:

1. What is the business role of EP?
2. What should the design and architecture be for EP (and how should it fit into the enterprise architecture)?
3. Who is responsible for the content, its structure (and meta data), and content standards?
4. How are investment decisions made, prioritized, and how should payoff be evaluated?
5. How will the institutional changes required to make EP a success be made?

For each of these decisions, this document proposes that a workstream be created for the duration of the development effort. The document also proposes the membership of each workstream, and the frequency with which it should meet. (After launch, the governance structure can then be re-evaluated and governance structure for maintenance mode can be set up.)

3.1. Governance Decision Types

Each key decision, and its corresponding workstream, is described in greater detail below. Representative issues for each workstream are also highlighted to clarify the relevance of each workstream.

1. **Mission Workstream: What is the business role of the EP?** At the strategic level, what is the primary purpose of EP? Is it meant to promote goals such as faster client service, higher quality, or more efficient operations? What are the desirable behaviors that need to be promoted? For instance, should the organization promote greater willingness to share information among staff, the creation and dissemination of information within the organization, or the gathering and application of ideas from outside the organization?

   Sample issues:
   - What is the corporate mission for the portal? What does senior management hope to obtain from this investment?
   - What are the behaviors that senior management wants to see from key holders of content and from the users of the portal?
   - How will senior management communicate the value of the portal to employees?

2. **Technical Workstream: What should the design and architecture be for EP?** The issues that need to be addressed here relate to the overall blueprint for EP. What are the core business processes of the organization that need to be taken into account? How are they related? What technical capabilities should be standardized organization-wide to support efficiencies and facilitate process standardization and integration? What is the plan for keeping underlying technologies up-to-date? What infrastructure services should be outsourced, if any?

   Sample issues:
   - What will be the source of people directory information?

- What other key interfaces to other Corporate systems should be planned for?
- How much of the maintenance of EP be done in-house?

3. **Content Workstream: Who is responsible for the content, its structure, meta data, and standards?** EP is a useless empty vessel without useful content. To work, EP must have clear standards for the purchase, storage, tagging (including attribution), updating, retiring, and security of content. This also includes processes involving content. For instance, what are the standards for creating a community?   What are the requirements? Should they receive corporate funding? What justifications are required to their continued existence? And what are the criteria for retiring one?

   Sample issues:
   - How will content providers be motivated to create and maintain valuable content?
   - Is there agreement on the taxonomies being proposed by the EP development team?
   - What help can content providers expect from the EP development and maintenance team?

4. **Investment and Evaluation Workstream: How are investment decisions made, prioritized, and evaluated?** How should EP be funded? Should it be funded centrally or via the business units, or some combination of the two?   What is the process for choosing which initiatives to fund and how much to spend? What process changes or enhancements are strategically most important to the organization? How do we know that the investments are bringing results?   Also, how should EP's governance structure be communicated to affected parties? (Governance works in a vacuum unless it is able to communicate its purpose and decisions. Responsibility needs to be assigned for creating and maintaining the communication channels and education efforts that disseminate K&L governance principles and policies, and the outcomes of the K&L decision-making process.)

   Sample issues:
   - Who should lead the change control effort during development and the enhancement list during maintenance?
   - What measures should be used to judge EP's level of success?
   - How should EP best practices (especially around the content communities) be spread?

5. **Change Management Workstream: How will the changes required to make the portal a success be made?**   How will the cultural goals established by senior management be realized?   This touch point defines who is responsible for establishing the cultural norms that support EP.

   Sample issues:
   - What are the key messages that need to transmitted to employees and principal content providers?
   - How can the organization build on past successes (e.g., technology successes) to underpin EP's success?
   - How can we compensate for the fact that the culture is wary of corporate initiatives?

3.2. **Recommended Governance Participation**

The EP Governance Matrix table summarizes the participation in the five workstreams defined earlier. The deciding members of each workstream (workstream may have non-deciding staff) are then presented in a table for each workstream that also includes its recommended meeting frequency.

Decision / Decider	Articulating & communicating role of portal		Architecture & Technical Decisions		Content (business, meta, and standards)		Investment & Prioritization & Evaluation		Change Management	
	Input	*Decision*	*Input*	*Decision*	*Input*	*Decision*	*Input*	*Decision*	*Input*	*Decision*
Business leadership		X						X		
IT leadership			X	X		X				X
HR leadership					X				X	
Business units	X						X			
Other Group?					X					

Table 1: EP Governance Matrix

Mission Workstream	Frequency: Beginning of construction, beginning of transition, go-live
Charter: These are the issues this group is responsible for, and this person is the escalation point.	
Name	**Title**	**Business Unit**
	CEO	
	Director of HR	
	CIO	

Technical Workstream	Frequency: Weekly until go-live

Charter: Members of the project's technical workstream together have the authority and technical expertise to arbitrate on if, and how, a change request is to be implemented. The technical workstream is invoked to define technical strategy, assemble technical teams, define the scope to be evaluated, and evaluate the effort estimate of the work tasks, corresponding to a technical *change request*.

??(CIO)?? is the escalation point.

Name	Title	Business Unit
	Project Manager	
	Infrastructure	
	Network	
	Applications	

Content Workstream	Frequency: bi-Weekly until go-live

Charter: These are the issues this group is responsible for, and this person is the escalation point.

Name	Title	Business Unit
	HR	
	Operations	
	Engineering	
	Legal	
	IT	
	Sales and Marketing	

Investment and Evaluation Workstream	Frequency: Weekly until go-live

Charter: In order to manage the change control process in a fair and stable manner, a Change Control Board is established. The Change Control Board serves as the focal point for change management and retains the authority for deciding which proposed changes actually get incorporated into a work product.

??Executive Sponsor?? is the escalation point.

Name	Title	Business Unit
	IT Leadership	
	Ops Leadership	
	Sales Leadership	
	Corporate leadership	

Change Management Workstream	Frequency: Monthly until go-live	
Charter: These are the issues this group is responsible for, and this person is the escalation point.		
Name	**Title**	**Business Unit**
	Champions of System	