

Planning for Enterprise Content Management

This Public Records Brief provides advice to public authorities that are considering ECM and recommends a collaborative planning and implementation approach.

The volume of digital content or information being created by agencies each year is growing. The value of this content, which is an important agency asset, may not be realised if the content is not useable and accessible in a way that improves efficiency, generates additional value and contributes strategically to an agency's business.

Some public authorities are considering Enterprise Content Management (ECM) solutions to improve content management practices and more effectively manage unstructured or semi-structured content such as emails, word documents, digital images, PDF files, spreadsheets and web pages.

This Public Records Brief describes ECM and some of the issues agencies may need to consider when planning and implementing ECM to ensure that recordkeeping issues are addressed.

What is ECM?

ECM has been rapidly evolving over recent years and definitions of it vary. For example, some vendors may describe advanced electronic Document and Records Management Systems (eDRMS) as ECM. However, ECM is more appropriately described as the strategies and technologies deployed to capture, manage, store, preserve, and deliver all forms of an agency's content or information regardless of document type or media.

Some examples of technologies or tools that can be considered part of ECM include:

- Document and/or records management
- Web content management
- Workflow
- Imaging
- Digital asset management, and
- Collaborative content management.

Advanced ECM has the functionality to integrate a broad range of content formats and technologies to manage the complete life-cycle of information. However, ECM is not just about technology. It is a broader strategy including components such as business analysis, risk assessment, policy development, change management and training.

The successful planning and implementation of ECM across an agency requires the collaboration of a range of agency staff, including ICT staff such as information architects, business analysts as well as records and information managers if it is to meet the unique requirements of the business units that create and access the content.

ECM considerations

ECM can benefit agencies by increasing the ability to store, reuse and share information as well as ensuring better quality data and improved productivity through concurrent use of data and faster access to information. However, implementation of ECM also presents a risk that key recordkeeping requirements, including the need to ensure reliable and authentic evidence of business transactions, may be overlooked when there is a broader focus on information.

Compliance with records management legislation and standards

ECM may assist agencies to comply with legislation such as the *Public Records Act 2002*, Information Standards and other policies relating to recordkeeping and the management of information if it improves the usability and accessibility of information. Involving records and information managers in planning will ensure that ECM technologies have the appropriate functionality to address recordkeeping requirements where necessary. These requirements include the creation and capture of records and associated metadata, evidentiary integrity, classification, reliability, security, access control and retention and disposal.

Ensuring new records are identified and managed

Implementing ECM technologies will give rise to new and revised business processes – whether for web management, workflow or content publishing. In implementing these new processes, it is important to ensure that recordkeeping obligations are met and that any new records are identified and appropriately managed.

Changing role of records managers

In some agencies, the role of records and information managers will evolve as ECM is implemented. Records managers may be required to manage some of the people and process issues related to all of an agency's content instead of focusing only on the management of public records. They may require skills in the areas of change management, communication, project management, policy development and business strategy development. The ongoing training and development of information and records managers should be considered by agencies.

Selecting ECM technologies

New ECM technologies and processes should complement or enhance existing agency content management practices and systems. Agencies first need to identify structured and unstructured content, document existing content management processes, gain an understanding of user requirements and based on this information identify the areas in which ECM will add value to the business operations of the agency. Decisions regarding architectural requirements, technologies and business models should follow.

All ECM technologies should be carefully assessed against the agency's content management and business needs. Issues for consideration include cost control, ease of use, content reuse, integration, efficiency and better management and administration of content.

Stakeholder involvement

The planning and implementation of ECM is most successful in an environment in which stakeholders have been involved from the beginning of the project and effective working relationships have been established. Organising working groups of key stakeholders to assist in the coordination and planning of ECM will ensure that information is shared and issues associated with the various components of ECM are addressed.

Agencies that have already implemented potential components of ECM, such as an eDRMS or a Web Content Management System, may wish to ensure that the staff who were involved in those projects are included in working groups or consulted.

ECM technology users, such as administrators and technical support staff, may not always be involved in planning for ECM. However, successful implementation of ECM also involves addressing change management issues and dedicating resources for the training of these stakeholders.