



Article Title: Best Practices for Forming a Governance Committee

Author: Karuana Gatimu, Solution Architect
Project Manager & SharePoint Architect, Skechers USA Inc.
Principle Enthusiast & Blogger, SharePointStrategist.com

SharePoint governance is a topic that most organizations do not spend enough time thinking about. The concept of governance relates to decisions that define expectations, grant power, or verify performance. Any company which deploys an enterprise content management (ECM) system of any sort should consider forming a committee to aid in governing these areas. For better or worse people have come to think of SharePoint as something easier that does not require these best practices. Field experience teaches us something different.

Any type of professional reading this article might be cringing in their seat because the thought of a committee doing anything is not your cup of tea. Here is a chance for you to have a different experience. ECM as a whole and SharePoint specifically is about collaboration. Bridging the gap between technology and business, SharePoint is a platform dedicated to bringing users together to make better business decisions, have faster access to enterprise data and share information within their various workgroups.

All enterprise content management systems are best managed with the inclusion of key players focused on making the long term strategic business decisions that will define success for the system. Whether your organization is just using SharePoint for a web portal solution or whether you have fully integrated virtual workplace forming a Governance Committee is definitely something you should pursue.

The difficulty comes in how to form that committee and who to include. The following points come from real world experience and a review of a variety of best practice references.

1. **Form a Balanced Group:** Include executive SharePoint sponsors, business analysts, IT professionals and line of business people who are or want to derive value from the SharePoint deployment. Try not to exceed ten people for the full group. If you are in a large organization consider forming sub-committee for specific tasks so you can include others.
2. **Include Legal and/or Human Resources Departments:** If you have these departments in your organization representatives from these areas are necessary to creating a compliant strategy.

3. **Foster Collaboration:** Take ownership of the tone of your meetings. Facilitate a conversation where all members are heard and can participate in the decision making process. Keep people focused on the goal not the perceived obstacles.
4. **Don't Build Rome in a 2 Hour Meeting:** Have a clear agenda and break it into manageable chunks. Nothing is gained by trying to do too much at one time.
5. **Build a Living Document:** A Governance Plan is a living part of your organizational strategy and will change over time. Retain your versions but don't expect to be "done".
6. **Use the Tools:** Create a site within your SharePoint deployment for your governance documents. Remember to include features like an issues list, discussions, objectives, surveys and document libraries both for the Governance Plan itself and research materials. Add in a calendar and tasks to keep track of important dates as well as a workflow for document approvals.
7. **Educate Yourself:** Collaborate with other professionals outside your organization to learn what they are doing. SharePoint has one of the most vital user communities of any platform software – use it!
8. **Keep Your Enthusiasm!:** Keeping a positive attitude while discussing potentially contentious things like taxonomy or retention periods can be challenging but ultimately will benefit the group as a whole. Take responsibility for being the Principle Enthusiast in your Governance Committee.

An ECM Governance Committee is an opportunity to break down the barriers between user groups within your organization and come to a common understanding about how to best serve your enterprise with SharePoint as your tool. Remember, however that it is people with their institutional knowledge that make technology useful. They are your best resource for creating governance success!