

Managers Checklist:

Transitioning to a Paperless Office

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Whether you're starting down the path to digital storage, upgrading to a more robust system or looking to automate processes, this checklist will help you get started.

Most managers who are converting to a 'less paper' office — or even a paperless office — are aware of the benefits. In terms of accessing information, operating efficiently, and providing top-notch service, digital storage — especially with a Web-based system that enables 24/7 remote access via a browser — is light years ahead of paper and mixed media. For organizations challenged with cumbersome regulations and frequent audits, electronic storage also offers clear audit trails paper can't match.

Are you just starting down the path to digital storage? Looking to replace a simple system with something better or more robust? Ready to march forward with full automation of routine business processes? Regardless of what's driving you toward change, this checklist may help you avoid common pitfalls.

I. Finding a project champion and establishing vision

Executives, business managers, and users are critical in determining the barriers to efficiency and what needs to be addressed. IT staff need to respond to these needs by translating them effectively into a concrete plan. As you pull together the team that will make the project a reality, you need to:

1. ___ Examine challenges that are driving your company to automate. What are your goals? Understanding the drivers leads to better solutions.
2. ___ Choose a project champion for your digital storage and automation project. The person should understand the company's documents and business processes and be passionate about the role of effective IT in enabling positive change.
3. ___ Choose an IT leader to collaborate with your champion. This person should understand the business challenges the implementation is expected to solve as well as the intricacies of your IT infrastructure.
4. ___ Conduct a thorough business analysis. Is the procedure you plan to automate necessary, or is it redundant? What rules govern the procedures, tasks, and documents involved? Can the process be streamlined and improved?

II. Assessing information needs and potential security risks

Before you begin a document management project, consider who needs access to which information. Note who should be denied access, viewing rights, or the ability to approve, alter, or sign documents. Understanding enterprise-wide file use is vital. You should:

1. ___ Conduct an inventory of document types in your organization.
2. ___ Learn how files are organized and how workers search for them. Look at broader enterprise needs as well as your department's requirements.



Imaging, BPM/workflow, and
Document Management Software

3. ___ Determine whether each document type needs to be secured by department, role, specific user, etc.
4. ___ Consider regulations governing information access (HIPAA, Sarbanes Oxley, Right to Know, etc.) and establish rules for access that help you to comply.

Conduct a thorough business analysis. Is the procedure you plan to automate necessary, or is it redundant? What rules govern the procedures, tasks, and documents involved? Can the process be streamlined and improved?

5. ___ Evaluate the importance of a web-based electronic document management (EDM) solution for your business. Even organizations with a single location benefit from remote access to their documents from any location, at any time.

6. ___ Make sure your system can restrict access to documents and data by criteria such as location, department, role, and user.

III. Develop security guidelines

An EDM system with configurable administration lets you control who accesses and acts on your files, leaving clear audit trails. Still, the foundation of solid security is establishing and communicating a corporate policy people support. Make sure you:

1. ___ Create an information governance policy if you don't have one. Rules must be simple so they aren't ignored. Reiterate company policies regularly.
2. ___ After you convert to electronic storage, conduct regular audits to verify you have the details you need to prove compliance. Make system or communication adjustments, if necessary.

IV. Ensure appropriate storage of electronic records

Too often, data is stored in diverse systems that result in isolated data silos, complicating business efficiency as well as compliance. An integrated EDM system lets you gather documents from diverse sources so they can be centrally accessed, retrieved, and searched.

1. ___ Consider your objects that need to be stored: paper documents that can be scanned; images; correspondence; faxes; voice mails; videos; online forms; screen scraping from websites, portals, and applications; and emails.
2. ___ Make sure your EDM solution stores, or points to, diverse data and document types so that all of your information can

be indexed, searched, and securely retrieved through one central system.

3. ___ Consider data that is regularly compiled into reports. By automating data extraction and printing reports to PDF or TIFF files, you not only avoid paper; you create digital reports that can be stored and accessed securely, yet instantly, from any location via a Web browser.
4. ___ Establish clear and consistent rules for long-term storage of documents that have exited the business lifecycle but need to be retained according to regulations.
5. ___ Create clear, consistent rules for timely migration, purging, and destruction in accordance with company policies that support government and industry regulations.

V. Determine the Total Cost of Ownership (TCO)

Even if you have experience with EDM and automation projects, it can be challenging to determine the TCO for an EDM or business process management (BPM) solution. Here are some things to consider:

1. ___ Evaluate the complete requirements to operate your chosen EDM storage system and the BPM solution you will use to automate your processes.
 - Determine required upgrades to your existing infrastructure.
 - Evaluate whether you would benefit most from high-speed or desktop scanners, and whether you need features such as duplex or color.
 - Assess software, considering whether your EDM solution can handle structured and unstructured data. Keep long-term goals in mind. Verify that the software has an open architecture with complete web services to enable thorough integration with your existing applications and data.
 - Consider whether professional services are needed to integrate systems.
 - Does your planned solution require custom programming? Can your IT team handle it internally, or will you need professional help?
 - Determine whether it's best for you to in-source or out-source document scanning and indexing. If you do so internally, will you need to hire temporary staff, or add support in other areas while your staff converts files?
 - Consider whether you prefer the long-term control afforded by purchasing and managing a software solution, or whether you are willing to relinquish some

control for the short-term savings a hosted solution typically allows. Your decision will affect costs and control.

- Significant increases in mission-critical electronic data necessitates daily backups using a hard drive, tapes, or other media. The amount of space, speed, and memory required will determine cost.

2. ___ After you determine the expected TCO, don't forget to calculate anticipated savings from the implementation. Usually, efficiencies gained by a high-performance software solution cover installation costs within a year, and sometimes within several months. After cost recovery, savings typically skyrocket.

VI. Develop an indexing or file plan

Just like using an encyclopedia, your staff's success finding information depends on what they need and how they search for it. Since every job requires different information, developing a file plan to help people find data in your electronic documents — now and in the future — is essential. Make sure you:

1. ___ Involve managers, end users, and IT. This lets everyone fully explore business needs and the solution's capabilities. It will also help technical and non-technical staff to understand each other's challenges and improve collaboration.
2. ___ Analyze each document type, its source, lifespan, and important information about each document's contents.
3. ___ Involve end users in the indexing process. This helps you to avoid under indexing (failing to consider future needs for the data stored in documents) and over indexing (including extraneous data no one searches for or cares about).
4. ___ Evaluate enterprise needs for data stored in your documents, as well as the processes that involve those documents. Even if you are starting your first automation project with a single department or a process *within* a department, you will avoid continually revising your indexing plan if you plan carefully now.

VII. Market the new initiative to users

The best plans are meaningless if they are not supported, adopted, and eventually embraced. There are several concrete steps you can take to set the stage for success:

1. ___ Communicate benefits to every user before the project begins.

2. ___ Show how staff's lives will be made easier through digital storage and automation.

3. ___ Involve end users in document and process analysis. They are the ones who know their routine procedures best and can provide you with the details you need to ensure nothing is missed.

4. ___ Establish milestones that will help staff to see and celebrate progress.

5. ___ Consider incentives that encourage people to support and take full advantage of the efficiency gains provided by the solution.

6. ___ Recognize staff and celebrate when major project milestones are met.

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Summary

Successful projects start with a solid plan. Make sure you do a candid assessment of your needs, consider all options, and choose a reputable EDM and BPM provider with high-performance software and experience. You will be well poised for success, and when you reach it, you will never look back.



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