

# SHAREPOINT

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**INFOPATH IS A** powerful SharePoint tool, but are you exploiting its power in ways that can actually help your business? When you think of InfoPath, don't think "data entry." Instead, envision it as a self-contained database.

SharePoint MVP Paul Galvin outlines InfoPath best practices in "[Creating an InfoPath Development Strategy](#)." InfoPath is easy to use, but don't be fooled. The simplest techniques are not necessarily the best ones. Learn some tricks to get the most out of this versatile forms-publishing tool.

Do you need some best practices for managing your SharePoint infrastructure? Should you capture and log every database transaction, or is it OK to recover a database to the point of the latest successful database backup?

Ross Mistry and Shirmattie Seenarine team up on tips for figuring out how SQL Server recovery models affect the ability to cut data loss during database recovery operations. Read "[How Much SharePoint Data Can You Risk Losing?](#)" to learn how to choose the best recovery model for your SharePoint database. What have you got to lose—except a good night's sleep?

How about some helpful hints to manage unruly SharePoint users? Keep control with a governance plan with policies and penalties that users understand. Follow the advice of Microsoft MVP Brien M. Posey in "[Suppressing a SharePoint Rebellion](#)," to restore the peace and your credibility.

What are your best practices? Send the details to [ccasatelli@techtarget.com](mailto:ccasatelli@techtarget.com), and I'll publish your tip. ■



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# Creating an InfoPath Development Strategy

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Suppressing a SharePoint Rebellion

*Put a plan of best practices in place to get the most out of this powerful SharePoint tool.* **BY PAUL GALVIN**

**INFOPATH SERVICES, PART** of the enterprise edition of Microsoft Office SharePoint Server (MOSS), provides powerful functionality that allows developers and power end users to quickly create online forms.

InfoPath is a powerful tool, and even inexperienced users can create and publish an online form in less than an hour. Like many SharePoint features, however, the most obvious path forward with this tool is not necessarily the best path. Learn how to incorporate practices into your InfoPath forms development process that will provide enduring benefits for your personal productivity and for your company.

InfoPath forms are nearly always tied to business processes that combine rich data entry, a well defined and tightly managed business process, automated notifications for approvals /dispositions and reporting. In SharePoint terms, these map nicely to InfoPath (rich data entry), work-

flow (managed business process) and views on libraries and lists (for reporting). For time-sensitive processes where money or jobs are on the line, throw in some key performance indicators to round it out.

Any managed business process like that needs to answer questions like:

- 1 **What is the next step in the process?**
- 2 **What needs to happen in order for the workflow to move to the next step?**
- 3 **What was the last thing that happened with the form?**
- 4 **When should the next step be finished? Is it overdue?**
- 5 **What was the average execution time for the process? Longest time? Shortest time?**

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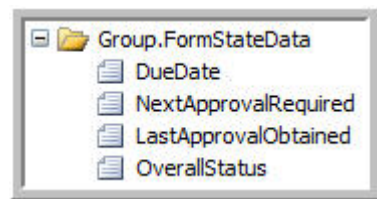
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At any given time, the InfoPath form's "state" precisely answers those questions. This leads to a key best practice: Represent the business process state by storing business process state data in the form itself. Consider **FIGURE 1**:

**FIGURE 1: Form state data**



**FIGURE 1** depicts a few typical pieces of data that collectively tell us the state of a form at any given time:

- **DueDate:** When the next approval should be obtained. This can drive a key performance indicator or an "overdue notice" automated email.

- **NextApprovalRequired:** This tells us who is responsible to approve or deny the request. We can't proceed with any workflow processing until this approval is obtained.

- **LastApprovalObtained:** This tells us who, exactly, most recently approved the request.

- **OverallStatus:** A single value that tells us at a glance what's happening with this form.

Your own business process will require different sets of specific data to be stored.

Normally, this state information wouldn't appear on a view available to typical end users. InfoPath, however, doesn't care if the state information is visible to end users or not. Add your state information to the form, promote those values and update them via rules on the form itself—for example, when the user clicks a "submit for approval" button. SharePoint Designer and Visual Studio style workflows can both read and set the values of InfoPath fields as long as you promote them when you publish the form to SharePoint.

Managing a business process state is a powerful technique that every user should take advantage of when implementing a business process in SharePoint with InfoPath.

## CREATE SELF-DOCUMENTING INFOPATH FORMS

Once we embrace the "form as database" concept, we can do some interesting things to organize the form, document the form and debug the form in the—hopefully—rare cases when production problems arise.

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It's common for even moderately complex InfoPath forms to leverage multiple views. For instance, you may translate a multi-page paper form into an InfoPath form with one view per printed page. That can make a lot of sense. However, don't fall into the trap that a view is only for data entry by your end users. Create at least two additional views:

**1. Create a view to manage developer notes.** If you want to hide those notes, don't provide any runtime access to this view—rely on the InfoPath desktop client to get at the view at design time.

What better place to store notes about the form than the form itself? If you rely on a more classic approach to form documentation—for example, a SharePoint document library—then the documentation is far away from the form itself. The only downside with this practice is a small amount of bloat. You are actually adding an extra view that you never intend to provide your end users. The purist in you may feel like this is a waste of good resources, but consider maintenance programmers that will be looking to expand your form far in the future or maybe in about two weeks from now. If definitive programmer notes are embedded in the form, your organization will save time and money when it wants to correct or enhance that form.

**2. Administrative /debug view:**

Create a view that you intend to provide only to your developers and administrators. Show the form state data described above. If someone calls into the help desk with an issue, you can pull up the form and inspect its form state in a nicely arranged graphical format suited to your own style. Back that up with some developer notes that explain the meaning of those state fields.

**3. Plan for Growth:** You'll soon find yourself with a half dozen views on a typical InfoPath form if you have developer notes, an admin view, end user instructions, "main" data entry and a few confirmation screens. And that's just for starters. It can become unmanageable. A quick and easy way to organize them is to adopt a naming convention for your form views such as that depicted in **FIGURE 2**, page 6.

I use numbers to indicate views where users can enter data, early letters for confirmation type screens and later letters for administrative type views.

**PROCEED WITH CARE**

Like many SharePoint features, InfoPath is deceptively easy to use. However, its form and function—its very name—pushes us into thinking "form" and "data entry." Don't fall into that trap.

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Think of the form as a complete self-contained database. Provide your users with a terrific forms experience, but save yourself a lot of grief. Make your business process automation and debugging tasks easier by saving process state data in the form.

If the form is a database for business process automation purposes, why not use developer notes? Create a view just for developers, and reduce your long-term maintenance costs.

Finally, think about debugging. When users report a problem, they

usually say something like “it didn’t work.” Don’t rely on their shaky memory or myth-based understanding of the form and associated business processes. Create a view that lays out the facts (the state data) in a nice format suitable for debugging the form.

In combination, these practices will enhance your personal productivity with the tool and help your organization create high-quality forms and automated business processes with SharePoint and InfoPath. ■

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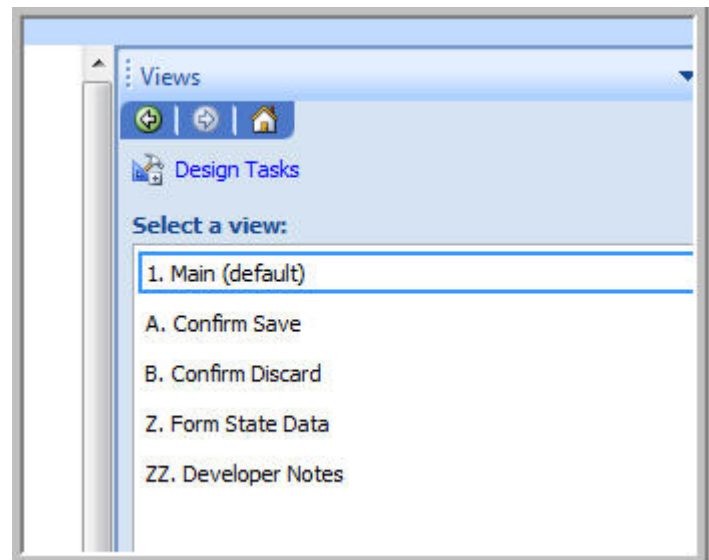
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**FIGURE 2: Adopt a naming convention for your views.**



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Paul Galvin** is a SharePoint MVP and co-founder of Arcovis, a SharePoint consulting organization providing services to clients in the New York metro area. Galvin has worked in the IT industry for more than 15 years in areas such as software development, consulting and SharePoint solutions design, where he works with clients to create business solutions using the SharePoint platform. He contributes to the SharePoint community through MSDN forums and his blog at <http://paulgalvin.spaces.live.com>.



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# How Much SharePoint Data Can You Risk Losing?

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*SharePoint administrators can minimize data loss by selecting the appropriate SQL Server recovery model.*

BY ROSS MISTRY AND SHIRMATTIE SEENARINE

**MICROSOFT OFFICE SHAREPOINT** Server (MOSS) 2007 and SQL Server are intricately connected with SQL Server as the back-end data repository for MOSS 2007.

SharePoint administrators sometimes have difficulty understanding this relationship, which can prevent them from having a full appreciation for it.

One of the main challenges faced by SharePoint administrators when managing a SharePoint infrastructure is figuring out how the SQL Server recovery models affect their ability to cut data loss during database recovery operations.

Each recovery model handles recovery a little differently. Specifically, the models differ in how they manage logging, which governs whether or not a SharePoint database can be recovered to the point of failure.

## OPTIONS FOR SQL SERVER RECOVERY MODELS

The three recovery models associated with a SharePoint database in SQL Server are:

- Full
- Simple
- Bulk-logged

**Full recovery model:** This approach captures and logs every database transaction, which makes it possible for administrators to restore a SharePoint database to an arbitrary point in time. When using this model, administrators must conduct backup maintenance on the transaction log to prevent logs from growing too large and disks from becoming full. After each backup, disk space is opened again and can be used until the next planned backup.

Some SharePoint administrators



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may notice a slight degradation in SQL Server performance when maintaining a transaction log. Don't sound the alarm. This is typical when logging all transactions to the SharePoint databases. SharePoint administrators

For instance, if an administrator performed a full or differential backup at midnight, and a SharePoint content database crashed at 4 p.m., it loses all changes that were made after midnight. In addition, data entered into the database after a successful full or differential database backup is unrecoverable.

This model has some advantages. It requires the least amount of administration because transaction log backups are not required. SharePoint administrators who store data that is not deemed mission critical tend to like the simple recovery model.

*SharePoint administrators using the simple recovery model have the least number of options when recovering data because the transaction log gets truncated after each backup.*

who insist on preserving critical data often overlook this issue because they realize this model offers the highest level of recovery.

**Simple recovery model:** SharePoint administrators using the simple recovery model have the least number of options when recovering data because the transaction log gets truncated after each backup. This means changes after the latest full or differential backup are unprotected. As a result, you can only recover a database to the point of the latest successful database backup.

**Bulk-logged recovery model:** This final recovery model maintains a transaction log and is similar to the full recovery model. However, the main difference is that transaction logging is minimal during bulk operations to maximize database performance and reduce the log size when large amounts of data are inserted into the database.

Bulk import operations such as BCP, BULK INSERT, SELECT INTO, CREATE INDEX, ALTER INDEX REBUILD, and DROP INDEX are minimally logged. Because the bulk-logged recovery model provides only minimal logging of bulk operations, SharePoint administrators cannot restore a SharePoint database to the point of failure if a disaster occurs during a bulk-logged operation.

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In these situations, administrators typically must restore the database—including the latest transaction log—and rerun the bulk-logged operation. This model is typically used by organizations running large bulk operations that degrade system performance and do not require point-in-time recovery. Bulk-logging is not a common selection with SharePoint databases.

### CHOOSING THE BEST RECOVERY MODEL

It is much easier to choose the correct recovery model if administrators consider the recovery goals and requirements for a database. SharePoint administrators must determine, at the very least, how much data they can risk losing, how frequently data in the database changes, whether tables change significantly, what the

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## Preparing for SharePoint Recovery

**MANY COMPANIES THAT use SharePoint to support their most important business requirements must make special accommodations for its recovery in their business continuity plans. To make sure that SharePoint is protected in an emergency at your company, do the following:**

- **CREATE A BUSINESS RISK ASSESSMENT:** Evaluate how your company and its department are using SharePoint, and determine its associated business impact. When creating a business risk assessment, determine SharePoint's recovery rank among competing critical applications and document business-related workarounds.
- **TRAIN ADMINISTRATORS:** Training all systems administrators in SharePoint recovery processes will help ensure that all its special needs for recovery will be met. IT professionals who have the training will do a better job of handling post-recovery needs for SharePoint.
- **PERFORM OFFLINE BACKUPS:** For global companies operating on a 24/7 basis, planned downtime or clustering may be needed so that all users are offline. The backups must include SharePoint Server's primary server, SQL Server repository and domain servers containing security permissions. This will allow for a unified point-in-time recovery, rather than trying to piece together the environment. —SEARCHWINIT.COM

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financial or business impact will be if data is lost, and whether there is more than one database in the Share-

recovery model if you don't require a point-in-time recovery and you are willing to lose data. On the other hand, use the full recovery model if it is important to recover data to the point of failure. By default, the SQL Server system databases are configured with the simple recovery model.

In addition, the SharePoint Config, Content and Admin databases are set to FULL and the SSP and Search databases are set to simple recovery model. The recovery model on each database can be changed on the fly, so go ahead and choose the best recovery models for your SharePoint databases. ■

*Use the simple and bulk-logged recovery model if you don't require a point-in-time recovery and you are willing to lose data.*

Point farm that needs to be logically consistent.

Use the simple and bulk-logged

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**Ross Mistry** is a principal consultant at Convergent Computing, an author and a SQL Server MVP. He installs SQL Server, Active Directory, SharePoint and Exchange Server software within Fortune 500 organizations in the Silicon Valley. His SQL Server and SharePoint specialties include high availability, security, migration and virtualization. You can follow him on twitter @RossMistry.



**Shirmattie Seenarine** is an independent technical writer with more than 10 years of experience. She has contributed to many books, including Windows Server 2008 Unleashed, Exchange Server 2007 Unleashed, SharePoint Server 2007 Unleashed and SQL Server 2008 Management and Administration.

# Suppressing a SharePoint Rebellion

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Suppressing a SharePoint Rebellion

*What if no one is taking your SharePoint governance policies seriously? Learn some techniques to regain control.* **BY BRIEN M. POSEY**

**ANYONE WHO HAS** ever put together a SharePoint governance plan knows firsthand how much work the process involves. So what do you do if you discover that nobody is taking your policies seriously? How can you tighten the reins without making the rebellion even worse? It might be time to try some new techniques to regain control over your SharePoint environment.

Ideally, you should get management to sign off on your SharePoint governance document before you begin to put the policies into effect. Without management's blessing and support, you don't have a prayer of maintaining order.

If your users don't like the policies, then some of them will inevitably try to go over your head in an effort to either circumvent the policy or have it repealed. That's why it is so important to get management on board before the SharePoint governance

policy goes into effect. You need to know that management will back you up when these types of uprisings occur.

## **AUTOMATE WHAT YOU CAN**

One way of ensuring that users adhere to your policies is to automate policy compliance. In many cases, it is possible to create SharePoint workflows that automate otherwise manual processes. This automation can help to ensure that tasks are performed in accordance with an approved method. Of course, the scope of a SharePoint workflow is limited. You will be able to automate some tasks, but you won't be able to automate everything.

The only way that you can be completely sure of whether or not your policies are being adhered to is to perform audits. But a thorough audit can take a long time to complete, and

most network administrators simply don't have the time for such tasks.

If comprehensive audits are too time-consuming, then you might consider doing random spot checks instead. Although not as thorough as an audit, occasional spot checks can help you to pinpoint policy violations that may otherwise go unnoticed.

see if anything could be clarified.

When I did, I found out that when I had submitted the policies to the HR department, HR forwarded them to

*If comprehensive audits are too time-consuming, then you might consider doing random spot checks instead. Although not as thorough as an audit, occasional spot checks can help you to pinpoint policy violations that may otherwise go unnoticed.*

### **SIMPLIFY THE LANGUAGE**

I've worked in several different levels of management within IT, so I have heard every excuse in the book. One of the most common excuses that users try to make when they are caught violating a policy is that they did not understand the policy. Therefore, it is important to nip that particular excuse in the bud from the start.

At one of the companies I used to work for, employees had to sign a form stating that they had read and understood the various IT-related policies. In fact, the form had to be signed before the employee was even issued a username and password. This technique wasn't completely effective, though.

Over time it became apparent that some employees were signing the form even though they honestly did not understand what the policies were. Even though I was the one who wrote the policies, I wondered if I had been unclear about something, so I took the time to review the policies to

the company's legal department. What I didn't know was that the legal department had essentially rewritten the policies to make them legally defensible. The result was that my once-simple document was now chocked full of legal jargon. In the end, my solution was to write a plain English summary of the policies. It took a bit of effort to get the legal department to agree to the summary, but ultimately we worked together to create a summary that average users could understand.

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## ENFORCE THE POLICIES IN A CONSISTENT MANNER

One of the most important things that you can do in regard to enforcing your policy is to make sure that everyone is aware of the consequences of policy violations. Next is to make sure that policies are enforced in a consistent manner.

To give you an idea of why this is so important, consider this situation: The person who was in charge of creating the policies for a particular company wrote a document that included an excessive number of rules and penalties. His idea was that he wouldn't actually enforce most of the rules, but he wanted to have the rules in place in case someone were to really abuse the system.

One day an employee was terminated for violating one of the more obscure rules in the policy. That employee sued the company on the basis of discrimination, citing that he had been singled out because the policies had been enforced in an arbitrary manner. The court upheld the company's right to terminate the employee, but the former employee appealed the decision and received a substantial judgment against the company.

With that in mind, there are a few guidelines to consider following when it comes to policy enforcement:

### 1. Recognize that some violations

**are more serious than others.** It's easy to create a clause stating that anyone caught violating a policy will be terminated. Unfortunately, such a clause doesn't really allow you any flexibility for dealing with minor infractions without risking being accused of favoritism or discrimination. Therefore, you should take the time to make sure that the punishment fits the crime, and document what constitutes a minor infraction and what the consequences of that type of violation are.

**2. Formalize any exceptions to the rules.** In an ideal world, the same rules apply to everyone. In the real world, though, this type of equality isn't always practical. Imagine, for example, that you have a policy stating that anyone disclosing confidential financial information to someone outside of the company will be immediately terminated. That probably sounds like a good rule, right? The problem is that if the company's CFO was required to turn over financial information to a government auditor then the CFO would technically have violated the policy.

It's easy to say that the CFO wasn't actually violating a policy because he was doing his job, but you have to keep in mind what could happen if the company is ever accused of enforcing policies arbitrarily. The easiest way to get a handle on this situation is to



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build exceptions into the policy.

Instead of saying "Any employee caught disclosing financial information will be terminated," say something like "Any employee caught disclosing financial information will be terminated, unless that disclosure is required by law or is necessary for conducting business, and the disclosure has been approved by executive management." I'm not a lawyer, and my wording would need to be formalized, but you get the idea.

**3. Keep the rules to a minimum.** It's better to create the minimum number of rules but to fully enforce each rule that is created. Using this approach helps to eliminate confusion on the part of employees, and it helps to ensure that disciplinary action is performed in a consistent manner.

If users are rebelling against your current SharePoint governance plan, and you have not been enforcing that plan up until now, you may not be

able to do a lot right now. Before you take any action, it is a good idea to consult your company's legal department about what your options are.

*It's better to create the minimum number of rules but to fully enforce each rule that is created.*

In those situations, your best course of action may be to develop a new governance plan and let employees know that it will be strictly enforced. Another approach is to officially inform employees that starting on a certain date the existing policy will be enforced. Either way, you can begin to regain control of your SharePoint installation. ■



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Brien M. Posey** has received Microsoft's Most Valuable Professional award six times for his work with Windows Server, IIS, file systems/storage and Exchange Server. He has served as CIO for a nationwide chain of hospitals and healthcare facilities and was once a network administrator for Fort Knox.

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