

Understanding Content Services for the Enterprise

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Content is the lifeblood of any successful business in today's intensely competitive environment, but without a solid strategy and solution for managing that content, businesses can be quickly left behind. Often referred to as "Content Services," making the most of content requires accessing, indexing, evaluating, prioritizing and protecting that content to best leverage it in order to drive higher customer satisfaction and growth through existing and new revenue streams. Choose the right service provider with expertise in Content Services, and set your business on the path to success.

One of the most significant challenges facing the enterprise is that content is no longer limited to only static collateral or online documents, but includes evolving sources such as social media streams. Recognizing that content comes from so many varied sources and finding more efficient ways to manage it is one of the secrets to developing a strong Content Services strategy. When a business learns to make sense of all its enterprise content and finds ways to tap into it to drive growth, reduce risk and protect sensitive content, that is the recipe for success.

Having a Clear Content Management Plan is Essential

The volume of content flowing in and out of enterprises is enormous, and continues to grow as new channels for communication emerge. As a result, in many cases workers are spending more time looking for relevant information, within and external to the corporate perimeter, and less time using it to expand the business. Fortunately, storage technology has advanced and costs remain relatively low, so capacity is not an issue. However, managing the rising volumes and content types requires a clear vision for how the content will be organized, secured and accessible to maximize value.

The responsibility for managing content used to fall on knowledge workers, but now everyone in the enterprise shares in the task because content and access to existing information plays a larger part in all corporate roles. Content comes into the organization from a wide variety of sources, so more of the responsibility for compliance and security is spread across many different owners. More

people are involved in creating, gathering and managing content, while even personal devices are playing a part in enterprise content services. And it's not just people who are contributing to the increased content—with machine learning and AI, the need to access and leverage content is now coming from sources other than humans.

All Content Should Not be Treated the Same

Different kinds of enterprise content often require varying approaches. For example, storage, security and compliance are very distinct tasks when it comes to content. Similarly, the types of content, ranging from documents or statements to instant messages or social media, will play a role in determining the best approach. And in today's multi-channel environment, all of those touchpoints might be required for any one customer request. Storing and accessing that content to provide a complete 360-degree customer view is necessary for delivering the best customer service possible while also uncovering opportunities for growing those relationships. Ensuring that enterprise employees have easy access to the relevant information means better processes and better service.

That's because the true value of content often comes from its ability to drive new business. Companies are always looking for ways to leverage the information already in-house to sell new products or services to an existing base. Knowing where those customers have invested in the past or what kinds of questions they may have asked will help direct future interactions. But not all content is valuable only for its ability to enhance revenue or profits—it also can help make an enterprise more efficient, meet legal or regulatory obligations, and reduce the need to re-enter or re-create important information. Identifying a tipping point of cost vs. value will depend on the specific business, but is a critical part of the process.

Although most enterprises already have some level of Content Services, the age and security of these systems vary greatly. Keeping the systems current and secure is not easy, opening businesses to an increased risk of breaches. For many organizations, relying



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on a service approach where the security and maintenance is built-in means that the worry of updates, patches and recovery is handled by a trusted partner organization that has the required expertise. This way, the IT department can focus on the larger content services initiative and strategy rather than getting mired down in the day-to-day tasks of patching software and systems.

Choosing a Reliable Content Services Program

So how does an organization determine its needs for content management services? There are a number of factors to consider, such as opportunities for consolidation, business goals and drivers, IT investments, areas in which the company is failing or falling behind competition, obstacles to improved content utilization and more. In some cases, an event such as an audit finding or a security breach could also be the reason for assessing content needs and solutions. A classic strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis will help to uncover those areas where the enterprise is doing well and those areas where there is room for improvement. With a clear picture of how changes to Content Services will impact business goals, a company can focus on steps that will have the most immediate and significant impact to improve information management.

A good Content Services program is fully connected into an enterprise's other systems and should be transparent to the end user. The content that is created, stored and consumed must be served to the right audience at the right time with the right level of security. By outsourcing Content Services needs and relying on a service model, enterprises are able to more easily stay current with the latest versions of software and security patches while also establishing the information connectivity needed. Companies enjoy the benefit of not being locked in to a single deployment investment freeing IT staff to focus on other strategic priorities that will help to enhance the bottom line. ■