

Empowering SharePoint Users with Purpose-Built Document Management

ECM, Document Management and SharePoint

With more than a decade of market success behind it, SharePoint has clearly delivered on the promise of re-shaping the way organizations around the world collaborate. And as Microsoft celebrates SharePoint's longevity, customers continue to look for new ways to get the most out of their investment in the technology. With or without SharePoint in place, today's IT leaders must seek out the most productive and cost-effective approaches for organizing, managing and sharing the vast array of documents and information that exists across their organizations. This white paper addresses the considerations that businesses should make as they evaluate their overall enterprise content management (ECM) needs, and specifically those related to document management.

More than 78 percent of Fortune 500 businesses today make use of SharePoint, and the Association for Information and Image Management (AIIM) estimates that 60 percent to 70 percent of firms rely on the product in some way. With approximately 125 million licenses sold, and availability in more than 40 languages worldwide, there's no denying SharePoint's reach across the enterprise space is strong and growing.

Still, in the early days, SharePoint was not widely accepted as a production-level ECM solution. But Microsoft responded with enhancements as well as new ECM and document management functionality, such as improved handling of metadata (using descriptive properties or tags for classifying and indexing managed content), thereby making it more likely that users would be able to more efficiently manage and locate information stored within SharePoint. And with the release of SharePoint 2010, Microsoft enhanced the platform's back-end data connectivity, enabling it to work with information and content from other applications, whereas in the past it simply provided read-only access to back-end information.

Even with these and other advancements atop the remarkable tool that SharePoint has become, a need still remains to empower businesses with a way to customize and augment the broad-based SharePoint platform so that it better suits their specific requirements for organizing, managing and tracking documents, information and business processes. Indeed, with the ever-increasing volume of content that organizations must manage – from traditional Office documents and PDF files, to email, mobile data and the vast array of other types of unstructured content that pervades today's organizations – there's greater demand than ever before for a more effective means for managing mission-critical information.

The Case For Purpose-Built Document Management

As IT leaders, CIOs and other executives evaluate their ECM and document management needs, there are a host of issues they should take into account. A fundamental component of an overall content management strategy relates to managing, controlling, sharing and collaborating on documents and related processes. Specifically, organizations need to consider how SharePoint addresses their needs for searching, viewing, securing, routing, editing and tracking documents and document-driven processes, such as invoice processing or contract management, in addition to how that compares to other purpose-built document management solutions.

The free version of SharePoint (SharePoint Foundation) provides many of the tools a small business may need to implement basic – but not advanced – team collaboration services. According to a 2010 ZDNet product review, “SharePoint Foundation uses SQL Server (or the free SQL Server Express), and requires very little administration. Using it with SQL Server Express also means that you can set up a single server collaboration instance for very little outlay — making Microsoft’s collaboration competitive with the open-source alternatives.”

But, depending on the business and its specific needs, this level of collaboration is not enough: some important capabilities related to document management may not be available “out of the box” with SharePoint Foundation, or they may require capabilities only offered in the paid – and more robust – SharePoint Server platform. Since custom development and the paid version of SharePoint Server can be cost-prohibitive, many SMBs have turned to commercially-available, purpose-built document management solutions to augment SharePoint. Certain types of businesses, particularly those in industries that consider document management to be one of their highest organizational priorities, are also looking beyond SharePoint for expanded capabilities, with regulatory management and enforcement being one area where purpose-built solutions bring powerful out of the box functionality to the table.

Further, IT resource allocation concerns and the need to establish company-wide procedures that can be quickly and easily deployed – as well as adequately and efficiently enforced – are also driving adoption of purpose-built document management solutions to augment SharePoint. Some ECM and document management vendors have been careful to take steps to ensure their solutions are not only painless and cost effective to deploy, but also capable of being implemented right at the initial point of deployment. In fact, there are alternative solutions that integrate easily with SharePoint from the get-go, without any special development required. Moreover, these same solutions provide convenient access to their full range of document management capabilities right from within the SharePoint platform, making access to important documents and participation in workflows seamless and as easy for the user as point and click, or drag and drop – which can have a profound impact on successful company-wide adoption.

For many organizations, it ultimately comes down to choosing between developing one’s own custom document management capabilities on SharePoint, or employing a solution that augments SharePoint with out-of-the-box features. In other words, do you want to invest your IT resources in boosting the capabilities of SharePoint in ways not addressed by the platform or the other enterprise systems you have in play, or simply turn to a purpose-built alternative that will help you quickly achieve your goals?

Boosting the Value of SharePoint

As SharePoint’s growth has reached phenomenal levels, most ECM and document management vendors – making note of the platform’s universal appeal – have responded by offering some level of SharePoint connectivity. At the same time, with the advent of cloud computing, the availability of SharePoint as a service in Microsoft Office 365 is also extending the platform’s reach, allowing for broader use and easier access to the collaboration tool for those businesses relying on the cloud to host their key business applications.

But for many organizations with specific and/or mandatory requirements related to document management, it takes much more than just connectivity or cloud-based accessibility to get the job done. These businesses are turning to purpose-built solutions that offer deep integration of document and

business process management functionality with SharePoint's collaborative capabilities. Such built-in, targeted functionality boosts the value of the overall SharePoint solution as both a rich collaboration portal and a centralized document repository, creating a better and more comprehensive platform for managing, searching and tracking all the content that exists across an organization's ecosystem. Furthermore, the specific features that purpose-built solutions can deliver – from compliance support to business process automation and intelligence – ensure that structured and unstructured data is uniformly stored, indexed, secured and available for routing, editing and tracking.

Having this functionality readily available out of the box can give an organization the specific document management capabilities it requires right out the gate, without the need to invest in and wait for a custom solution. ECM and document management solution providers in the SharePoint market today are keenly aware of this need -- especially those serving highly-regulated industries, such as pharmaceuticals and life sciences, manufacturing, financial, insurance and legal -- where regulatory compliance is an essential part of the daily routine. The most suitable solutions for these audit-intensive markets offer out-of-the-box security, version control and audit trail features, in addition to automated processes and workflows, backup, archiving and records management capabilities such as retention and disposal. These features address specific requirements needed for compliance with industry standards and regulations, such as ISO 9001, FDA 21 CFR Part 11, EU GMP Annex 11, and Sarbanes-Oxley (SOX), among numerous others.

And beyond vertical markets, there are areas within every organization, such as human resources or accounting, which deal with sensitive corporate data and have specialized documentation and information needs. An effective document management system will provide robust and easy-to-implement security measures and access permissions for such data, ensuring that policies and procedures are followed at every point in a document's lifecycle.

Getting Rid of the Chaos with Best-in-Class Document Management

SharePoint – with all of its functionality – offers a very broad base of features that can ultimately be tailored to meet specific business needs. Still, many companies looking to create order out of the chaos that exists across their vast collection of important documents and related processes are turning to targeted, purpose-built solutions for the most expedient approach to improving the way they manage such critical information. These solutions are designed with the understanding that the keys to creating order revolve around continually striving to maximize information reuse, eliminating redundancy, and ensuring organization-wide access to the right information when it is needed, while also improving how sensitive company information is accessed and controlled.

An important component of any purpose-built document management solution is to allow users to easily and conveniently get content into and out of the system. Along these lines, useful mechanisms include allowing users to save and open files – from any application – directly to and from a central repository, as well as providing the ability to automatically capture content from scanners, email, mobile devices and other enterprise systems such as ERP or CRM. The more seamless and automated the methods for saving and accessing data, the better for ensuring the most effective and comprehensive document management.

In addition, purpose-built document management solutions are designed to automatically index and support large numbers of documents for the purpose of instant retrieval, so that access to the “right” document in a timely manner is assured. The ability to search on both metadata and file contents is important, as well as the ability to perform simple searches by typing in a keyword or two, or to construct advanced search filters to instantly pinpoint critical information. Other useful search tools also include the ability to save common searches or queries for future use.

Because document management should also be both simple and flexible, providing users with the ability to classify and organize documents by any property or tag (i.e., metadata, such as document type, client, project, date, etc...) is also essential. Through improved classification and organization – with documents and information tagged and accessible directly from SharePoint – the typically inefficient and time-consuming process of searching for and locating the right information is dramatically improved. With AIIM estimating that office workers can spend as much as 50 percent of their time just looking for the right information, clearly, any organization that turns its attention to search improvements can realize a major, and near immediate, return on investment.

Other issues to consider when evaluating content search functionality include the ability to confine search results to only those documents to which the user has access rights, and the ability to capture and index a wide range of file formats.

Improving Enterprise Efficiency Through Information Lifecycle Management and Other Features

It’s important to note that document management is much more than finding or publishing documents: it’s about managing the content and information lifecycle, because you never know when you may need to reference or access that second or third iteration, particularly for purposes such as e-discovery or audits. That’s why purpose-built document management solutions go beyond SharePoint to include comprehensive version control and history features that track the entire lifecycle of a document or other information – even if the file format has changed, such as from an originating Word document to a PDF. In fact, some ECM and document management systems maintain a comprehensive history of all actions and changes, not only for documents, but also for workflows and processes, and even pure metadata. These features point users in the right direction to quickly find the version of the document they need, guiding them to the most up-to-date information, in addition to previous versions, should they be needed.

From a data flow standpoint, purpose-built document management solutions are also designed to provide a competitive edge. They make uploading, retrieval and storage both fast and secure, while also easing server bottlenecks by offloading data-intensive processes from the already-busy SharePoint platform.

Scalability is also critical. It’s important to determine how much information you’ll be managing, and how quickly it will grow, and then plan your approach and the ECM or document management solution you choose accordingly. Usability and user adoption can be greatly improved by eliminating data bottlenecks and improving the responsiveness and efficiency of an enterprise system that must be used daily. As a result, given the data-intensive nature of document management, augmenting SharePoint with a purpose-built solution to achieve superior overall system performance can make sense for many organizations.

Maximizing Project Management, Publishing and Reporting Functionality

Combining SharePoint with purpose-built document management systems for the purpose of streamlining and facilitating critical project management tasks can yield exceptional results. Indeed, with many projects lasting for extended periods of time, and the existence of numerous documents and other information related to each project, having straightforward, automated processes in place helps keep things moving forward and on track.

Purpose-built document management solutions bring capabilities to SharePoint for managing and tracking project information that has no associated document or file, for example different employee records with phone numbers and emails. These database objects can be then tagged to relevant documents such as work permits and such. In addition, the inclusion of features such as assignments, digital and electronic signing and email notifications are valuable tools that can dramatically improve project efficiency.

A purpose-built document management solution can also complement SharePoint's already powerful publishing capabilities by harnessing associated metadata to automate and control publishing in a structured manner. For example, approved documents can automatically be published – either to a subset of users or to all users, including internally within the company's firewall, or externally to partners, contractors and customers via the web and mobile devices. And content can be fluidly integrated with other team or project-focused information and collaboration tools in SharePoint, such as announcements and status updates, calendars, group discussions and social interactions.

Additional document-related functionality also becomes possible, such as “on-the-fly” conversion of file formats: for example, the ability to quickly or automatically convert Word documents or CAD drawings to PDF format for easier and more secure distribution.

New reporting options can also be brought to the table with purpose-built solutions to augment SharePoint's capabilities – such as incorporating data and analytics associated with documents and document-related processes to generate reports surrounding proposals, sales orders, customers, expiring contracts and more, with granular details that increase the strategic value of such data to the organization. And the ability to graphically display and share this information in SharePoint provides a powerful way to illustrate and publish results to distributed teams. This level of business intelligence and reporting can provide improved visibility into new or existing key performance indicators (KPI) and other metrics to enhance management insight and business performance.

CONCLUSION

This white paper has only touched the surface when it comes to explaining how SharePoint can be augmented with a purpose-built document management solution to maximize your overall return on investment. SharePoint is a rich platform that can be configured and customized to meet a variety of content management needs, so at some level, choosing to augment its capabilities with purpose-built document management can be viewed as a make-versus-buy decision. If the necessary document management features can be cost-effectively obtained on the market, resources that would have been required to implement such capabilities in SharePoint can be redeployed to address other important needs, or to pursue new business

opportunities. Also worthy of consideration are the benefits that can come from access to technology that has been developed specifically for document management and optimized and hardened in multiple production environments, versus using a one-off custom approach.

However you choose to address your content and document management needs in your SharePoint environment, either with an internal or outsourced custom development project, or with a commercially available solution that is tightly integrated with SharePoint, optimizing the way your organization manages documents and related processes will have an immediate impact on efficiency and productivity, while also improving business intelligence and overall business management.

Devising the Optimal Document Management Scenario in SharePoint

Efficient document management can deliver dramatic gains in efficiency and productivity for your organization by improving the way you organize and manage your business documents, information and processes. An alternative to building your own internal solution is to employ a purpose-built document management solution such as M-Files, which provides complete “out-of-the-box” document management that is in use in thousands of production environments in over 90 countries worldwide.

As you consider your document management needs, take a look at what M-Files brings to the table for organizations using SharePoint:

- ³⁵₁₇ **Deep Integration with SharePoint** as well as the ability to seamlessly interface with essentially any CRM, ERP and database system to provide a centralized approach to document management that works in concert with existing systems.
- ³⁵₁₇ **Fast Comprehensive Search** across large numbers of documents and information, including both metadata and full-text search. M-Files also provides unique metadata-driven dynamic views that eliminate chaotic folder structures and provide instant and automated access to any document based on the need. For instance, documents by type, date, customer, or those at a certain workflow state, such as in review or approved.
- ³⁵₁₇ **Flexible and Secure Metadata- Driven User Access Permissions** ensure that only authorized personnel gain access to specified documents and information. M-Files also supports Active Directory and all your existing user and group accounts, automatically creating a seamless single sign-on environment.
- ³⁵₁₇ **A Full Complement of DM Features** including version control, automated workflow with assignments and notifications, and check-in/check-out to support editing in a team environment.
- ³⁵₁₇ **Deep Integration with Windows Explorer**, supporting all of your familiar Windows applications so that documents can be saved and opened from a centralized vault using standard File Open and Save commands.
- ³⁵₁₇ **Available in Cloud, On-Premise or Hybrid Deployments**, which combining elements of both cloud and on-premise. For instance, you can manage your vault on-premise with seamless integration with cloud-based applications, such Dynamics CRM Online, or cloud-based document management or publishing, with tight integration to an on-premise implementation of Dynamics AX, GP or NAV.
- ³⁵₁₇ **Multiple Access Methods** including an optimized Windows Explorer client, a Web interface supporting any platform including Mac and Linux, and mobile support for Smartphone and

tablets such as the iPhone, iPad, Android and Windows Phone. Offline access is also supported in the event a connection to the Internet is unavailable.

³⁵₁₇ **Built-in and Fully Customizable Document Types, Workflows, Templates and Reporting** and audit trail features to support records management requirements and compliance with industry standards and regulations such as ISO 9001, FDA 21 CFR Part 11, EU GMP Annex 11, Sarbanes-Oxley, and numerous other standards, laws and regulations.

³⁵₁₇ **Automated Project Management** features to streamline SharePoint team site development, collaboration, distribution of information and communication, with secure automated publishing of managed content. The agility of M-Files enables SharePoint users to build new document types and workflows on the fly.

³⁵₁₇ **Metadata-based architecture** enables businesses to manage and track content and processes much more efficiently than traditional file folder-based approaches. This unique approach enables organizations to automate business processes and access permissions in a fundamentally more efficient manner.

³⁵₁₇ **File Sharing and Collaboration with “Co-Authoring” Powered by Windows SkyDrive**, so when a document is checked-out for editing, simply designate it for co-authoring, enabling others to make changes to the same document simultaneously. Team members can include internal colleagues as well as external partners without core system access, they just get a link to access the document via SkyDrive. Read-only sharing is also supported.

³⁵₁₇ **Centralized Document Management** with integrated automated backup and archiving with support for email.

About M-Files Inc.

M-Files Inc. develops the award-winning M-Files enterprise content management (ECM) system and cloud-based service M-Files Cloud Vault that runs on the Windows Azure platform. M-Files is easy to deploy, learn and use, and has enabled thousands of businesses in over 90 countries make dramatic gains in efficiency and productivity by improving the way they organize and manage their business documents, information and processes. M-Files is available in 24 languages and is in use at customers such as AstraZeneca, EADS, Flybe Airlines and Parker Hannifin.

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