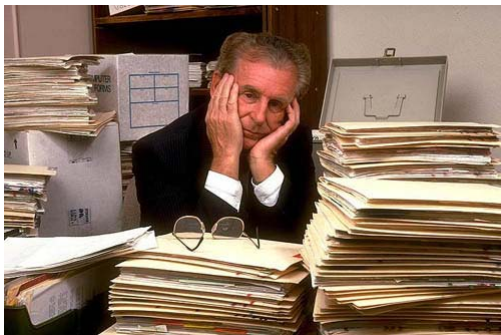




## Too Much Paper, eMail and Regulations: The Impact on Today's Businesses

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Look around your company today. Have you become a "paperless business" as some technology people forecasted a while back? Or do your copiers and electronic printers just keep churning out paper which gets taken on airplanes to be reviewed, brought to customers for discussion, or printed out to be read in someone's "spare" time? Then look at your e-mail. Away from the office for just a few days, there is a dearth of e-mails waiting for you upon return: some urgent, some sent to you by multiple people, each attaching the same file for you to act upon or review. Some of those e-mails include you in a master group, or are sent out electronically to hundreds of others. And how do you review that e-mail? Do you read it all right then, file some away to review later, never read other e-mails? Or maybe you print out what you *think* is most important so you can study it more carefully, include it with your customer presentation, or share with an administrative person to incorporate into a proposal, or perhaps to file away?



### Paperless Office?

Probably not; and speaking from a business sense, probably not even practical. But more and more companies today look at the glut of information all around them, not only words on a screen or piece of paper, but also attachments, such as PowerPoint presentations, physical papers with someone's signature on it, information couriered over to you, or sent out by your office via Fed Ex or UPS. Today's instant messages can be copied and saved. Some offices save important phone mail. Now, even government regulations and laws *require* you to save, document, and have access to more and more information for years, with the ability to quickly access, produce, and integrate with yet other information, sometimes for years in the future, while other information is never accessed, yet still needs to be saved and "accessible."

Yes, there IS an information glut around us, but businesses today are learning that they must have a plan, a process, rules for keeping more and more information for ever-longer periods of time. When I attended a recent AIIM (Association of Information and Image Management) conference here in Minneapolis, presentation rooms were filled with people eager to know about how to manage these records, these e-mails, this explosion of information; and how to comply with the new laws like Sarbanes-Oxley, HIPAA, DOD 515.05, and hundreds of regulations and compliance issues facing their industry or individual company.

One person at my lunch table said she'd just like to eliminate one storage *building*, another talked about daily UPS packages arriving from their remote offices containing orders which had to be keyed in, integrated with other data, and turned into reports. The discussion was about how to reduce the physical paper, how to set up or establish the right process for capturing data, archiving it, and electronically retrieving it as needed.

Many companies today are now setting up a new position: Records Manager, Information Manager, or Content Manager-- a position whose primary job is to oversee this information explosion, keeping the information accessible and retrievable while containing costs, reducing inefficiencies, and managing the paradigm shift.



How will this impact your company? In addition to looking at the technology needs for scanners, printers, and on-line retrieval mechanisms, companies need to look at the impact this will have on their storage needs. As we shift to less paper in boxes to more access electronically, there needs to be rules for storage, and assessments made as to the anticipated growth. Questions like

- What is the quantity of *documents, invoices, claims, forms, etc.*, you handle via paper in (what time period)?
- How long do you need to retain this information? *Today we speak of a need for a number of years, not months.*
- How large are these documents?
- How quickly do you need to retrieve this information? Who needs to be able to access it?
- Does information contained in these documents need to be correlated or indexed to other information at your company?

- Is there a need to automate the workflow process - - instead of paper being passed from location to location, department to department, should there be a new process to handle this information and workflow with electronic approvals and delegated, automated management?
- Who else needs to use this information, and what might it need to be integrated or included with, *such as the mortgage papers, the loan application, the picture of the house, the credit references, and line of credit assigned, the terms and conditions?*
- How much of my information today is compatible in format or able to be integrated with e-mail, web information, and diverse file types?
- Once I have this information, do I need to present it over the web and in different formats or portals for different constituencies? How do I link it to my back-end information, and customize and update it easily and efficiently?
- And when the compliance time to **keep** this information is passed, how can I be assured it will be removed from my storage, or archived in a less costly fashion automatically?



### **Content, Records, and Information Integration/Management**

How can your solutions work for you? We can start by talking about what your business issues are as they relate to this environment. Is it driven by the legal, compliance and regulatory issues? Is it driven by the costs of doing things in a manual and paper-ridden fashion today? Do you need faster and more complete instant access to information in order to stay competitive, respond to your customers, or meet your fulfillment demands?

As the Software Practice Manager here at Datatrend, I welcome that discussion, and together with our years of business experience, and our valued alliance partnerships, we can survey, demonstrate, design and implement the solution that's right for you. There are exciting offerings in the world of Content Management, On Demand access, e-Records, and Portal Design and Access whether you already have a streamlined office today, or are surrounded by the flood of e-mails and paper everywhere. Let's talk about *your* priorities and the tools and resources we can bring to bear to help make sense out of all that information and all those rules. Let's talk soon and help you make that information and those records truly meaningful, compliant, and useful to running your business in the most profitable way possible.

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