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The Five W's of ECM:

The Who, What, Where, When, and Why of Enterprise Content Management

Introduction

In today's business world, there is an abundance of strategies and tools used to enhance business processes, as well as an ever-growing use of acronyms to classify them. From BPM and ERM, to DM and DAM, it's not surprising many people become confused as to what they are, how they differ and most importantly, how they can benefit your office, department, and business as a whole.

In this white paper, we will focus on Enterprise Content Management (ECM) and will take you through the five w's (who, what, where, when, and why) in order to provide you with the basic knowledge of ECM and how it can benefit you and your business or department.

What is Enterprise Content Management?

ECM, or Enterprise Content Management, can be confused for other business process tools; this is because many people interchange them, assuming they serve the same functions. Truthfully, ECM is the umbrella term that embodies many other

systems, such as Document Management, Business Process Management and Records Management, to name a few.

According to Aiim International, the Association for Information and Image Management, Enterprise Content Management is "the strategies, methods and tools used to capture, manage, store, preserve, and deliver content and documents related to organizational processes. ECM tools and strategies allow the management of an organization's unstructured information, wherever that information exists".

> "ECM allows businesses to securely manage their critical information in order to improve efficiency and lower costs"

In simple terms, ECM is software used to capture, store, manage and track electronic documents and images throughout the document's lifecycle. ECM allows businesses to securely manage their critical information in order to improve efficiency and lower costs. But it doesn't stop there; leading ECM software providers make available additional solutions to enhance the ECM solution. For example, Digitech Systems' PaperVision Enterprise offers

additional components that can be integrated with the ECM software, such as workflow, mobile, message, and report management capabilities.

Some ECM systems also come equipped with data backup functionalities to further round-out the solution. A good ECM service provider will customize a complete solution to fit the needs of each and every business. For further information about choosing an ECM solution, download our whitepaper "Six Critical Things to Look for in an ECM System".

Who is ECM for?

ECM is an excellent tool for businesses of all sizes. Initially, ECM was left for large corporations due to its high cost and need for IT support to implement and manage. This isn't the case anymore. New technological developments have made many ECM systems very affordable for small and medium-sized businesses and have virtually eliminated the need for IT resources. Managing the system has become so user-friendly and easy to navigate, that IT is no longer needed.

ECM lends itself beautifully to all industries as well; for instance, the healthcare industry has adopted ECM technologies in order to cut costs and improve patient care. Hospitals, clinics and private practices have seen the need for more efficient ways to manage their massive amounts of information and patient files.

This medical clinic says, "Having old charts scanned as opposed to stored is such a quick and efficient way to access patient information. It expedites completion of insurance forms and legal documents. We are able to provide quality healthcare to our patients by having their complete medical record computerized".

On a departmental level, ECM allows information to be shared and managed effectively. Accounts payable departments are more efficient than ever before, retrieving invoices with the click of a mouse and leveraging things like early payment discounts.

Retail establishments can use an ECM system for improving customer relationships, therefore increasing revenues and manufacturing plants use ECM systems for improved business process management.

These are just a few examples of the many industries that benefit from Enterprise Content Management systems.

Where is critical business content kept?

Some ECM system providers offer different solutions based on client needs. Content is either kept on the business's own computer system (an on-premise ECM solution) or can be conveniently stored and accessed online (cloud ECM). Because software capabilities differ between software developers, we'll be analyzing Digitech Systems' on-premise and cloud ECM software to compare the two.

On-premise ECM software is installed on a business's computer(s) and data is scanned into the content management system. There are up-front capital costs for an on-premise solution such as, hardware and software licensing. Cloud ECM, on the other hand, eliminates the investment in hardware and operates on a pay-as-you-go basis, allowing clients to access documents from anywhere.

On-Premise vs. Cloud

A house is like On-Premise ECM	A hotel room is like Cloud ECM
You purchase and own it with 100% responsibility for upkeep	You rent it for as long as you need and only pay for what you need with zero responsibility for upkeep

When is an ECM system needed?

Anytime is a good time to start thinking about implementing an ECM system but here are some indications that you would benefit from one sooner than later:

- If you or your employees spend more than a 5 minutes a day searching for records, invoices, customer and vendor information etc.

- If you keep critical business records in off-site storage facilities, adding to your operating expenses.

- If you keep your business documents on-site, reducing office space. Keeping paper records on (or off-site, for that matter) increases the risk of loss, damage, and theft.

- If you or your employees spend time recreating lost or misplaced documents.

- If you spend too much money on stationary, for instance, paper, ink, toner etc.

- If you're missing out on capturing early-payment discounts from vendors due to inefficient information filing and retrieval processes or frequently get hit with late-payment charges.

- If you or your employees miss deadlines and budget targets due to poor communication and collaboration.

These are just some of the indications that you would benefit from an ECM in your business or department.

Why bother with ECM at all?

Some may ask, why bother with a content management system at all? Why not just set up files and folders on our computer system and use that? Besides being a completely inefficient way of managing critical business documents, a file and folder system doesn't allow users to track document usage, collaborate efficiently on up-to-date versions of documents, restrict access to users/departments, backup data, and a slew of other benefits that come with an ECM system. A simple folder system won't increase productivity or cut down on your operating expenses either.

Here is list of the benefits of implementing an ECM:

- Affordable

- Easy to implement and manage

- Increases user and department productivity

- Reduces human error

- Decreases operating expenses

- Improves vendor and customer satisfaction

- Increases security through audit trails

- Maintains regulatory compliance (PIPEDA, HIPA, Sarbanes-Oxley etc.)

- Easily integrates with existing computer systems (SharePoint)

- Eliminates the risk of damage and loss

- Enhances collaboration among employees and across departments

- Environmentally friendly

- Mobile components make accessing documents from anywhere, at any time

More and more companies are turning to Enterprise Content Management systems in order to control and manage their critical business information, regardless of their size. They're starting to realize that streamlining their business process can save them time and money, ultimately contributing to their bottom-line. If you have large amounts of

information coming into your business and you want to save time, money and frustration, then it pays to investigate what an ECM system can do for you.

Conclusion

ECM can be a confusing concept but it's really quite simple to implement and use. Any business looking for a way to cut costs, improve productivity, and streamline their business processes will benefit from an Enterprise Content Management solution. The amounts of content generated by businesses is growing exponentially every year, so if you feel as though it's time to gain control of the content chaos in your organization and/or department, an ECM system is an excellent tool for doing just that!

About Polar Imaging Inc.

POLAR IMAGING INC.
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With over 30 years' experience, Polar Imaging is a leader in Enterprise Content Management solutions and scanning, delivering a broad spectrum of ECM solutions, fully customized to fit the needs of its customers. Polar Imaging also specializes in cloud

backup and recovery, unlike any other provider in the region. Its unique services offer a customer experience that surpasses all others. Polar Imaging is a reseller of Digitech Systems software, PaperVision Enterprise.

Core products and services:

Document Scanning Services, Electronic Content Management (ECM) Solutions, Business Workflow Automation, Mailroom Services, Cloud Backup and Recovery, Software as a Service (SaaS), Microfilm & Scanning Equipment Sales and Services, Professional Services.

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