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# Enterprise Content Management System

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Enterprise Content Management (ECM) is a formalized means of

organizing and storing an organization's documents, and other content, that relate to the organization's processes. The term encompasses strategies, methods, and tools used throughout the lifecycle of the content.<sup>[1]</sup>

## History

Enterprise Content Management, as a form of content management, combines the capture, search and networking of documents with digital archiving, document management and workflow. It specifically includes the special challenges involved in using and preserving a company's internal, often unstructured information, in all of its forms. Therefore, most ECM solutions focus on Business-to-Employee (B2E) systems.

As ECM solutions have evolved, new components have emerged. For example, as content is checked in and out, each use generates new metadata about the content, to some extent automatically; information about how and when the content was used can allow the system to gradually acquire new filtering, routing and search pathways, corporate taxonomies and semantic networks, and retention-rule decisions. As email and instant messaging are increasingly employed in decision-making processes, the ability to access this data and use it in business decisions is facilitated by ECM.

Solutions can provide intranet services to employees (B2E), and can also include enterprise portals for Business-to-Business (B2B), Business-to-Government (B2G), Government-to-Business (G2B), or

other business relationships. This category includes most former document-management groupware and workflow solutions that have not yet fully converted their architecture to ECM, but provide a web interface. Digital asset management is a form of ECM concerned with content stored using digital technology.

The technologies that comprise ECM today are the descendants of late 1980s and early 1990s electronic document management systems (EDMS). The original EDMS products were stand-alone products, providing functionality in one of four areas: imaging, workflow, document management, or COLD/ERM (see components below).

The typical early EDMS adopter deployed a small-scale imaging and workflow system, possibly to just a single department, in order to improve a paper-intensive process and migrate towards the mythical paperless office. The first stand-alone EDMS technologies were designed to save time and/or improve information access by reducing paper handling and paper storage, thereby reducing document loss and providing faster access to information. EDMS could provide online access to information formerly available only on paper, microfilm, or microfiche. By improving control over documents and document-oriented processes, EDMS streamlined time-consuming business practices. The audit trail generated by EDMS enhanced document security, and provided metrics to help measure productivity and identify efficiency.

Through the late 1990s, the EDMS industry continued to grow steadily.

The technologies appealed to organizations that needed targeted, tactical solutions to address clearly-defined problems.

As time passed, and more organizations achieved "pockets" of productivity with these technologies, it became clear that the various EDMS product categories were complementary. Organizations increasingly wanted to leverage multiple EDMS products. Consider, for example, a customer service department—where imaging, document management, and workflow could be combined to allow agents to better resolve customer inquiries. Likewise, an accounting department might access supplier invoices from a COLD/ERM system, purchase orders from an imaging system, and contracts from a document management system as part of an approval workflow. As organizations established an Internet presence, they wanted to present information via the web, which required managing web content. Organizations that had automated individual departments now began to envision wider benefits from broader deployment. Many documents cross multiple departments and affect multiple processes.

The movement toward integrated EDMS solutions merely reflected a common trend in the software industry: the ongoing integration of point solutions into more comprehensive solutions. For example, until the early 1990s, word processing, spreadsheet, and presentation software products were standalone products. Thereafter, the market shifted toward integration.

Early leaders already offered multiple stand-alone EDMS technologies.

The first phase was to offer multiple systems as a single, packaged "suite", with little or no functional integration. Throughout the 1990s, integration increased. Beginning in approximately 2001, the industry began to use the term enterprise content management to refer to these integrated solutions.

In 2006, Microsoft (with its SharePoint product family) and Oracle Corporation (with Oracle Content Management) joined established leaders such as EMC Documentum and entered the entry-level "value" market segment of ECM.

Open source ECM products are also available, including WebGUI, Alfresco, Sensenet, eZ Publish, KnowledgeTree, Jumper 2.0, Nuxeo, and Plone.

Government standards, including HIPAA, SAS 70, BS 7799 and ISO/IEC 27001, are factors in developing and deploying ECM. Standards compliance may make outsourcing to certified service providers a viable alternative to an internal ECM deployment.

The technology components that comprise ECM today are the descendants of late 1980s and early 1990s electronic document management systems (EDMS), which in turn had their roots in the microfilm, microfiche and paper filing systems of the 20th century. The original EDMS products were stand-alone products, providing functionality in one of four areas: imaging, workflow, document management, or COLD/ERM (see components below).

The typical adopter of these new technologies deployed a small-scale imaging and workflow system, possibly to just a single department, in order to improve a paper-intensive process. The primary benefits that the first stand-alone EDMS technologies brought to organizations revolved around saving time or improving information access.

Specifically:

- Reduction of paper handling and storage
- Reduction of lost documents
- Faster access to information
- Online access to information that was formerly available only on paper, microfilm, or microfiche
- Improved control over documents and document-oriented processes
- Streamlining time-consuming business processes
- Document security and audit tracking
- Metrics to help measure productivity and identify efficiency

Through the late 1990s, various segments of the EDMS industry continued to grow steadily. The technologies appealed to organizations which needed targeted, tactical solutions to address clearly-defined problems.

As time passed, and more organizations achieved "pockets" of productivity with these technologies, it became clear that the various EDMS product categories were complementary. Organizations

increasingly wanted to leverage multiple EDMS products. Consider, for example, a customer service department, where imaging, document management, and workflow could be combined to allow agents to better resolve customer inquiries. Likewise, an accounting department could access supplier invoices from a COLD/ERM system, purchase orders from an imaging system, and contracts from a document management system as part of an approval workflow. As organizations established an internet presence, they wanted to present information via the web, which required managing web content. Organizations that had automated individual departments now began to envision wider benefits from broader deployment. Many documents cross multiple departments and affect multiple processes.

Early leaders already offered multiple standalone EDMS technologies. The first phase was to offer multiple systems as a single, packaged "suite," with little or no functional integration. Throughout the 1990s, integration increased. Beginning in approximately 2001, the industry began to use "enterprise content management" to refer to these fully integrated solutions.

Today, organizations can deploy a single, flexible ECM system to manage information in all functional departments, including customer service, accounting, human resources, etc.

## References:

1. ^ <http://www.aiim.org/What-is-ECM-Enterprise-Content->

Management.aspx