



Document Management

Document management refers to the storage and retrieval of both static digital images and dynamic documents with a digital source (such as CAD generated or Microsoft Office documents).

The great benefit of a Document Management System over conventional folder based digital file storage, or paper, is the ability to organise, manage and control documents, many millions if required, and retrieve a specific document when it is required.

In addition, Document Management Systems may incorporate records management. A high level requirement, Records Management, refers to the lifecycle management of documents with respect to policies, rules, and regulations. Document Management Systems have several component functions. Depending on the requirements of a business, a system may have a method of converting documents into digital form (capture), applying look-up information to the digital files (metadata or index fields), and storing images in a database on digital media.

A Document Management System will also include the ability to search for documents (full text or index search), security features, and provide output (view, email, fax, print). Workflow, or routing of files, is an additional feature of many systems.

Seven Primary Benefits of a Document Management System

1. Provide a central repository for corporate knowledge
2. Assist in meeting compliance mandates
3. Cost containment purposes
4. Security enhancement
5. Data integrity enhancement
6. Disaster recovery
7. Customer and Stakeholder satisfaction

1. Document Management as a Central Repository

- Allows file access from regionally dispersed office groups
- Central system can serve multiple locations
- Enables access to documents 24 hours per day, 7 days per week
- Facilitates end-user requests by allowing much more self-service than possible with paper file management
- File sharing and collaboration



2. Meeting Compliance Mandates

For Government, industry, departmental, partner/supplier, other

- Document Management can help manage the flow of electronic forms and support the legal standing of electronic signatures
- Reduce recordkeeping and reporting burden imposed by regulations
- Share and control information with external agencies while maintaining standards
- Improve internal management procedures and processes
- Security of vital business information in electronic records is a key component in defining and protecting critical infrastructure
- Electronic records are a significant asset and Document Management can and should be an important part of an organisation's business continuity, contingency, and disaster recovery plan
- Document Management can assist in tracking and managing the original records, redacted versions, and requests for access

3. Cost Containment

- Substantial gains in efficiency reducing labour requirements and freeing up personnel
- Save physical file storage space (when using an electronic based rather than paper based system)
- Decrease in copying and printing
- Reduction in courier expenses
- Scalability: Expand without incurring undue expense

4. Security Enhancement

- Facilitates restricted access
- Varying levels of user rights permit access without exposing information unnecessarily
- Full audit trail of activity
- Retainment of prior versions of documents
- Electronic data encryption
- Files are retained and cannot be lost or destroyed

5. Integrity Enhancement

- Digital images provide exact representation of original paper documents
- Administrative controls restrict modification, deletion, importing or exporting of documents, reducing lost, misplaced, or damaged files
- Simultaneous multi-user access allows a single document to be used by multiple parties at once

6. Disaster Recovery

- Backup capabilities, unlike paper file storage
- Backups can be stored off site or in a fireproof safe
- Data redundancy for continuity of operations
- System component redundancy for reliability
- Full system redundancy (clustered architecture) for uninterrupted operations

7. Stakeholder and Customer Satisfaction

- Efficiency gains result in much more timely service
- Files are readily accessible to the user from the desktop
- Facilitates immediate attention to client requirements and requests
- Files are securely accessible to multiple staff, branch offices, external agencies and remote locations
- Document look-up capabilities allow any assigned member attend to a task or requirement
- Workflow and document routing allow for tracking and expedite work completion
- Project and Strategic level reporting is made more readily available

Disadvantages and Risks

Though Document Management offers great potential for efficiency gains, the technology can have some drawbacks if not designed and implemented properly. Some of the possible areas of concern include:

- Failure to align with business requirements
- Incorrectly indexed documents
- Time investment for document preparation, capture and indexing (where paper document conversion is involved)
- Capital investment for technology
- Changing technology standards
- Training of personnel
- Risk associated with poorly planned implementation
- Security and confidentiality concerns

All of these risk factors can be minimised by using industry accepted best practices during the analysis, design, and implementation phases of the Document Management project. With proper planning and execution, all the benefits of Document Management can be realised with minimal and managed risk levels.