

## **INFORMATION POLLUTION: A DISASTER WAITING TO HAPPEN**

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Information is not just the spice that enhances the ingredients it **is** the main ingredient in industry. While the obvious benefits of information-use have driven the exponential growth of this industry, there has not been a similar attention paid to the inevitable risks of mis-information. Just as the benefits have grown exponentially, the dangers of misinformation have also grown exponentially. Unfortunately, good information turns into misinformation for a broad variety of reasons: design or development errors, data contamination in data warehouses, byproducts of system conversions, corruption of information due to accidental failures, deliberate fraud and security problems are some of the wide-ranging causes of misinformation. To state this simply, *we don't just have information-error problems we have information pollution !!* The difference between information error and information pollution is that the former is strictly local in domain impact and is driven by a single failure in most cases. The latter, on the other hand, is the accumulated effect of multiple uncorrected errors that may cause misinformation, unpredictably, in multiple domains.

Dealing with a business environment that is information-polluted is vastly different in concept and practice than dealing with particular information-error problems. First, an awareness of information-pollution problems has to be cultivated. Businesses need to develop a healthy respect and fear for what information-pollution can do to their organizations. Second, information-error problems have to be identified and dealt with independent of information-pollution problems. Information pollution is an enterprise-wide challenge, while information-errors are generally much more local. Third, solutions for information-pollution will be vastly different in nature from that of information-error problems. At the heart of the information pollution problem is the matter of *information integrity*. If we can manage information integrity at the enterprise level then we would have found a way to manage information pollution in that enterprise. If we can manage information integrity at the national level, then we would have found a way to manage information pollution for that society.