



Records and Information Management

“Clean Your Room; The Cleaning Lady Is Coming!”

With the influx of compliance, e-discovery and retention policies, many organizations are desperately seeking the magic bullet to stifle their RIM (Records & Information Management) woes. We fail to see the need to “clean up” so that the “cleaning lady can do her job”. If we don’t pick-up the clutter, how does the floor get clean? Overlaying a sophisticated EDMS (Electronic Document Management Systems) or email Management over a convoluted and inconsistent paper or electronic system has the same effect and we are often left disappointed and frustrated at the results.



Implementing a RIM program is a process and organizations need to go back to pay attention to the beginning of the record life cycle before attempting to fix the problems at the end of the life cycle. Too often we overlook the obvious of how to prevent the problem before we invest time and resources in fixing what has become an ongoing problem. This is not to minimize the significant need and value for technology. There is a plethora of solutions today that provide an efficient means to manage the information deluge. More often than not, however, organizations fail due diligence in evaluating the entire process. You need to know where you are and how you got there before you map where you want to be.

Conduct a survey

When was the last time your organizations completed a RIM inventory/audit? Whether you do it yourself or hire an outside resource, this is an investment that will save you ten fold in the end. Following is a minimum starting place for development of a sound RIM program:

What

Identify file/document types within each department that are being created. Often times you will find they are not necessarily in line with your retention schedule; something you don’t want to find out in a litigation scenario.

How

How are these records being created? Are electronic documents printed and filed? How are they indexed? Understanding how records are being created plays a significant role in solving the mystery of how to manage the information and create a consistent process that takes the guesswork away from the end user and defines the life cycle of the record. Doing it right in the beginning of the life cycle allows technology solutions to take care of it at the end.



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Where

Where are the documents being stored? Are there duplicate copies unaccounted for? There is a natural tendency for us to want to control access to our documents at the end user level. Lack of confidence in the corporate policy and process drives us to create multiple copies of documents so that we always have access. The problem is that when it's time to apply retention, how do we ensure that we have included the plethora of rogue copies? Understanding where these documents are and implementing a process for the creation and retrieval, along with good training will help alleviate this issue.



When

When does a record become a record? Too often, documents are neither indexed nor classified until the middle or end of the life cycle. They live in a limbo state often referred to as “working documents”. Documenting and understanding when your end users create records will help define the policy and ensure that the organizations intellectual property is identified and secured.

Why

Undoubtedly the most important question to consider when conducting the survey is “why”! “Why do you do it this way?” And the most common answer is....”Because we’ve always done it that way!” There is story after story of organizations continuing a process that is no longer applicable. Personnel turnover and poor training policies are often the cause. Managers don’t have the time or resources to periodically review departmental workflow and the trend continues.

Compiling this information about will shed light on your path to enterprise wide solutions. Executives and Managers need information to make sound business decisions about the present and future. The same concept applies to your RIM program. Test the water and know the tides before jumping into the ocean. And clean your house before calling the cleaning lady!



For more information about how Southwest Solutions Group can help you through the maze of RIM development, call us at 1-800-803-1083 or email us at info@southwestsolutions.com.



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