

The breakout session on continually improving an Information Service led by Jacqueline Beattie, Head of Business Information Services, ABN AMRO was an active and engaging discussion between delegates from a wide range of companies including Field Fisher Waterhouse, Deutsche Bank, Mercer Oliver Wyman, Grant Thornton, JP Morgan, Addleshaw Goddard and others. It looked at the challenges of running an international information service and why change is necessary. We looked at the speed and pace of change, and the importance of keeping up with outside regulatory factors and inside strategic drivers. Participants gave examples of how their Business Information Services has spotted different drivers for change.

Internal networking is crucial in order to stay ahead of the game to spot changes before they happen. In networking Internally, we discussed how we should pick internal stakeholders carefully. Some delegates found that reactive “feedback forms” have a limited value but keeping “brag files” “golden emails” and testimonials were useful at appraisals and in building business case proposals. An information service should continually reposition itself to stay relevant to the business.

Managing workloads was also discussed and if more routine work is pushed back to the end user, then an obvious benefit is a change in reputation with more challenging work. Helping people really formulate a question rather than just giving a reactive answer for example. But a more strategic benefit of “pushing back” can be getting “further into the business” For example by partnering with departments such as Business Development to get further into the business process, again with a resulting change in perception of the department. .

Changing skillsets are an important consideration and emerging new functions will be swallowed up by other departments with the BIS becoming obsolete if you don't acquire new skills. We should go after the new functions and then reposition the department accordingly. Finally we looked at how technology can help us such as the example of the use of a new system at ABN AMRO to manage contracts whilst providing really accurate usage statistics. This is dependent on working with internal data ie the global HR database and data from external vendors in the right format, It will be incredibly powerful to deliver really detailed reporting to management.