

Gathering Intelligence - the secret of Information Management

Executive Briefing Document



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– the secret of Information Management

Executive Summary

Regulations, corporate governance and legal commitments are the watchwords of all CIOs and business executives today. Being able to follow audit trails relating to your business information and have the data to hand as and when you need it are becoming increasingly crucial requirements in a post-Enron world.

Dealing with your corporate information effectively has never been more necessary, but for many organisations, the majority of this data is still held in paper-based documents, which are often difficult to find and inefficient to manage.

But according to Forrester Research, intelligent electronic or 'networked' documents offer a solution to this problem by replacing inefficient, manual, paper-based processes with streamlined, automated ones.

Such documents provide a secure and reliable format for presenting dynamic content, while at the same time incorporating business logic that can capture important business data which needs to be stored commonly in multiple transactional and other legacy back-end systems.

But because these networked documents include data as well as business logic, they are not just useful tools for staff purely within your own organisation. They can also be used for collaboration purposes by mobile workers, customers, partners and suppliers that reside outside of the corporate firewall.

This means that networked documents not only have the ability to address the regulatory and governance issues faced by organisations in both the public and private sector. They also cut the costs associated with manual processes, improve customer satisfaction levels, decrease time to market, and extend the value of your investment in enterprise applications – many of these were identified as key issues for CIOs, according to the NOP Technology Confidence Barometer, in today's troubled economic climate.

Overview

Enterprises are drowning in a sea of information. It's everywhere you look, but the salient bits have a habit of eluding us just when we need them most because they are all too often buried in divisional or departmental silos and their related systems.

But these days, the business of tracking, archiving and managing information is becoming ever more crucial as organisations find themselves subject to the demands of better corporate governance and increasingly stringent laws and regulations.

These range from the US-based Sarbanes-Oxley Act on financial disclosure, which is intended to prevent corporate scandals such as those that engulfed Enron from happening again, to Basle 2, a new risk management code for the European banking sector that is due to come into force in 2006.

Another key initiative affecting the public sector is e-Government, whereby the UK Government is requiring public authorities to make all of their services available online by 2005.

In order to meet the challenges posed by these new initiatives and regulations, organisations need to know that the information they have is accurate, easy to find and simple to access. Not an easy task.

But these are not the only issues. According to the NOP Technology Confidence Barometer (see Fig. 1), which is based on surveys undertaken with IT decision makers in the US and Europe, the top executive concerns are cutting costs (43 per cent) and secondly improving or upgrading current systems – a logical result of respondents declaring themselves loathe to recommend any new large-scale capital expenditure.

The desire to boost employee efficiency by implementing collaborative applications and increasing high-speed data transmission capabilities were also high on the agenda (26 per cent respectively) as organisations attempt to make the most of what they've got in the continually difficult economic climate.

How do organisations make the most impact on these priorities with the potential for the highest return on investment?

Addressing the Challenge

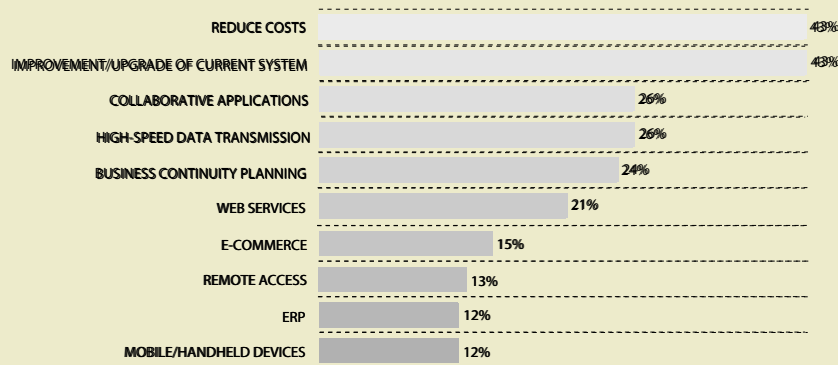
The cornerstone of any enterprise is information, and one of the key ways that enterprises exchange and store it is in the form of documents, most of which are still paper-based despite the vast quantities of money that have been thrown at automating different parts of the business over the last 20 years.

Documents such as invoices are used to undertake business transactions, while others such as catalogues and brochures provide readers with important knowledge about the company or the products it offers.

But, amazingly, IT so far seems to have made little impact in this crucial sphere, resulting in too many tasks still being undertaken manually, which, in turn, leads to delays, high error rates, poor productivity and process inefficiencies.

John Dalton, an analyst at Forrester Research believes that there are three key reasons for this shortfall and explains his rationale in a report entitled "Crossing the document-data divide."

Figure 1 **European CIO Priorities for 2003**



Source: NOP Technology Confidence Barometer

Firstly, many complex enterprise applications that handle visceral functions such as purchasing and invoicing are not optimised to automatically generate and send important forms and reports to the right people in one easy step.

Secondly, all too few organisations take an enterprise-wide view of information management. Instead, many leave technology purchasing decisions to individual business units, which tend to focus solely on their own needs. This results in a failure to develop a clear corporate strategy and piecemeal automation efforts. “The result: economies of scale get sacrificed for incremental gains,” Dalton warns.

Thirdly, even if companies have adopted an enterprise-wide strategy for automating their document-intensive business processes, most have implemented proprietary systems, which are costly and time-consuming to manage and maintain.

Networked documents – the answer to our prayers?

The answer to these problems lies in what Forrester describes as networked documents or as Dalton elaborates, “living documents with a bi-directional interface to enterprise processes” (see Fig. 2).

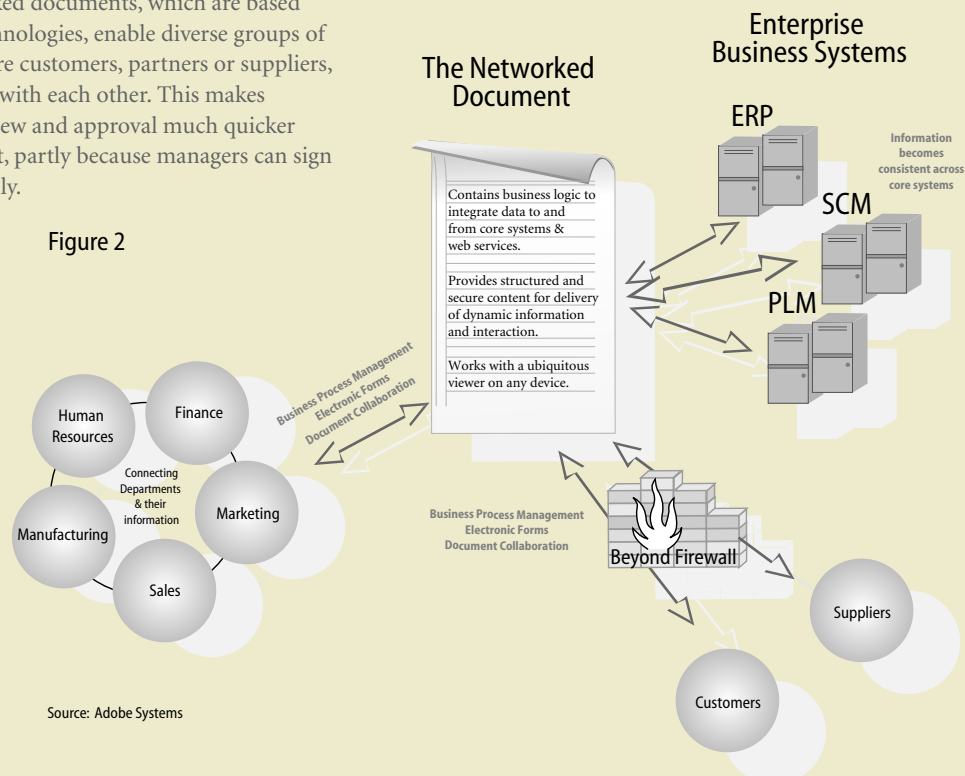
Rather than simply being a static means of displaying information, networked documents, which are based on open Internet technologies, enable diverse groups of users, whether they are customers, partners or suppliers, to share information with each other. This makes processes such as review and approval much quicker and more transparent, partly because managers can sign documents off digitally.

Solutions to these issues are available from vendors such as Adobe Systems so that users across the business can generate either transactional or personalised documents from existing core business systems without companies needing to invest in expensive new systems.

Users can also embed networked documents into their enterprise applications, which makes it easier to generate information relevant to individual customer needs. Documents can then be delivered to customers on their preferred device, for example a PC, mobile phone or PDA.

While it is possible to track and monitor any additions, amendments or comments that have been included in the networked document at any stage of the work lifecycle, information within the document can also be ‘locked down.’

This means that it cannot be changed without authorisation; enabling staff to create documents of record that are suitable for auditing purposes – something that is of critical importance for government bodies and highly regulated industries such as telecoms and financial services.



Cost Benefit Analysis

The advantages of networked documents are multiple. On the one hand, they make it quicker, easier and more cost-effective for organisations to capture forms-based information and for customers to complete any document-orientated task.

For example, if a client fills out a loan application at a PC in their bank or on a PDA at home, intelligent features embedded into a networked document could help them work out their monthly payment rates without needing to resort to a calculator and intelligently complete sections for customer convenience. Furthermore, customers have found today's exclusively online interaction with their banks - typically through HTML interfaces - to be highly unreliable and lacking in flexibility.

If further information is required that is unavailable at that time, they could simply save any changes they have made on their PC or mobile device and come back later without having to worry about needing to start the whole process again.

On the other hand, networked documents also help reduce the number of manual tasks that staff need to undertake internally. This, in turn, helps to lower the costs associated with time-consuming data entry by cutting error rates and enabling personnel to concentrate on higher value work.

Other advantages include cutting the costs associated with having to generate and ship pre-printed forms or hire a raft of programmers to build custom electronic ones. Customer service is also improved by enabling customers to download and submit forms securely themselves over the Internet.

Archiving these documents is also a key requirement for organisations in several industries as they are legally required to retain documentation and correspondence for various time periods depending on the document.

Information Management in Action

The UK Government's Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) is in the process of implementing an information management system to boost efficiency and enable it to meet its 2005 e-Government targets.

The organisation currently has to deal with up to 3,000 different forms, the majority of which are for internal use, the rest being grant application and export certification forms for Defra's customers, which include farmers and environmental agencies.

Most of these forms take the shape of word processing documents and can be up to 20 pages long. This means that staff currently spend a lot of time re-keying information as well as printing and sending off forms to relevant parties either via the post or as email attachments.

Defra decided, however, that in order to improve productivity and ensure it would hit the government's goal of having all public services online by 2005, it would implement a solution from Adobe Systems to enable customers to complete its forms either on- or offline. An important aim here was to shorten the time it usually takes to process applications by enabling users to download and submit their forms securely and quickly over the Internet.

Another key goal is to standardise the design of internal forms and to streamline such internal processes as completing timesheets, overtime claims and expense forms. The first phase of this system is due to go live in autumn 2003.

Into the Future

Forrester believes that, over time, the increased adoption of networked documents will bring about deep changes in the way enterprises communicate with staff inside the organisation and with customers, suppliers and partners outside.

Moreover, as they proliferate, the time will come when expensive content management systems will no longer be seen as vital to streamline vast amounts of document output. Dalton explains: "The result? Documents will evolve into apps, and content managers will morph into process managers." So cost savings and more efficient business processes all round.

In future, static HTML-based forms will become a thing of the past as staff and customers start to demand more intelligence and convenient offerings that - as an added bonus - are also more cost-effective to develop and deploy.

Lastly, networked documents will become indistinguishable from today's collaboration applications, which focus on document sharing and workflow, as users increasingly expect to interact with forms that are responsive to change and full of computational logic.

Managing the Business Issues - Leadership Briefings in October and November 2003

To support this series of discussion papers, you are invited to attend Management and IT leadership briefings that are held regularly at a central London location, focusing on the issues of managing information.

Capturing data more efficiently across the extended enterprise - 8th October

From loan applications to purchase orders to compliance reporting, many business processes begin with a user filling out a form. This IT management seminar will highlight usability issues and methods for capturing data online or offline, across a variety of devices, for the convenience of users.

Document Collaboration and Enterprise Content Management - 14th October

In enterprises where document collaboration is business-critical, streamlining review cycles and automating collaborative processes can speed time to market. This business orientated strategy forum demonstrates how enterprises can potentially become more productive and efficient, by bringing together people, processes, and documents.

CIO Issues in Financial Services - 22nd October

This business-level forum, delivered in partnership with IDC and Accenture will discuss business solutions that make it possible to integrate data systems with documents to automate processes for the initial capture of content, administrative processing, and the reliable delivery of personalised documents over multiple channels.

Security - Protecting Enterprise Information Assets - 28th October

To improve customer service and streamline processes, organisations are increasingly replacing their paper documents and forms with electronic versions for critical business transactions and communications. This IT management-orientated seminar will highlight solutions to help organisations deploy security for the most important corporate asset – information.

Creating high-quality documents from Core Business Applications - 18th November

This IT and Marketing management seminar highlights solutions that improve outbound communications to reduce costs associated with custom programming or pre-printed forms and drive revenue through high-quality, personalised documents delivered in a format that suits customer needs.

The Real-time Enterprise and Mobile Applications - 25th November

This business orientated strategy forum highlights the opportunity to replace inefficient, manual, paper-based processes with streamlined, automated processes using mobile solutions to improve customer satisfaction and extend the value of your investment in enterprise applications to gain competitive advantage.

To book your place visit www.adobe.co.uk/boardroom

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For a full copy of the Forrester Report go to: www.forrester.com

For more information on the NOP Technology Confidence Barometer please contact Richard Jameson, Managing Director of NOP Technology, on **020 7890 9234**

References:

RoperNOP Technology Confidence Barometer: wave 2 summary: December 2002
Crossing the document-data divide: Dalton, J et al. Forrester: Feb21, 2003



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