

The Transformation of ECM

Capitalizing on the New Information Order

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The role of information in organizations is under constant change. What was simply a casually drafted email or document one day can become a critical corporate asset overnight simply through a change in business policy, regulatory update or a legal challenge to the business. Information types are rapidly expanding in relevance to the enterprise as well. Social content like wikis and blogs or rich media (video and audio) not originally considered critical to the business are becoming the primary ways to communicate information both within enterprises and with customers and business partners.

More companies are using cloud and SaaS applications for rapid implementation of new services and to save costs. Corporations are using new social media channels such as Twitter, Google Buzz, Facebook and others for customer communications and outreach. The result: information is getting increasingly disaggregated.

Enterprise content management (ECM) is no longer just about documents, images and other well-known assets. It is now about the broader information cloud which is much more dynamic and much more difficult to manage. The number of channels that generate information and distribute it has expanded beyond the traditional ECM definitions. Information itself is increasingly time-sensitive and shorter in form requiring rapid ingestion, dynamic aggregation and federation of sources to achieve timely business results.

It's a new era for enterprise information both in scope and in impact. This means traditional ECM needs to transform as well and expand in scope to provide a comprehensive information management platform. Here are a few of the key requirements:

1. End-to-end integrated information security. The nightmare for any company is being part of the next "WikiLeaks" release, such as UBS Bank, which found itself exposed when details on more than 2,000 clients and more than 40 politicians' transactions and private documents were made public. Integrated security combining advanced rights management, managed access through strong authentication, securing of information both at rest and in motion with encryption and federation of security

policies all become critical. Any information transmitted across the Internet unencrypted rapidly becomes someone else's. An information management platform needs to provide a sliding-scale approach to security, easily adjusting security levels across content stores without requiring major updates to metadata and policies.

2. Information ingestion on a massive scale. Information ingestion has been traditionally focused on devices intended for capture (high-volume scanners, multi-function devices, task-oriented devices, etc.). Today, 87% of all mobile phones include cameras. The total mobile phone sales for 2010 exceeded 1.2 billion units, according to Gartner Research. Of those, 50% meet or exceed five megapixels, and some of the largest manufacturers (Sony Ericsson, Nokia and Samsung) released 12-megapixel phones in 2010, making them extremely capable capture devices. Businesses like Chase Bank have already enabled iPhone4 users to process checks instantly with a click of their camera phones. Other major banks such as Bank of America and Citibank are quickly following suit. Imagine the hundreds to thousands of near-simultaneous submissions from disparate devices delivered at Internet speed needing to be indexed, categorized and incorporated into a business process, not to mention the growth of ingestion of information already in electronic form.

3. Federated search. Search related to ECM has typically focused on records, with some capability to include limited structured data sources. With the disaggregation of information spanning structured and unstructured data, the traditional approach is no longer sufficient. The ability to federate across different locations, content stores and data types has become a fundamental requirement.

4. Integrated information communication and distribution channels. There was a time when publishing to a Web portal and distribution by email were sufficient. Not any more, at least not if organizations are intent on leveraging information for competitive advantage. Customer communication has become a web of interactions

combining online, email and cross-channel communication, all designed to improve customer service and affinity. New social channels are also being leveraged along with rich media to create engaging customer experiences and to "reach them where they live." An information management platform provides the capabilities to keep communication consistent, coordinated and compelling while personalizing the customer experience across print, Web, email and social communication channels.

5. Incorporate cloud information stores. High-value information is being generated by cloud applications and stored outside the common IT infrastructure. Organizations still need to manage and control this information as part of their information management policies. An information management platform can integrate with or federate cloud content stores to provide overall management and use of the information.

6. Seamless retention from active to archive. Compliance requirements—whether directed by the business or by outside regulatory and industry bodies—continue to drive the need to apply retention periods and automate migration of information from one storage state to another. ECM systems typically focus on storage of active information—information that can be accessed in a split second and is part of current projects, workflows or processes. Backup and information archives typically deal with information and data that is not in immediate use but may be called up some time in the future or relegated to offline storage. An information management platform can apply retention policies seamlessly across both active and archived information.

7. Extensible information collaboration services. Collaboration has expanded beyond the traditional model of desktops collaborating around a set of documents either synchronously or asynchronously. Today collaboration initiates from anywhere. The broad use of handsets, laptops, iPads and other mobile devices is leveraging new social information forms, channels and collaborative models. An information management platform needs to provide an open customizable approach to incorporate new forms of collaboration into projects, workflows and business processes while keeping the information under management.

It's time to evaluate how your current ECM strategy and infrastructure is poised to provide an information management platform capitalizing on the new information order to create competitive advantage for your business. ■