

SPECIAL REPORT

Seven key things you must consider before you invest in document management software

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Dear Colleague,

Filing has been part and parcel of business for centuries. But have you ever asked yourself how much it actually costs? Even in the days of the "information age", the sheer volume of non-electronic information is enormous. It's expensive in terms of filing cabinet space. It's expensive to file and retrieve. And there's always the risk that a disaster like fire, flood or malicious damage could play havoc with your data.

In today's immediate world, everything is needed yesterday. If you can't keep up to speed, you stand to lose existing and new business. Professional and government bodies are also becoming more demanding with the threat of random checks at a moment's notice. And of course, there's a plethora of official documentation that needs to be instantly accessible to ensure you're in compliance.

Factor in the administrative problems of your electronic data..."lost" files, network security intrusions, and so on... and the damage to your bottom line becomes even more obvious. With margins tight and markets more competitive, this is damage that your business could well do without.

Electronic Document Management (EDM) solutions have been on the market for a number of years. But up to now, many of these were out of the reach of the small to medium business. However prices have come down to such a level that a sophisticated, easy-to-use EDM system can cost as little as £1 a day per user to run - that's less than the cost of four first class stamps. This means that EDM is now in the reach of even the smallest business.

But is EDM for you? Will it bring you dramatic business benefits that show up in your bottom line? Is it easy to install and master? This report has been compiled to help guide you through the decision making process and I trust you will find it useful. If you have any queries or require any further information, please contact me on 0151 638 6000.

Yours faithfully,

The Cull Team

Cull Micro Imaging

1. Time, space, lost business... Conventional filing may cost more than you think.

Despite the "information age", most small to medium businesses still depend on archaic methods of document storage. Certainly, a large proportion of information is now stored electronically, but many documents still end up in conventional filing cabinets.

Neither is ideal. Especially when you're trying to compete in a faster, ever more demanding market. And of course, you can never predict when a document has been misfiled or completely lost, or anticipate disasters like flood, fire, malicious damage or power cuts. All of which, without adequate backup, could seriously affect your business.

How much is your valuable time worth?

Hard copy filing is expensive in terms of time - statistics show that a single document can cost as much as £15 to file*. When you consider how many documents get filed every day, the cost to your business soon mounts up.

Conventional filing is also expensive in terms of the valuable space it takes up. (A filing cabinet costs a company on average £500 a year in floor space rental costs alone*.) And even when you store information electronically, documents are "not found on the system", corrupted or you simply can't remember where you filed them.

Statistics show that, on average, staff spend 10% of their time looking for information*. That equates to nearly four hours a week - half a day's work wasted on hunting for information just to allow people to do their jobs properly. If you were to cut this down to just seconds rather than hours - across every area of your business, and for every member of staff - the savings could mount into tens of thousands of pounds per annum. And remember, these savings are then available to invest in your business to create even bigger profits.

How much are your customers worth?

The pace of our working environment is getting faster as we endeavour to keep up with the increasing pressures of immediacy.

Customers want everything now, and they'll let you know the minute they're dissatisfied. Businesses simply can't afford *not* to keep up with these demands. And when it's customer service that separates the good from the bad, if your information retrieval isn't up to speed, you don't just risk losing existing customers, you risk missing out on new business too.

How much is your reputation worth?

These days there seem to be more official rules and regulations than ever. You're not simply expected to comply with the ethos of these official bodies, but also the specifics of internal procedures, for example the handling of documentation going forward. And there's always the pressure of knowing that they could check up on you at any minute, demanding to see a client file from years back which may have been archived - or even misfiled. These coupled with regular audits and investigations compounds matters still further.

At best, the very thought of an official audit can result in days of additional administrative work. At worst, you run the risk of being fined, losing your accreditation and tarnishing

* Source: www.gartner.com

your reputation as a 21st century organisation that takes its business and customers seriously. All of this is stressful, costly and time-consuming, and it's not what you're in business for.

How much is a simple solution worth?

Electronic Document Management (EDM) is much simpler than it may at first sound. Essentially, it brings all forms of information together into one central electronic repository.

In other words, all your in-going and out-going correspondence, email, internal communications, transactions, official documentation, customer records, supplier information - in fact everything that would conventionally been stored in filing cabinets or your PC network - is stored in one instantly accessible and secure place.

Here are just some of the benefits that EDM brings to your business:

- The latest generation of EDM solutions are easier to use and more cost-effective than ever before, with full training available
- Fast information retrieval time maximises your working time
- Productivity is improved, giving you a competitive edge
- Storage costs are reduced and office floor space can be used more cost-efficiently
- Sharing of information is more effective and efficient
- Easy remote access for off-site working
- Easy compliance with both internal and external operating procedures

A good EDM system costs less than you think. Once the preserve of large corporations, prices have come down so much that the technology is now easily available to the small to medium business at an affordable price. So much so that some EDM systems cost less than £1 a day per user to run.

2. Document Management "automates the mundane" and speeds up customer service.

The immediate benefit of an EDM system is the reduction in day-to-day administrative costs.

No more filing cabinets, paper or storage consumables

Gone is the need for archive storage, and office space previously taken up by bulky filing cabinets can be put to more profitable use. You also save on paper and other storage consumables, all of which may seem small expenses but which - when added up over the course of a year - can be quite considerable.

No more "lost" files or risk of disaster

File retrieval times are almost instantaneous; removing the wasted hours spent searching for documents. And there's no more risk of "lost" files, or different versions of the "same" file being in existence on several different computers.

And of course, a good EDM system comes with full backup, so all information can be instantaneously duplicated and filed securely off-site. A task that, in the old paper-based days, would be daunting to say the least.

No more poor customer service

Of course the real bonus of EDM comes in terms of customer service. Customer information is instantly accessible so you can answer queries on the spot. Because you'll have an audit trail at your fingertips of past communications and transactions with that particular customer, there's no risk of error.

And because you won't have to ask the customer to wait while you go and find the relevant information, or call them back, you're immediately positioned as an efficient company that really takes its customers seriously.

It goes without saying that speed of service is critical if you're to keep ahead of the competition. So if you're working smarter by using EDM and your competitors aren't, you're already several steps ahead. And as everyone knows, retaining existing customers is far cheaper than finding new business. Worth the less than £1 a day it costs to run an EDM system? We believe you'll think so.

No more pressurised official audits

EDM also keeps the industry bodies happy. Because, by law, many records have to be kept on file for years, if they're instantly accessible rather than moulding away in some basement filing cabinet, you immediately remove the pressure of official audits.

In a nutshell this is what EDM enables you to do:

- Centralise your information pool
- Enable anyone with access to the system to retrieve a document in under two seconds, regardless of what format the original information was in
- Create a watertight audit trail on each document. You can instantly see where a document has gone, when it was edited, by whom and who received it. You can also instantly compare different versions of a document without having to wade through mountains of archives

Seven key things you must consider before you invest in document management software

- Save on valuable storage space - no more bulky, expensive filing cabinets
- Pull up information on any of your computers resulting in a powerful cross-reference tool
- Automate business processes such as invoices so that once they are in the system the information is instantly passed to the necessary people in the chain. No more walking up and down stairs and leaving files on people's desks
- Have a complete electronic back up of all your files, off site - for instant disaster recovery should the worst happen

Go straight to the information you need

EDM isn't just about instantly calling up information. It also lets you text search the actual body of a document as well as the title. And here's a real bonus for when you're in a hurry... It actually highlights the search terms so you can go straight to the information you want.

Just think of the implications of this for your business efficiencies. Suddenly, at your fingertips, you can bring up all the records on a customer within seconds including all other correspondence with him, even references made to him internally, even emails. The power of this feature speaks for itself.

Put yourself back in control

Put simply, EDM puts you back in control. And if you're not in control of your own systems and your own day-to-day running of the office where most of your work is done... If you're not in control of the information nerve centre that drives your business forward and upon which your success depends... then your reputation as a professional business is at risk. It's as serious and straightforward as that.

In these ultra competitive times, the business that demonstrates that it is in control of its communications and customer service is the business that will prosper.

Those that just "get by" will fall by the wayside. A bit of time-consuming administration used to be par-for-the-course in the days when everyone was doing paper-based filing. But as more and more organisations recognise the clear business benefits of EDM, to overlook this massive innovation in the world of business - especially when its costs so little to run - could be a disastrous move for any forward-thinking business.

3. EDM costs less than £1 a day to run.

EDM used to be the preserve of large corporations. No more. These days, the technology is easily available to the mass market, especially the small to medium sized business, at affordable prices.

Installation and training are straightforward and payback is typically six to twelve months. In fact an EDM system can cost a small to medium business less than £1 a day per user to run.

Compare this with the huge cost implications of chasing up paper-based files, cabinet storage and actually filing the information in the first place. Also compare it with the cost implications of losing business because you're not perceived to be as efficient and "on the ball" as your competitors.

Compare it with the time you usually spend on official audits, not to mention the risk of fines because certain information may not tie up.

Then there's always the risk of a disaster. If you were to lose all your paper-based information through fire, flood or malicious damage... or if someone were to hack into your network or a virus play havoc with your data... what would be the implications to you in terms of lost business?

Consider some of the other cost-saving benefits:

- No more endless photocopying
- No more time wasted looking for the document you need
- No more flustered moments when you're running late for a client meeting and you've had no time to read up because you were looking for their file
- No more time spent chasing your staff for feedback on how each client is progressing
- No more tripping over ugly filing cabinets that take up valuable space
- No more worries of being able to prove that customers and official bodies have received certain documents - because everything is tracked and audited at every stage
- No more wasted time with frustrating call-backs, when (if you'd had a customer's details immediately to hand) you could have dealt with their query when they first called you

When you add it all up, for less than £1 a day you get a system that brings massive business benefits. It is not an overstatement to claim that EDM is an important to modern 21st century business as the advent of the computer all those years ago.

4. Fast and easy to use.

If EDM conjures up visions of a bulky system that takes armies of secretaries to operate, think again.

Easily integrates with your existing systems

An EDM system simply sits alongside your existing systems. It's so fast and easy to operate that literally anyone can master it. Its simple "point and click" Windows styled interface is designed to integrate seamlessly with your existing IT network, so - basically - anyone that can use a computer and a simple scanner can learn to use an EDM system in minutes.

The scanner is fast too - much like a state-of-the-art photocopier - and if you already have a multi-functional copier/printer/scanner then you'll quickly be able to seamlessly link with a quality EDM system. And of course, any information that comes into your office electronically can be instantly filed in one centralised, secure and easily accessible place.

Instantly searchable

EDM systems work by capturing electronic files and scanning hard copy documents into a repository where they are indexed and filed electronically. This means that documents can be instantly recalled by searching on any combination of words throughout the document.

Better still, you can also go instantly to a page *within* a document - even printed documents like brochures, PDF documents or official legislation. This is especially invaluable for lengthy documents that, in the old days, would have taken ages to wade through to find that relevant section.

No risk of error

EDM systems work alongside your existing software packages like accountancy software, customer databases, back office systems and so on. The result is that output from multiple sources can be electronically filed within the one system. This ensures that documents are always up to date and there's no risk of error or confusion as several parties work on what they believe to be the "same" document. And because there's always an audit trail, you know instantly who's been working on a particular document, when and what changes were made.

Confidential and password protected

EDM also carries security benefits. Confidential files are filed securely and can only be accessed by those with user rights and passwords. There is no risk of tampering or intrusion by unauthorised third parties or hackers.

And as mentioned before, all your data can be backed-up and stored remotely in case of disaster - an invaluable way of ensuring that the critical information and knowledge that make up the intangible assets of your company are protected.

Facilitates efficient remote working

With more and more people working from home or needing access to mission critical information on the move, efficient remote access is essential. Whereas before, you may have had access to information stored on your server, documents that were stored conventionally would have been inaccessible.

An EDM system lets authorised users access all information securely from anywhere in the world, at any time of the day or night. This is invaluable if you want to lay your hands on a vital piece of legislation, a supplier brochure or important customer records, but don't want to waste valuable time travelling to base to do it.

Customisable

Because not all businesses are the same, a good EDM system can be tailored to suit the individual organisation. You'll find out more about which EDM system is right for you on the following pages.

5. Do you really need EDM?

If you're weighing up the pros and cons of an EDM system, it's important to ask yourself a few questions.

How much can an EDM system improve my business throughput?

You can expect to increase productivity by between 10-30% in as little as 45 days. You will save time, cut costs and remove the need for bulky paper filing units.

Is EDM relevant to every business?

Yes, EDM is an indispensable tool for every business that needs fast access to up to date information and wants to remain competitive in a fast-moving business world. Five years from now, it's the kind of system that won't just be an optional "add on" but which will be an essential part of every forward-thinking business.

What would an EDM system mean for our staff on a day-to-day basis?

An estimated four hours of every working week is lost retrieving and filing business information. With an EDM system, you can find any document you need in just seconds in a database of up to four million documents.

Every letter, spreadsheet, fax, email, drawing or other document can be recorded, tracked and accessed by designated users. So there will be no more endless photocopying, no more missing information and no more unnecessary storage costs.

Would I need to buy any extra software or equipment?

No, EDM systems connect straight into your existing IT network so it runs seamlessly alongside your current systems without the need for expensive programming to create an interface. Everything is supplied, including a scanner that lets you instantly file hard copies as they come in. Electronic files are simply batch imported into the new repository.

Would a new system require full staff training?

EDM systems include a training session. However it's so straightforward that even the most technically shy member of staff will be able to master it almost immediately.

We've been managing fine with our traditional filing methods until now - do we really need a new system?

But ask yourself this. How much time does it take you? How much space does it take up? Have you ever been faced with any "lost" files or human error as various versions of the "same" document get mixed up?

Have you ever had to call customers back because you can't lay your hands on that critical document or transaction? Have you ever been working remotely when you needed access to some key information and had to call into base and wait while someone else sourced it for you?

Do you have a system that files documents, letters, emails and transactions with each customer into one instantly accessible file? Have you ever felt the pressure of gathering together data for official audits?

6. Choosing the right system for your needs.

Whatever your unique document management requirements, we can provide a bespoke solution from a wide range of options. You need to consider such issues as:

- Do you have stand-alone computers, or is your office environment networked?
- Would your business benefit from workflow management?
- Do you have remote workers that need Internet or Intranet portal access to the system?
- Do you want control over user access privileges, so you control who can view or edit particular documents?
- What kind of images do you need to import into the system?
- Which other teams will require access to your documents?
- What other applications (eg Windows) hold data and would benefit from integration into the system?

7. Other organisations' experiences

One of the best ways to research whether an EDM system is right for your business is to examine what other organisations are doing. We've put together a file of case studies which we hope will help you to arrive at the best decision:

"In the office we now say 'we Invu it' instead of saying 'we filed it'." Steve Petrie, Director, John Joseph Financial Services.

"Following the implementation of Invu's document management system, we have managed to take around 200,000 client files out of the sales locations. We estimate that this has led to a 23 per cent increase in efficiency and time saving for our administrative staff." Asim Tariq, Millfield Project Manager.

"We are in no doubt that this is the best solution for our customers and will provide business efficiencies with real added value." Henk Lemmens, Divisional Manager, Panasonic Business-to-Business.

"Every day we are reaping the benefits of the consistent saving of both time and money associated with having information at the touch of a button and being able to distribute reports and documents without the need for copying or paper. We're really impressed!" Mr Turner, Senior Partner, Forbes Solicitors.

"I can honestly say that investing in the Invu system was one of the best business decisions I have ever made." Mike Miles, Managing Director, Accalon Associates Ltd.

"Already we are seeing significant operational and productivity gains with a reduction in paper manual processes, which promises to be a great return on investment for us." Simon Davies, Business Development Manager, Haslers.

"The solution from Invu is delivering significant cost-savings, replacing the paper trail with a full audit-trail, removing the need to request copy invoices and a product which interfaces with our existing accounting packages."

"Invu immediately showed its expertise and the final product cannot be compared to anything currently on the market. The product was modified to fit in perfectly with our business requirements and is now fundamental to the business. We have users who say they cannot think how they operated before Invu." Pierre Swart, Invu Administrator, Universal Music Group.

"The system was implemented almost immediately and within a month more than 350 of our staff were able to use it. We are now a much more efficient organisation giving our tenants the service they deserve and expect." John Paul, Head of Information Services, Anglia Housing Group.

"We found Invu was a very professional company that could provide us with the technology we needed." Maureen Davies, Finance Manager, Vetspeed.

"Internally Invu has enhanced our efficiency significantly as the client filing tray disappeared overnight - filing client documentation would take around three hours each day so if you multiply that cost over a year we've made a huge time and cost savings. Our interoffice memos and internal book keeping paper work have also disappeared. The other major advantage is how easy the system is to use. The staff picked it up very quickly, and when new staff join us, they learn to use the system very quickly." Jim McCormick, Tax Partner, W J Miscampbell & Co Chartered Accountants

"We have about 400 metres of lateral filing rack just for the documents relating to our clients. Apart from the obvious environmental issue of paper usage, it was reaching a point where we needed a dramatic reduction in the amount of paper we were handling and storing. Invu's solution is helping us move towards that nirvana of business, a paperless office." Graham Williams, Managing Partner, Macnair Mason Chartered Accountants

"The information we have accumulated on our clients over a 23 year period is enormous and tighter financial regulation requires us to hold onto virtually every piece of paper indefinitely. One of our biggest challenges was storing this - we used a document storage company which was costing us around £1800 per annum to operate."

"Perhaps our biggest challenge of all was being able to retrieve the information easily when required for regulatory purposes. Keeping track of over 3,000 files stuffed full of documents, correspondence and file notes was becoming very difficult."

"We chose Invu because we were looking for a system that was "universal" in that any business could use it. This was important because that meant there was a better chance for the product to continue to be developed and benefit from input across a wide range of industries - in other words we expect that Invu will still be there in 20 years time when we still want to use it. Some of the other systems particularly the bespoke industry systems worried us in this respect."

"There have been many benefits from using Invu. Compliance is easier, proving compliance is easier, we look much more professional to our clients and way ahead of our competitors and we don't lose "bits of paper" any more! Invu is one of the first bits of software we have bought where it really did do what it said on the box." Greg Thompson, Cambridge Financial Planning

"Once our Management had made the commitment to locate the Documentation Department away from our main office in London to Kent our biggest challenge was to find an effective system to hold scanned data and process prospective client files for management approval in an electronic format. We found plenty of people that could provide tailored services but this would not have given us the flexibility we needed in the event that our procedures or regulatory requirements changed or new areas business came on board."

"Invu offered us a complete package that we could then tailor in house to meet to our needs. It is now fully implemented in both Documentation and Accounts areas. Each

Seven key things you must consider before you invest in document management software

area has very differing requirements but Invu has been tailored in house without the need for extra expense, training or implementation time.

"Our greatest achievement has been the additional security the system offers us. We no longer spend many a happy hour hunting down files. Departments requiring instant access to files post sign off can achieve their goals in a matter of minutes. As we move forward we anticipate greater integration of Invu with our systems offering a more complete service to all areas of the business" Sharon Webb, Documentation Manager, Man Financial

"Before Invu we had to sort out all our paperwork manually and create a Job Bag for each order. This would contain all the information relevant to the job but we often had the situation where it did not contain the correct information and we would have to hunt around the office for it.

"Using Invu has helped us a lot. Whatever information comes in goes straight into Invu where it is easily accessible by all. It's so easy to find stuff. Now when clients ring in with a query we don't have to ring them back later with a response. We have the information to hand and can answer the entire query immediately.

"We were recommended Invu by word of mouth. It seemed the best choice for us as we could manage part of our manufacturing process through Invu's workflow module and we had all the benefits of any easy to use and affordable document management system.

"Another area it has helped us in is the processing of Sales invoices. Before Invu we were often one month behind when invoicing and jobs were missed and dropped in to the following month. We are now signing off invoicing by the 10th of the month, due to information being available and missed jobs are now at a minimum. Financially it has helped us immensely." Andrea Kelman, Office Manager, Technical Signs

"I don't need to ask for information anymore because I can access it easily using one button and a couple of keywords on my PC; plus I never have to worry about a document being miss-filed. Now when customers telephone we can access every piece of information about that customer without having to make return telephone calls which has greatly improved our customer service. Because we can deliver documents electronically we no longer have to send out duplicate invoices and because notes can easily be recorded even temporary staff can easily see history, which is very impressive." Ian Lynch, Chairman/CEO, Air Sea Scotland

Conclusion

I trust you've found this report interesting and picked up some useful information along the way.

In summary, conventional filing of information is expensive, not just in terms of the time it takes to file and retrieve a document, but in terms of the valuable floor space it takes up.

There are also cost implications when it comes to keeping up to speed with official bodies and customer demands, not to mention the cost in terms of disaster recovery should fire, flood or malicious damage affect your data.

With more and more businesses embracing the bottom line benefits of remote working, access to mission critical data, on the move, is something that every small to medium sized business can now enjoy. And EDM isn't expensive. In fact it can cost as little as £1 a day per user to run - that's less than the cost of four first class stamps.

EDM isn't one of those technological "breakthroughs" that impede a job rather than assist it. Far from it. Here we have a solution that's installed in the fastest amount of time, with the minimum amount of disruption to your business.

EDM is also easy to use and even easier to master. It runs seamlessly alongside your existing systems, with no complicated interface required. And literally anything can be stored this way - electronic data, your entire filing cabinet contents, even audio, DVD and videotapes in some cases.

As our enthusiastic customers will tell you, EDM is an investment that - like your computer network, email and Internet usage - isn't an optional add-on anymore, it's an essential part of 21st century business for organisations of all sizes. Once you've seen the bottom line benefits for yourself, you will wonder how you ever did without it.

Yours faithfully,

The Cull Team

Cull Micro Imaging

Are you willing to embrace 21st century document management?

Whether you're a small or medium sized business, and no matter what market you operate in, Cull will share their experience with you to help you cut out unnecessary costs and deliver a more efficient and impressive customer service.

Before you make a decision, why not give us a call on 0151 638 6000. We'll offer you advice, opinions and facts - and also help you calculate the kind of time and money savings you can expect to achieve. Then if you wish, you can decide if you'd like to meet us. Or you can make contact via info@cull.co.uk