

By Brian Lincoln, senior product line manager, Xerox DocuShare

Companies are still hesitant to make IT purchases during today's unpredictable economy. Budgets are tighter than ever, forcing IT leaders to justify every penny they spend. This makes calculating expected return on investment (ROI) before making a purchase very important. When it comes to enterprise content management (ECM), this can seem like an elusive goal. However, measuring the ROI of ECM isn't as difficult as some may think. Here are seven critical areas to measure and track:

1. Time savings

Searching for information is very time consuming. If an employee can quickly find information using an ECM system, the freed-up time can be refocused on other business priorities. Leveraging multifunction printers (MFPs) with an ECM system turns the devices into a cornerstone of business processes. MFPs can automate office activities, such as invoice handling, by scanning documents directly into an ECM workflow that routes the document to specific departments or colleagues. The process saves on employee time and postage fees.

Storing documents in digital form can also eliminate filing cabinets, reducing office space requirements and storage fees. For example, the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission maintained 50 four-drawer lateral cabinets to store paper documents, but after installing an ECM system, now only keeps one. Additionally, four full-time staffers who built paper files were redeployed to new positions.

2. Document storage

Time spent, transportation costs and gas emissions affiliated with shipping hard-copy documents from multiple locations or to offsite storage can be greatly reduced with ECM. Offsite document storage facilities also require additional energy to light, heat, cool and maintain.

When Niagara Catholic School Board District in Ontario adopted ECM, it reduced the need for daily mail deliveries between school locations, eliminating the need for one courier driver. Among other benefits in going paperless, the district saves \$38,000 annually by publishing a newsletter online rather than in hard copy.

3. Compliance

Staying compliant is a cost of doing business in regulated industries. To maintain compliance, many business documents must be kept secure and confidential, yet easily accessible. Often a lot of time is spent copying, filing and retrieving documents, with increasing office space devoted to file storage.

ECM solutions that help meet this requirement through features like permissions, digital signatures and auditable workflows make annual audits easier and help companies avoid the risk of potential fines. With ECM, content is housed in a secure Web repository, accessible 24/7 that can be searched by keywords (case numbers, client names, or other user-designated fields). ECM can also decrease the risk of paying thousands of dollars in fines due to inability to comply in a timely or complete fashion; and establish up-to-date document permissions so the right people can access the right information.

At Copernicus Group IRB, an independent institutional review board that monitors biomedical research, an ECM solution helped the company achieve 21 CFR part 11 compliance in their process for reviewing client cases. In addition, scanning and converting all paper documents to digital virtually eliminated storage costs, and cut the risk of losing documents because they are now easily searchable on-line.

4. Customer satisfaction

Customer service is the lifeblood of business. Improved response time and efficient business processes can greatly impact a customer's experience and loyalty.

Insurance administrator OwnerGUARD ([see video](#)), stores and shares claims electronically. They reduced turnaround times by 47 percent, and now provide faster customer service, increased satisfaction rates and save more than \$8,000 monthly on printing and toner costs.

5. Supporting the mobile worker

With ECM, employees have instant access to information from anywhere. Virtual teaming is significantly easier as it allows colleagues across the hallway or across the globe to share business-critical information internally or externally. According to InfoTrends, 90 percent of companies underestimate or don't know their true document production costs; although they may spend up to 15 percent of revenues on document-related activities (up to three percent on output costs alone).ⁱ

The London Borough of Islington utilized ECM to go paperless, digitizing thousands of documents and saving the council hundreds of thousands of pounds. Another benefit of digital, web-based filing is that council employees can be more mobile, spending more time in the community, while new jobs can also be created for local people, especially individuals who need to work from home.

6. Sustainability concerns

Using ECM, Nevada County, Calif., eliminated nearly 65,000 trips to county buildings annually, saving the district significantly on fuel costs. This also reduced auto emissions by more than seven tons and the miles driven annually (between locations to fetch paper files) by nearly three million, resulting in less wear and tear on roads.

7. Productivity

Workplace productivity is the most important measure of business success. Successful organizations effectively use workforce, technology and innovation to improve customer service, decision-making and quality of goods. ECM systems can drastically cut the time needed to get work done, freeing employees to focus on more important and revenue-generating tasks.

Western Forest Products, an integrated Canadian forest products company, uses an ECM system and invoice workflow. It saves nearly \$20,000 per month, with improved turnaround times and reduced errors. The accounts payable process was labor-intensive and awash in paper. Every day, more than 700 invoices were received at the company's headquarters in Duncan, British Columbia and more than 20 other remote sites from thousands of suppliers. Now, invoice processing time is cut from a week to less than one day.



About the author

Brian Lincoln is the senior product line manager for the DocuShare Platform with Xerox's DocuShare Business Unit, based in Palo Alto, California. Brian has over 14 years of experience as a Content Management professional, including previous positions at Documentum and then EMC, Inc. where he specialized in launching vertical applications into government, and related regulated industries. He has performed roles spanning the entire product development lifecycle, evolving from engineering and consulting leadership positions into senior product management, where he also managed OEM relationships. Brian holds a bachelors degree in economics from California State University, Sacramento.

ⁱ InfoTrends, Inc. and ALL Associates Group, "Assessing and Benchmarking Document Costs: Developing a Future Document Strategy," March 2006.