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Julian Jenkins is a leading information design practitioner with 2nd Road, a Sydney-based consultancy firm specializing in using design thinking and the principles of rhetoric to transform management processes in large organizations. Julian has a doctorate in modern German history and taught as a Humanities academic for 10 years. In recent years he has developed particular expertise in the design of information to support senior leadership teams, in areas such as strategic planning and reporting. Insights from his work as an information designer have been published in international design journals.

[www.seconroad.com.au](http://www.seconroad.com.au)**From Data & Measures to Meaningful Decisions – Designing Useful Information for Senior Management and Boards**

Abstract:

The recent global financial crisis has highlighted an important issue which was easily overlooked when the economy was booming – that there are serious deficiencies in the quality of information available to senior Executives and to the Boards that oversee them. Though there have been useful efforts to broaden the scope of management information in recent years – moving beyond mere financial statements to embrace concepts such as the “triple bottom line”, “balanced scorecards” and “corporate social responsibility” reports – the recent crisis has exposed a dangerous gap in strategic information, and in the ability of key decision-makers to foresee potential risks and crises both internally and externally.

What is needed is certainly not just more information – the volume of information currently available is already a major problem. Rather, we need a whole new paradigm, based on two important new elements – a deeper theory of knowledge and a user-based approach to the design of management information.

A deeper theory of knowledge will move us beyond the reductionist approach of modernist epistemology, which believes that reality can be accurately represented in numbers, measures and dashboards. On its own, this approach is inadequate to cope with the human-centred, globally connected complexity of the modern organization.

A user-based approach to the design of management information will shift the emphasis away from the data itself towards the desired user outcomes – by focusing on the type of conversations that decision-makers want or need to have, the decisions they should be taking, and the level and format of information that will best support these processes.

My paper will address these issues and opportunities with practical examples and insights drawn from my consultancy work.