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Next-Gen ECM: Addressing Organizational Issues in Information Management

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Clive Longbottom
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Biography

Clive Longbottom is the founder and research director of Quocirca (www.quocirca.com). Trained as a Chemical Engineer, Clive understands that everything within a business is predicated on process, and that the only point of technology is in making sure that the processes run efficiently and smoothly.

Business processes cover a multitude of sins, and therefore Clive is a technical generalist, covering areas as diverse as storage, servers, operating systems, IT platforms, data centres, systems management, on-line services, big data and analytics – in fact, pretty much anything that can have an impact on the business. He strongly believes that analysts that are too focused on a single area may be able to help the IT department, but that they will generally fail in what they should really be doing – helping the business.

Clive is regularly quoted in the technology industry and mainstream business media and is a regular contributor of analytical content to various publications and frequently blogs on Computer Weekly. He regularly delivers presentations from formal keynotes at large events to informal off-the-cuff talks at executive dining evenings.

Clive has been elected as a Fellow of the Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (RSA). As part of this, Clive has written on how technology can be used to help underserved areas of the planet, and can help in making life better for people without imposing a view of everyone needing to move to cities or to change their aspirations.

Rob Bamford
Principal Analyst Business and Communications
Quocirca

Rob Bamforth is a Principal Analyst working with Quocirca (www.quocirca.com), focussing on business communications, with particular emphasis on where communications impacts people and things through mobile, social, unified and machine-to-machine (Internet of Things) communications. His overall experience combines sales and marketing, with an in-depth understanding of technology development and deployment.

Business communications covers a wide area, encompassing telecommunications, convergence with IT and collaboration. It touches on employee and business effectiveness and efficiency as well as environmental and other external changes. Rob's perspective is on the business impact from large enterprise to SMB.

Rob joined the analyst community, establishing the wireless and mobile practice at Bloor Research prior to extending his interest in the impact of the convergence, or as he would rather say, 'collision' of IT and Telecommunications industries with his work at Quocirca. He has written numerous articles and many reports encompassing the impact and management of mobile devices, mobile security, the cloud, the Internet of Things, unified communications and video conferencing. Rob also presents and contributes in seminars, video interviews and webinars, has been involved in industry groups such as the EVUA and Mobile Data Association and for several years has been a judge for the GSMA awards at Mobile World Congress.

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Keywords Enterprise Management content (EMC), Information, Data, Analytics, Information
Paper type Research

Abstract

This *article is an abstract of the report (www.quocirca.com/content/next-gen-ecm-addressing-organisational-issues-information-management) on how Enterprise content management (ECM) systems have typically only been used to manage a*

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small proportion of an organization's information. The future must be about managing more of it, and in a more effective manner throughout the entire lifecycle – from the point of creation, through collaboration to final-form content, and eventually to archival/disposal. The full report and research findings are available to purchase directly from Quocirca (www.quocirca.com).

Introduction

Traditional enterprise content management (ECM) systems have been primarily leveraged to manage a small sub-set of an organization's content. However, with an increasing volume of electronic content and the need for strong governance, risk and compliance (GRC), it is time to move more towards a platform that manages not only an organization's most mission-critical content assets, but also the related workflows and business processes. This requires a completely different approach to managing content: specifically, a metadata-based approach that serves as the foundation for driving collaboration, workflows and content identification through to security in a more effective and intuitive manner.

The problems with current content management approaches

Data is a stream of ones and zeros, either held on a storage device somewhere, or passing over a network. What value does it have? As just data, not a lot. It only gains value as it becomes content - and this requires knowledge of what the data is, what it means and how it should be used in context with other available content – and herein lies the main problem for an organization when dealing with its content assets.

Consider an organization with 200 employees. It is highly likely that these 200 employees will be creating over 1,000 documents and 10,000 emails per week. There will also be further documents created or sent across from along the value chain – suppliers providing information; customers asking for or sending in information.

However, it is difficult for an organization to capture and then manage all of these documents and pieces of content throughout their complete lifecycle – particularly at the early stages where documents are being created and collaborated on.

The legacy approach of the system that creates and manages that content, or the output being managed, has been based on where it is stored in a folder/file hierarchy, which leads to major issues. These islands of content rapidly become disconnected and unmanageable – the costs both in financial and business opportunity value can be major.

This creates another problem for an organization. An executive with a focus on customer satisfaction will tend to look at where they believe the majority of their value lies – in the customer relationship management (CRM) system. Someone responsible for inventory and shipping will be more likely to look at what is in the supply chain management (SCM) system.


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Although there may well be some data overlap in these systems, it is unlikely to be a fully integrated IT ecosystem. Corporate hierarchies tend to place people within a pigeonhole; the licensing and management of 'enterprise' applications mean that the overall view of the available data and information is often dictated by that pigeonhole.

This leads to the problem that an executive in charge of customers ends up looking at data available through Point A and can only see detailed data from the CRM system, along with some overlapping data held in other systems such as ERP. Unsurprisingly, they could come to a completely different decision to someone else looking at the data available to them from Point B. This makes it nearly impossible to effectively aggregate, manage and report on all this information. 'Middleware', where separate technology outside of the various systems themselves is used in an attempt to pull together disparate systems, has been one approach – but synchronizing different types of data in real time has proven problematic. The ultimate goal has to be to provide visibility of all content across an organization while avoiding the duplication of data, silos of data and other technical overheads.

Many organizations have turned to enterprise content management (ECM) systems to address this issue. ECM systems have grown from a need to control certain content assets in order to meet governance, risk and compliance (GRC) issues, such as being able to demonstrate compliance to Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), HMRC/Companies House or other needs. When electronic content volumes were small, ECM made good sense – highly process-based systems that managed a few, easily identifiable datastores based around a folder/file hierarchy worked.

However, traditional ECM systems have been based around the concept of pulling those files into a centralized, dedicated database – and it just does not work any longer. As organizations have moved to ever-more ubiquitous file sync and share (FSS) systems (such as Dropbox and Box), many ECM systems have failed to keep up with such changes in end-user experience and usage patterns. Whereas the FSS products have created a simple method of drag and drop and folder synchronization where all a user's information is stored for easy access everywhere, this has not been a focus of the ECM vendors. Instead, they have maintained focus managing the content that they believe is most important to their customers – that which is already being used within the upper echelons of an organization for decision-making purposes, or for regulatory compliance. Meanwhile, they have tried to demonstrate continued market value through adding additional – often questionable and confusing – features.

By keeping per-seat pricing high and messaging a focus on the management and control of information assets once they have reached a level of agreement across a broader group within an organisation, it can be perceived that such ECM vendors are minimizing the volumes of information under control.

Although this makes some sense, it is actually dangerous. Not only are content volumes exploding, but the concept of that content being held in a handy folder/file hierarchy has disappeared. Content can come from anywhere – inside the

organization, suppliers, customers, web searches, you name it – and it needs to be managed effectively.

If decisions are made only against a sub-set of managed content that has previously passed through several levels of unmanaged collaboration, the risk of making the wrong decision is amplified. Full access to all information available along the entire collaboration chain is needed.

Only through a more systemagnostic and inclusive approach to how content is captured, managed, and shared can an effective enterprise information management strategy be embraced across an organization and its value chain. For this to happen, there must be greater democratization in information management – it must be widespread across the organization and its value chain, it must be easy to use, and it must be standardized so that organizations do not have to be prescriptive to those it wishes to participate with across the value chain.

This requires a complete rethink of information management – not just at a technical level, but also at the business level.

At the technical level, the use of metadata is the key element. At the business level, the notion that all data must be democratized is important. Let's look at the value of data and information.

The full report can be downloaded direct from Quocirca at:

www.quocirca.com/content/next-gen-ecm-addressing-organisational-issues-information-management

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M-Files enterprise information management (EIM) solutions eliminate information silos and provide quick and easy access to the right content from any core business system and device. M-Files achieves higher levels of user adoption resulting in faster ROI with a uniquely intuitive approach to EIM that is based on managing information by 'what' it is versus 'where' it's stored.

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Clarifying the business impact of technology

Quocirca is a primary research and analysis company specialising in the business impact of information technology and communications (ITC). With world-wide, native language reach, Quocirca provides in-depth insights into the views of buyers and influencers in large, mid-sized and small organizations. Its analyst team is made up of real-world practitioners with first-hand experience of ITC delivery who continuously research and track the industry and its real usage in the markets.

Through researching perceptions, Quocirca uncovers the real hurdles to technology adoption – the personal and political aspects of an organization's environment and the pressures of the need for demonstrable business value in any implementation. This capability to uncover and report back on the end-user perceptions in the market enables Quocirca to provide advice on the realities of technology adoption, not the promises.

Quocirca research is always pragmatic, business orientated and conducted in the context of the bigger picture. ITC has the ability to transform businesses and the processes that drive them, but often fails to do so. Quocirca's mission is to help organizations improve their success rate in process enablement through better levels of understanding and the adoption of the correct technologies at the correct time.

Quocirca works with global and local providers of ITC products and services to help them deliver on the promise that ITC holds for business. Quocirca's clients include Oracle, IBM, CA, O2, T-Mobile, HP, Xerox, Ricoh and Symantec, along with other large and medium sized vendors, service providers and more specialist firms.

Details of Quocirca's work and the services it offers can be found at **www.quocirca.com**