



## The Blended Solution: Integrating Digital and Hard Copy Document Management

- *Bruce Zeuli*

Business documents are the lifeblood of every organization, regardless of industry. They are the intellectual assets that drive strategic business processes, and as such, must be easily accessible as well as protected. However, most document solutions vendors have a one-dimensional view of document management, providing either offsite hardcopy document storage or digital conversion and archival services via a web-based repository. In reality, neither of these alternatives by themselves is the complete solution.

Migration to a completely paperless environment is a long-term business objective, but the fact remains that, currently, paper is a critical cog in the information infrastructure of an organization. Simply put, paper is a necessary supplement to digital workflows. By maintaining and managing an entire library of important records in only one format, a business is failing to recognize the reality of its document management needs: that most organizations have many years' worth of backlog in both paper documents and electronic data – all requiring retention in both digital and physical archives. In short, the immediate need is for a blended solution that allows for the integrated management of documents and records in a variety of formats; however and wherever it is needed.

In actuality the number of paper documents created each year is continuing to rise, as rather than eliminating paper, the innovations brought about by technology have created more. In most companies, documents exist in multiple locations, in a number of different formats and media, and are managed by several systems and processes, both automated and manual. In this environment, organizations need a single integrated approach to classify and apply retention policies as well as to store their records according to fiscal, legal, and regulatory requirements, no matter the format.

Integrated document management is not limited to one storage or conversion methodology, but is a blended solution tailored to the short and long term requirements of each customer's business. It is a systematic approach that creates a document storage, records retention and protection strategy that matches an organization's needs for archiving, accessing, securing, and managing their critical business data.

To achieve a competitive advantage in today's economy, enterprises must effectively manage and utilize their documents to attain organizational goals. Only a vendor that manages the complete lifecycle from content creation to disposal can meet this objective.

This approach also addresses the most important priorities in today's document management environment.



## Information Security, Privacy & Compliance

Decentralizing and distributing data through a variety of electronic and physical means combined with a more mobile workforce make complicates information security and makes privacy issues a top priority for every organization. Compliance and regulatory legislation is perpetually evolving to mandate how confidential records are accessed, used, transmitted, and disposed. Organizations must move quickly to protect their documents, whether in paper or electronic form. This includes developing a comprehensive document privacy protection plan that outlines each process and control method for maintaining a chain of custody over critical records.

An integrated document management solution, blending physical and electronic records storage, is the only approach that ensures compliance for all of an organization's critical documents. Just managing the storage of paper records is a major undertaking. Combining the management of a legacy of data along with newly created digital documents makes providing quick access while ensuring security and privacy even more difficult. Only by managing all documents and records, regardless of format, in a uniform, integrated way can companies be assured that their vital information is not compromised.

## Managing Document Retention Policies

Records retention has recently become a hot topic for enterprises in all industries, primarily due to the increasing number of statutory requirements and legislation governing this area. The cost of poor retention practices can be in the tens of millions of dollars in fines, as some companies have learned, for non-compliance with Securities and Exchange Commission retention rules. However, a responsible records retention policy is not just about retaining records, it is also about records destruction. If a record is retained too long, it can also be expensive, as companies expose themselves to litigation risks, and could also be violating privacy rights. Although some high-profile court cases brought the records retention issue to light, the implication is clear: an integrated approach to managing all of your documents is the only way to gain control over the number of physical and digital records in existence and those being created on a daily basis.

## Disaster Recovery

Enterprises run on their data, and the value of critical documents and records grows each year. With this vital data stored in both paper and digital formats, in multiple locations, it becomes an absolute requirement that these records be protected by a common, integrated document management solution. Internal practices and business policies currently in place may no longer be adequate to meet disaster recovery requirements, and they may not meet the security and retention standards of an auditor. An integrated strategy of off-site storage combined with a



secure electronic document repository ensures that a businesses' records are secure; documents can be controlled and tracked; audit trails are in place and that their business continuity, data retention and security requirements are being met.

## Litigation

According to the Third Annual Litigation Trends Survey (October, 2006, Fulbright & Jaworski LLP), 89% of more than 300 U.S. companies had some form of litigation pending. Most of these companies were not prepared to provide the level of document discovery required in either a civil case or a regulatory investigation. With both paper and digital documents residing in multiple storage facilities, different management practices and tracking capabilities, variable search tools, and changing retention/destruction policies, it is virtually impossible to comply with discovery requirements in a timely manner. The only approach to effectively meet these requirements is a blended solution that manages all forms of documents, whether paper or digital, stored in an electronic repository or off-site facility.

## Mergers and Acquisitions

The trend toward accelerated merger and acquisition activity in some companies has put an increased focus, as well as burden, on effective document management. These transactions increase the need for an integrated storage management solution, as paper documents will be stored in completely different physical locations without a common tool to control, manage, or access records. Digital documents will reside in different repositories, usually accessible through separate software applications, with no common document management or integration tool in place. With 80% of an enterprise's data existing in the form of documents, files, images, and other similarly unstructured content, it is critical that an integrated approach be taken to ensure uninterrupted processes, proper compliance, continued customer loyalty, and full realization of the benefits of the merger.

## Conclusion

In today's document-intensive environment, with the conversion and management of an increasing volume of both paper-based and digital information, it is critical for organizations to utilize the expertise of a company that provides a blended document storage solution. While a lot of vendors offer either hardcopy storage or a digital document repository, neither of these services provides the complete document management solution. With the increased demands of information security, regulatory compliance, document retention policies, disaster recovery, as well as privacy and confidentiality, coupled with an organization's budget and space constraints, an integrated, blended approach is an absolute requirement.