



Put compliance and IT governance into the system

To be able to manage the increasing regulatory requirements, Danish municipalities should implement a system integrating all aspects of their compliance efforts. Monitoring, security standards, quality standards and strategy can and must be linked when municipalities manage their IT installations.

By compliance specialist, Tomas Hellum, Linkin

Most Danish municipalities and regions are facing major challenges in complying with requirements regulating IT operation and infrastructure. The overall amalgamation is not fully in place, but IT departments must nonetheless establish functional solutions, and these have to comply with on average 20 external requirements. These requirements include IT audit guidelines (RS315), the DS484:2005 standard laid down by Denmark's Auditor General, and the ITIL covering good IT service management practices. IT departments must generally be prepared for a more regulated daily life in the public sector. In addition, this needs to happen without compromising service quality.

Resources have been cut and the pressure is enormous, which possibly explains why many public sector organisations are tackling the challenges inefficiently. In addition, to meet regulatory directives, the municipalities have spent resources in implementing security and compliance measures on an issue-by-issue basis. This approach provides isolated one-off solutions for each regulatory challenge. However, new rules and regulations for the IT environment will soon be flooding in, and these will require extra resources. This means that they will never complete the work, and will end up hopping from area to area, damping down one fire after another.

One unifying principle

To be able to cope with the upcoming regulatory requirements, the municipalities have to move from a reactive firefight to an integrated approach that can enable them to combine their efforts and reduce the inefficiencies. This can be achieved by a holistic system integrating all compliance processes into the system. The aim is to preserve knowledge and experience and to recycle processes as much as possible to ensure that each regulatory requirement does not become a completely unmanageable project with much too short a deadline.

One example of a framework model is 'Linkin Principle'. This has been built up on the basis of experience from different sectors. All in all, it offers an infrastructure for handling the requirements. The model starts by explaining 'why' to those members of staff who need to work and perform the controls. The model also explains to management why they need to work in the way they do, and why we are implementing these and not other processes.



Connecting link

A compliance and IT governance strategy is the link connecting business with rules, requirements, best practices and IT security. This strategy can also be further linked to existing work processes in the Danish municipalities. The connection in itself makes the work easier by writing and revising the processes. The persons who need to edit them know precisely which rules, requirements and best practices have to be complied with by the municipalities. At the same time, the persons working with processes and controls can understand the connection. They can explain why we need to do what is described. This advantage arises when the strategy for compliance and IT governance is deliberately used as a focus point.

There are benefits of mapping all processes and workflows against regulatory requirements. This involves developing proposals for adding processes and workflows. Actual requirements, such as RS315 are also mapped to the existing processes and workflows in the municipalities. For example, this could be in the form of an appendix to the strategy for IT compliance and governance.

The important thing is that this method safeguards control by the municipalities. They receive an ongoing and accurate picture of the state of their IT – as opposed to a snapshot when an internal or external auditor carries out an annual spot check. All in all, the new requirements and regulations will be able to be implemented faster and more easily.

Tomas Høllum is a compliance specialist and founder of IT consulting company Linkin, which optimizes governance and compliance processes. Read more at www.linkin.dk

“IT departments in the Danish municipalities can benefit from the implementation of recurring compliance processes, thereby ensuring that each new regulatory requirement is not treated as a stand-alone project,” believes compliance specialist Tomas Høllum from Linkin.

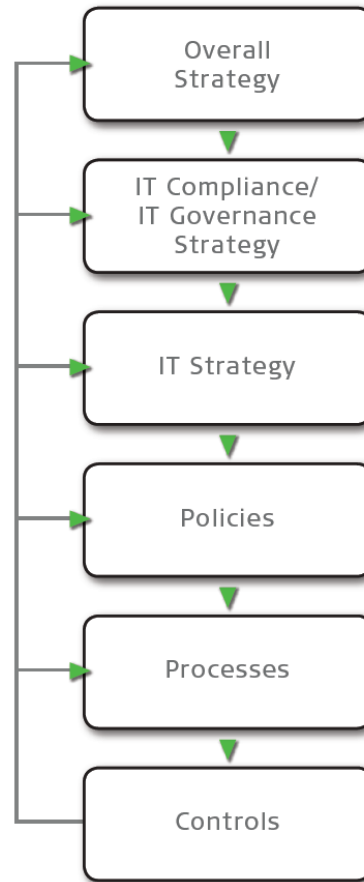


Fig. 1: IT management. The strategy for compliance and IT governance is the link connecting business with rules, requirements, best practices and IT security. Danish municipalities can benefit considerably by putting the full hierarchy into the system.

Consultant to Local Government Denmark (KL):

Cohesion provided by framework models

'Framework models ensure that management in a municipality is always in possession of information about the situation in their local authority area. The models can provide transparency so managers and staff can understand why the municipality is working with IT in the way it does. The models also explain to individual members of staff why the work should be carried out in a particular way. The models take care of the on average 20 external requirements that the municipalities are having to comply with in relation to their use of IT. Putting them together in a framework makes it much easier to work with regulations, requirements and best practices in the future.'

Michael Hald, Consultant to Local Government Denmark (KL)