



Enterprise Content Management: A Foundation for Enterprise Information Management

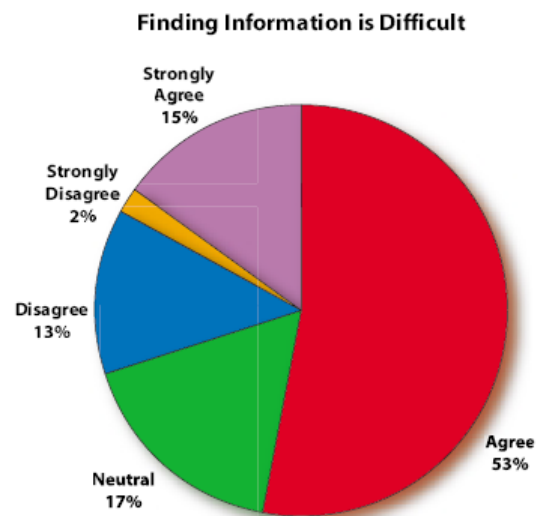
Five Pillars of Success in Enterprise Information Management

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ENTERPRISE CONTENT MANAGEMENT: A FOUNDATION FOR ENTERPRISE INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

Enterprise Content Management (ECM) is a technology that has been around for quite some time. The problem is, for all of its promise and potential, the word “enterprise” has never really been applicable. There are plenty of organizations that have purchased enough licenses to meet their organization’s needs, but that has led to millions of dollars in shelf-ware and more than a few not so satisfied customers. A few companies have implemented multiple departmental implementations, but in most cases, those departments are each running disparate systems with virtually no cross-departmental access leaving the users unable to find the information they need. This leads to users keeping their own copies of information on their PCs creating a potential compliance nightmare for their organizations.



Source: Delphi Group

A result of this departmental approach to ECM deployments is that most ECM implementations fail to achieve the true potential for the rest of the organization. Because most departmental systems were never implemented with the enterprise in mind, the ability to scale them beyond the original department often requires considerable re-work. In the end, neither the users nor the people tasked with supporting those systems are happy customers. There are a number of reasons why ECM has not achieved its potential, but there is hope.

BARRIERS TO ECM SUCCESS AND THE NEED FOR AN ENTERPRISE INFORMATION MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

ECM IS PERCEIVED AS TOO COMPLEX

Successful ECM implementations focus on supplying the needed content to the user directly from the applications that they use day-to-day. By document-enabling the existing applications, users have access to all related information, regardless of format and without the training and complexities of a separate interface. Nearly all users within a given organization are familiar with the Internet and most companies have corporate Intranets, but few companies actually tie the content from their ECM systems to their Intranets, bringing together all sources of information

for the targeted audience. While direct application interfaces are often the most efficient, delivering information through focused portals is also very effective. For example, a Human Resources portal should provide access to information related to vacation policies, health insurance, 401K programs and employee promotions regardless of the format of the content.

ECM THE 80% SOLUTION

The question is, would you rather be able to search for all relevant information or just documents? It is often said that 80% of an organization's information is unstructured content such as Microsoft Word documents, spreadsheets or paper documents stored in filing cabinets throughout the organization. Assuming that is true, that makes ECM an 80% solution. This becomes even more apparent when one considers that the greatest return on investment from most ECM implementations comes from linking those documents to related business information...the other 20% of the information that resides in other enterprise applications such as Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems. One example of this would be the quick return on investment achieved by document-enabling the Accounts Payable (AP) application.

Conversely, using the same AP process, the cost of processing an invoice is considerably higher when the person doing the processing does not have the related documents at their fingertips causing them to waste valuable time searching for it. The point is that ECM, on its own, does not provide a complete solution, but is a vital part of a greater information management need within every organization.

Nearly every ECM solution on the market today has some level of full-text capability allowing the users to search the language within the documents as well as the index information or metadata which describes the document. For most users, this is simply not enough. Users have become accustomed to searching the Web using easy to use tools like Google and Yahoo which return information effortlessly from sources around the world. When nearly 70% of users say that information is too hard to find within the organization, they may have a point.

Enterprise Information Management (EIM) is designed to move beyond the 80% solution, bringing all information assets together intelligently and leveraging your existing investment in ECM and records management technology. EIM leverages additional tools including corporate taxonomies, enterprise search and corporate portals to pull all information resources together in an intuitive, familiar interface for the users.

ECM IS PERCEIVED AS TOO COSTLY

ECM solutions have traditionally been justified on an application by application basis. As a result, the first department to deploy the solution bears the brunt of the software costs. This often prohibits organizations from implementing anything more than a departmental or point solution. In most cases, budgeting for any given implementation is done at the departmental level and, often with no oversight. Advanced planning allows organizations to spread the costs of their ECM implementations and encourages ownership across the organization.

**“If only HP knew
what HP knows”**

**-Lew Platt, former CEO of
Hewlett-Packard**

Compliance initiatives are driving many organizations to re-look at the technology and refocusing efforts to leverage existing investments. Risk avoidance is driving much of the investment, and there are considerable savings to be realized. The amount of money that can be saved as a result of improved document discovery process capabilities will, in some cases, pay for the solution.

The cost of not meeting compliance requirements can easily exceed the cost of deploying an ECM and Records Management solution.

FIVE PILLARS TO ACHIEVE ENTERPRISE INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SUCCESS

This approach is designed to help companies realize substantial benefits by building on their ECM investments and providing unified access to all relevant corporate information. By building a standard classification and categorization model that can be applied to Records Management, ECM, Enterprise Search and Portal technologies, companies can effectively leverage all of their information assets together, increasing the efficiency of their users. Gartner agrees, stating that “EIM will become critical as companies move toward architectures that support business efficiency and agility by design.” Companies that don’t drive towards EIM will lose their ability to compete in the long run.

“EIM will become critical as companies move toward architectures that support business efficiency and agility by design”³

-Gartner

#1 MAKE IT EASY AND INTUITIVE

The key to keeping things simple is providing users access to all of the information they need from the interfaces they use to do their tasks, providing access to all required information in the context of how it is used. One of the best examples of this is an image enabled Accounts Payable (AP) system. Allowing an AP processor to access vendor contracts, view and route invoices for approval directly from their AP system rather than having to launch a completely separate application is the key to cutting costs and gaining process efficiencies.

Contrast that with the average ECM solution with all of its bells and whistles. Finding what you want often requires in-depth knowledge of each department’s unique folder structure as well as the numerous options of how to create a structured search for the content you want. Out-of-the-box ECM user interfaces are typically too complicated and only give the user partial access to the information they need to complete their tasks. Users are looking for information, not just documents. Information comes from many sources including the Internet, Intranet, multiple ECM systems, corporate share drives, users PCs and databases. Intelligent search deals with all of these sources to provide greater efficiency.

Another example of success through keeping things simple is Google which provides a single line to enter your keyword or phrase. A browser based search engine that requires absolutely no training, yet has become the primary source of information for many company employees looking for information. If you asked an employee who was researching information for a project if they were more likely to find what they were looking for on the internet or searching within their own organization, most would likely choose the internet. That’s not to say that the Google interface is the greatest thing since sliced bread, but you can’t argue its success.

#2 IDENTIFY YOUR UNSTRUCTURED CONTENT

Because most companies implement ECM solutions at the departmental level, very few have actually taken the time to develop a content inventory that spans the organization. The push for compliance and the need for electronic discovery makes this even more important. It is impossible to have an effective Records Management program if you have not identified what corporate records exist.

Simply identifying the content is not enough to make it useful. Compliance programs have pushed many organizations to identify corporate records as well as the retention schedules that are vital to effective records management programs. The problem is that this is where most companies stop. It is one thing to know how long to keep a given document. It's another to understand the value of that content and enable the company to use it as a source of information or knowledge. As Lew Platt, the former CEO of Hewlett Packard once said, "If only HP knew what HP knows."

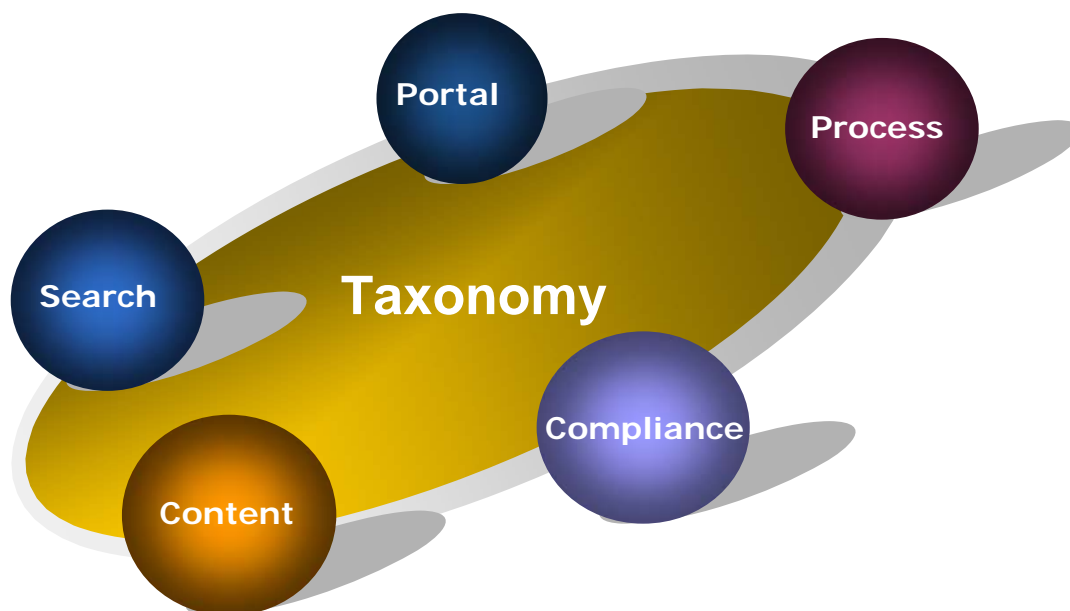
#3 IDENTIFY YOUR STRUCTURED INFORMATION SOURCES

Enterprise Information Management (EIM) is not just about content or database records. It's about all information, structured or not. By its very nature, EIM requires a strong understanding of all data sources including not only the content management systems, but other enterprise systems such as Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) and Customer Resource Management (CRM) systems.

One of the most important ways to ensure the consistent classification of content is to use the primary sources of information already in use. If a master data library exists, there's no reason to re-invent the wheel. There are many benefits for using existing information sources for content classification. First and foremost, it eliminates re-keying of metadata when indexing content. This not only makes the input process much more efficient, but also greatly improves quality by forcing consistent classification of content, thereby eliminating data entry errors and lost documents.

#4 STANDARDIZE YOUR TAXONOMY

Taxonomy is the key to making ECM work for the enterprise. Taxonomies, the classification and categorization of information against a known plan or structure, exist throughout the organization. A typical example of taxonomy is the hierarchical structure of a company's Intranet and Internet portals which defines how the company expects users to navigate for information. Another example would be the folder structures that so many people rely on to find the information they need. A well defined taxonomy can greatly increase a user's ability to find the information they seek.



The best way to ensure that information is available quickly and efficiently is to ensure a consistent, logical approach to how information is classified and categorized. There are a number of things that come together in the process of developing a corporate taxonomy. These include de facto thesauri that exist within the company such as documented lists of acronyms and terms commonly used. Other legacy taxonomies include directory structures, organizational charts, enterprise application data structures, relevant industry standards (ISO, OSHA, and HIPAA) and records retention schedules.

For companies looking to capture their organizations collective knowledge such as best-practices and lessons-learned, enterprise taxonomy is a must. One of the biggest mistakes organizations make in implementing KM solutions is thinking that the most important part of the process is getting users to “write it down.” In reality, the ability to re-use that information is determined by how it is captured. Successful Knowledge Management (KM) programs utilize enterprise taxonomy to standardize how knowledge is captured and classified and then linked to search technologies to drive how that information is made available to the end-user population. This ensures that users are intelligently directed to find the information in the same manner that it was captured.

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Delphi Group-

It has been said that if you cannot find the information you’re looking for quickly, it either does not exist or is lost. For example, the likelihood of a user actually navigating to the second page of a Google search is rather remote. If the information is not immediately evident, its value drops quickly. One of the big losses within any organizations information strategy is the concept of relationships. How is it then that Barnes & Noble’s Web site knows that a user who searches for “Harry Potter” finds every related book, tape or toy available to them while the average corporate employee searching for the ISO 15489 Records Management standard is never presented with information about MoReq or the DoD 5015.2 standards for Records Management? Simple, within most organizations, those relationships are not established nor do the search engines “learn” about patterns.

As noted in the 2002 Delphi White Paper, Taxonomy and Content Classification, “Finding relevant information quicker is the key benefit of taxonomy, especially when it provides immediate access to the right information that allows the user to take effective actions. Equipping enterprise knowledge workers with the tools to make faster and better-informed decisions is a strategic imperative in today’s economy. Jakob Nielsen, the guru of usability, estimates that poor classification costs a 10,000 user organization \$10M annually.” Being able to capture information more accurately, including knowledge assets such as best-practices and lessons-learned, and utilizing those resources more effectively makes companies more efficient and agile.

#5 PLAN FOR THE ENTERPRISE

ECM is a core component of any EIM strategy, but still only one piece of the information management architecture. Other key technologies to consider for EIM are Enterprise Search, Enterprise Portals and Business Intelligence to name a few. While many organizations may have one or more initiatives around these technologies, rarely do they pull them all together. Each of these technologies has value in their own right, but when combined; their value to the organization is increased greatly.

As for ECM, one of the primary problems is that it is not yet considered to be infrastructure. As a result, most organizations tend to purchase their ECM solutions one department at a time. The budgets come from the departments which demand their own solutions because, as we all know, their needs are different. Unfortunately, this leads to the all too common silos of information within the company where information stored in one department's system is virtually lost to the rest of the organization.

It is practical to implement ECM solutions at the departmental level. However, it is vital that organizations also look at how information is used throughout the organization during the design process to eliminate information silos. Enterprise taxonomies ensure that companies are looking not only at document indices, but also usage patterns and trends. In doing so, more efficient search techniques and tools can be used to facilitate a documents use across multiple departments.

When thinking about EIM, it is important that ECM solutions are a foundation component of the architecture just as enterprise search technologies and corporate portals are core components.

Whether you are implementing ECM, or launching a taxonomy project, it is important not to bite off more than your organization can handle. Keeping a strong focus on the project at hand will allow for a stronger outcome. To achieve the best results, it is not only important to have a well defined problem statement, but also to have a well defined success definition as well. The success definition will supply the measurable goals that the organization wishes to achieve.

Regardless of how you begin your EIM strategy, smaller manageable projects will result in a much greater success rate. While focusing on a department, it is important to realize the dynamics of the other departments that are impacted and be sure to incorporate them into the project plan. The people from the related departments provide valuable input on information usage and requirements. In addition, they become the champions for their own departments when the time comes, bringing needed experience and guidance.

SUMMARY

Companies are constantly looking to drive towards greater and greater efficiencies. The best way to do that is to tackle the basic inefficiencies inherent within the organization. When workers are spending upwards of 40% of their time looking for information, those costs add up very quickly. Nearly 70% of users say that finding information within their own companies is difficult. As a result, many of those users hoard information in their offices and on their laptop and desktop PCs creating a potential nightmare for companies looking to meet compliance demands and reduce overall risk to the company. Not to mention the time spent sifting through this information to make sure the company is not losing valuable assets. By implementing this proven EIM strategy, companies gain greater control of their information assets while driving the efficiencies they seek.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Michael Elkins serves as the Director of Sales & Marketing for CM Mitchell Consulting. He has over 16 years of experience in the information management field helping customers develop corporate strategies for implementing enterprise scale ECM and Knowledge Management solutions including enterprise taxonomy development, portal design and enterprise search strategies.

ABOUT CM MITCHELL CONSULTING

CM Mitchell Consulting is a company that helps organizations design, develop and deploy Enterprise Information Management strategies and solutions to make better decisions by managing information and processes to achieve maximum efficiency. Founded in 1992, the company has a long history of providing award winning services to our clients.

References:

1. Delphi Group, "Taxonomy and Content Classification."
2. SchemaLogic, "Enterprise-Level Taxonomy: The Key to Competitive Advantage."
3. Gartner, "Emergence of EIM Drives Semantic Reconciliation."