

Document Management or Records Management Systems - Which Will Best Help You Satisfy Your Enterprise Information Asset Management Requirements?

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Ensure the Right Tools are Used When Automating Records Management Practices

Providing tools that enable employees to quickly and easily create, store, locate, access and retrieve documents most certainly will have a positive impact on productivity and business process effectiveness.

However, without the appropriate mechanisms or safeguards in place to ensure the *authenticity* and *reliability* of those documents that must be set-aside as records, the vulnerability of corporate information assets during litigation, preservation and discovery, will inevitably be increased.

An enterprise (corporate, organizational) information asset management (EIAM) program that is not applied consistently to all corporate information assets, regardless of medium of storage (technology), increases litigation risk, discovery, preservation and production costs. This includes e-mail, electronic data sets, and other digital information, particularly that which resides on desktop computers.

Distinguishing Document Management Systems from Records Management Systems

Generally speaking, document management systems were not engineered to satisfy the robust requirements needed for "cradle to grave" *management* of corporate records, though many in the marketplace today are quite capable of satisfying some of the requirements addressed later in this document.

Implementation of document management systems without a pre-implementation examination of records management needs will almost certainly result in the inconsistent application of EIAM policies. During the litigation process, such inconsistencies may very well be seen as an opportunity to question the integrity of the entire [enterprise] program.

This includes the "proper" capture, management, and destruction of records, and the credibility of information held or produced in response to preservation orders and discovery.

Under "normal" circumstances the most appropriate first step is to identify functional (user) requirements, including those associated with information asset (and records) management policies, and approved retention schedules. It's important to ensure that implementation of such "systems" is driven by end-user business, legal, and regulatory needs (and associated processes) rather than technology. A consistently applied and effective EIAM program and supporting technology will best facilitate the identification, location, review, retrieval and production of records in a timely, efficient and cost-effective manner.

The question is often asked, "what distinguishes document management systems (DMS) from records management systems (RMS), and is either something we should implement as part of our EIAM program?" Most view technology as *the* way to improve productivity and increase organizational effectiveness. We suggest that when trying to answer that question it's important to keep in mind the fundamental differences between documents and records, and to keep in mind that not all documents are records, but that all records are documents!

Knowing whether an "object" is a document or a record can affect the way you preserve and manage corporate data.

As "unimportant" as it may seem to some, knowing whether an "object" is a document or a record (analog (paper or other "hard" copy) or digital (electronic file)) can influence the way you preserve and manage the business records that you may be called upon to locate and produce one day.

The answer to the question "are *they* documents or records?" won't necessarily be the same for everyone. In fact, the extent to which a person can answer the question, and how they implement information asset and records management policies, will be influenced by differences in *business needs, legal, and regulatory requirements* for maintaining documentary materials.

That's why it's important for those charged with EIAM responsibilities (including records managers) ensure appropriate policies exist, that they reflect consideration of the *structured and consistent management* of all documentary material regardless of their form or medium of storage or other characteristics, and that their capture and preservation can be unhesitatingly said to be *authentic* and *reliable*.

What are Records?

Records are documents and other materials or "objects" (regardless of their form, characteristics, or medium of storage) that detail the transaction of business, and that have been *set aside* by proper authority for preservation as evidence of the functions, policies, procedures, decisions, or operations of the business.

Records are Considered Authentic Based on Their "Genuineness"

Authenticity is the "genuineness" that has been conferred upon a record by its mode of transmission (how it's communicated over space or time), its form of transmission (the format/media that it has when it's received), and/or its state of transmission (its completeness and effectiveness when it's initially set aside after being created or received), and the manner in which it's preserved.

Conferring Reliability Upon a Record

Reliability is conferred upon a record when it can be trusted due to its degree of completeness, the amount of control exercised during its creation and maintenance, and the dependability and trustworthiness of the author.

Once you know what distinguishes documents from records, you will be in a better position to determine whether a document management or records management system will best meet your requirements.

What to Look for in RMS

If you determine the need exists for a records management system (RMS), you should keep in mind that whatever records management application software you deploy must satisfy two overarching criteria:

- ✓ It must be capable of managing all organizational records regardless of storage media or other characteristics, and
- ✓ It must implement records management procedures to ensure the capture and preservation of authentic and reliable records.

Ensure the Solution Satisfies Organizational Requirements

Once you've decided to automate your enterprise records management process, you'll want to ensure that the "tools" you select are capable of satisfying the goals and objectives of your EIAM program policies.

If you can answer "yes" to the general requirements questions below, then the chances are good that your needs will be best satisfied by a records management system rather than a document management system.

- ✓ Managing Enterprise Records. Does the "system" (software) manage organizational records regardless of the media of storage, or other characteristics?
- ✓ Implementing Records Management Procedures. Does the "system" (software) include automated records management procedures to help capture and preserve records, and ensure their *authenticity* and *reliability*?
- ✓ Maintaining Record Integrity. Does the "system" (software) maintain electronic records in a manner that will prevent alteration, and safeguard against their premature destruction?

Minimize the Records Management Aspects of the Enterprise's Litigation Risk Profile

Regardless of whether your organization decides to automate its records management processes, or continue existing (manual) processes, there are several questions that information asset managers can ask themselves to help them gauge the extent to which current information asset management practices may be increasing litigation risk. Ask yourself whether:

- ✓ Corporate records are managed consistently, regardless of the media they are stored on (paper, tape, hard drive, diskettes, etc.), or other characteristics.
- ✓ Policies, procedures and audit mechanisms are in place to ensure all employees capture and preserve records in a manner that will ensure their *authenticity* and *reliability*.

- ✓ There are policies in place – employees are familiar with them – regarding the creation, use, and preservation of corporate information (on office desktop computers, as well as data that is taken home and manipulated on employee-owned computers).
- ✓ Your organization has instituted mechanisms to prevent unauthorized alteration of electronic records and safeguard them against premature destruction?
- ✓ Your organization has implemented – is consistently applying – a backup strategy that will ensure your electronic records are properly preserved, reliable, authentic, and accessible?

Meeting the Challenge

Admittedly, there are *document management* systems on the market today that have some of the functionality and include many features that are inherent in well-engineered records management application software. The challenge when deciding upon, and implementing automated tools in support of your information asset management program is to ensure that your *organizational requirements* have been fully identified and documented, and that the supporting technology ultimately selected *best satisfies those requirements*.

A Standard for All?

The Department of Defense has developed DoD 5015.2-STD, which outlines records management application (RMA) design criteria that are to be followed by Defense agencies during the acquisition of automated records management solutions. Though the standard was designed to ensure RMA solutions deployed by these agencies satisfy legal and regulatory requirements, its use in the private sector may not be a bad idea at all for anyone considering automating their information asset management activities.

The standard outlines a baseline set of requirements for automated records keeping that must be met in order to satisfy 44 U.S.C. 2902, and guidance and implementing instructions promulgated by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) when record-keeping processes are automated through the use of RMA software.

In November 1998, NARA recognized (and endorsed) the DoD standard as conforming with the requirements of the Federal Records Act and the implementing records management regulations found in 36 Code of Federal Regulations 1220-1238.

This information is available on the Internet at URL <http://jitic.fhu.disa.mil/recmgt/>. The JITC web site contains information regarding the RMA certification test and evaluation (CTE) process and procedures that application vendors must complete before their software solutions can be implemented by DoD agencies.

Conclusion

Remember, *"all records are documents, but not all documents are records!"* Selecting the right tools in support of an enterprise information asset management program will assure the enterprise's ability to manage its information management assets more efficiently and cost-effectively, and quite likely will result in reduced litigation risk.