

Document Management on the Cloud

Digitizing Business Processes to Satisfy Today's Growing Demands

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Introduction

In this digital age where technology, especially Information Technology (IT), is revolutionizing the way businesses operate, not changing existing business processes to take advantage of this phenomenon can seriously hamper an organizations' growth in the long run. Having realized this, organizations today are focusing on taking their business processes digital more than ever before and this trend only seems to go one way, judging by the current performance and future projections of IT and IT Enabled Services (ITES) markets.

One area which organizations can find as an obstacle in digitizing their business processes, and one that could benefit tremendously from the introduction of IT, is document management. Every organization deals with a fair amount of data and information which are stored in the form of documents, files, or records and organizations need to manage these efficiently and effectively. Every business process needs to work with these documents to a certain extent, and for the digitization of these business processes, it is essential that document management be digitized as well. Storing these documents is only one aspect; organizing them, securing them, and making them available to those who need them are just as important.

So far, businesses have been following traditional methods of document management – printing documents, filing them, and storing them in storage cabinets. These methods just cannot work in today's world anymore. In the context of digitization of information and business processes, the traditional methods are not just inefficient and ineffective but also expensive in the long run.

Think about this with a simple example – when you call customer care, do you want your customer service reps to be able to immediately call up your records or do you want them to put you on hold while they go and search for your records in the central storage space?

In this white paper, we take a look at the need for digitization of business processes in general and how Document Management Software (DMS) in particular. We will also be looking at the current document management trends and the advantages of online document management software solutions.

1. The Need for Digitization

To catch up with this ever changing world, let alone get ahead of it, we need to be dynamic in our planning and execution. From investors to employees to customers, no one is content anymore with slow responses, long turnaround times, and communication gaps. Customers, especially those who only know the digital age, expect immediate service and seamless user experiences delivered at their locations of convenience. If you are not ready, willing, or able to provide them, they will find a vendor who can.

To be able to offer better and timelier service to our customers, we need to start using tools and resources that enable us to do so. That enabler is digitization through the deployment and integration of IT into business processes. By doing so, organizations will be able to make themselves more efficient and productive and offer their customers error-free service and faster turnaround times.

Also, it has to be ensured that technology, while adding value to the business, does not affect the business adversely. There is no doubt the need to disrupt existing processes but not at the cost of harming the business. Technology must complement the organization's operations instead of burdening already complex business processes with more complexity. Digitization improves the scope of your business and helps you enhance your value proposition.

Some advantages of digitization are:

Improved customer service

You can offer your customers what they want, whenever and wherever.

Optimized business processes

You can optimize your business processes to increase efficiency, effectiveness, and productivity.

Unearth hidden value

With digitization, you have the scope to unearth hidden value from your business processes.

Simplification

You can simplify your business processes to remove complexities from them.

Competitive advantage

Digitization can act as a competitive advantage by allowing you to get faster results compared to your competition.

Improve the bottom line

By removing a lot of waste from your operations, you can improve your bottom line too.

Digitization is inevitable – how fast you adopt it is the question.

2. Document Management – Ripe for Digitization

Perhaps no other business process is still as archaic as document management. Many organizations still use manual document management practices which, apart from being inefficient and expensive, also hamper and limit the organization’s ability to respond to its customers, both internal and external, quickly.

Every organization generates its own data and information in the course of its business. Employees need this information in the right format in the right place at the right time to be able to manage their job responsibilities. Any delays in receiving information could be the difference between a successful and failed transaction. From Exhibit A, we can clearly see the kind and number of issues being created by paper documents. The biggest issues most organizations face are data duplication and manual filing and retrieval.

Figure 1 : What would you say are the biggest issues caused by paper-based process in your organization (Max THREE) (N=449)



Exhibit A. Survey Question

If organizations still use manual practices and file documents with this information in central filing cabinets, not only will they waste time searching for the information but they will also jeopardize their reputation and their relationships with customers. However, if they do have access to information via a document management system, not only will they be able to close the deal immediately but they will also satisfy the customer’s needs effectively and productively.

Apart from streamlining document management, this software also helps with the digitization of other business processes. We’ll see how in the next section.

3. Document Management Software – The Essential Add-On

As mentioned earlier, businesses need to digitize themselves to survive and thrive. This involves the adoption of process-specific IT tools to automate business processes. The human resource management function can benefit from the deployment of online human resource management software as the procurement function by deploying online procurement software.

Regardless of the business process and the kind of software used to digitize it, one thing is common. They all need access to information. And they need this information to be accurate and in real-time. If the business process is to be digitized, it cannot afford to have an information source that is not digitized as well.

This is why a DMS makes for an essential add-on application. It can be integrated with other business management solutions to enable them access to information at all times.

To gain the most out of a DMS, an online document management software solution is more advisable. It allows you access to all your critical business documents from anywhere while maintaining the strictest standards of security.

4. Advantages of a Document Management System

A DMS comes with several business benefits, which we'll look at in this section.

Organized document storage

While filing documents might not seem such a hard job, searching for them when needed will become hard if they are not organized. With a DMS, documents can be profiled to ensure that they can easily be searched for using these properties.

Automated retention and disposition schedules

Some documents will be needed for a long time while some go through their entire document lifecycle quicker. Instead of manually retaining and disposing documents as and when necessary, this process can be automated.

Versioning and identifiable trails

A concern with critical business documents is data integrity. We don't want any unauthorized individuals to access these documents, even if they are employees. We don't want critical business data changed, even unintentionally. To avoid this, a DMS allows you to create different versions of a document. Instead of editing the original document, you can work on these versions and keep the original document secure.

Additionally, it also logs all entries. This log, which cannot be edited, acts as a trail and keeps the administrator abreast of the actions taken on a document.

Quicker response and turnaround times

We touched on this earlier; a DMS allows organizations to decrease their turnaround times. There is no more any need to search for hours; with a few clicks, you will have the information you need at your fingertips.

Streamlining business processes

A DMS helps streamline other business processes, or at least their information-dependent workflows. For example, a publishing firm can streamline its editing process using a DMS.

Return on Investment (RoI)

Money spent on a DMS is not expenditure but investment that can come back with interest, and quickly. While tangibly you will see expenditure coming down because you don't need paper, filing cabinets, and storage space, intangibly, you will see faster responses, quicker decision-making, and enhanced customer relationships.

Other

Though the primary use of document management software is to manage documents, its applications are not limited to just document management. It is much more than that. It doubles up as a virtual collaborative workspace where users can form team spaces and work together.

5. Trends in Document Management Software

Document management software is also changing its face in this demanding and dynamic world. As more and more users adopt this software and demand more from their service providers, newer trends emerge. Here are some trends in DMS:

Figure 2 : Forecast - Global Public Cloud Market Size, 2011 To 2020

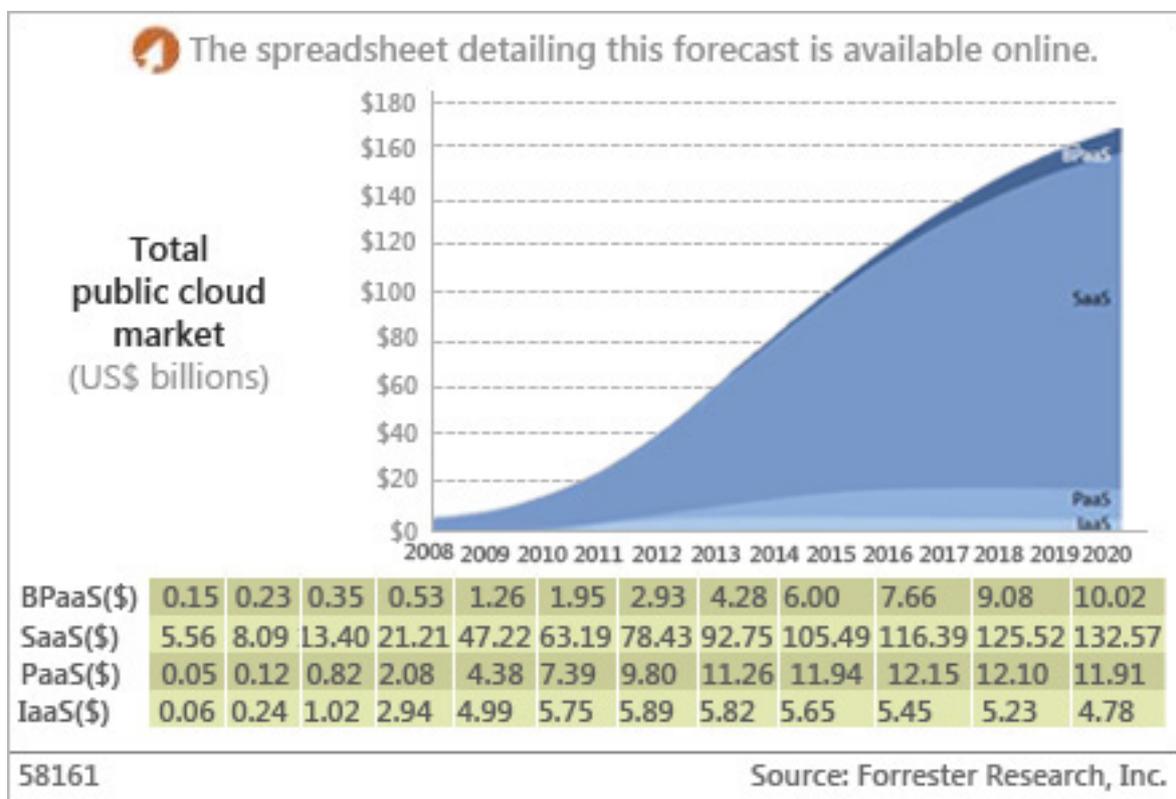


Exhibit B. SaaS Market Growth (Annual)

Taking to the cloud

Though initially hesitant because of security and accessibility issues, many organizations are now preferring cloud document management solutions over on-premise installations. Not only will this save them considerable expenditure in IT but it also allows them more flexibility and increases the scope of access. In Exhibit B, we can see the predicted SaaS market annual growth. It clearly shows the upward trend in the adoption of SaaS applications.

Mobile solutions

This closely follows the previous point. With the world increasingly adapting to mobile, being able to take our data with us is a prerequisite. To satisfy this demand, today's document management solutions come with native mobile apps that can be accessed by users securely over the internet.

Informed decision-making

With information now readily available at their fingertips, employees can make informed decisions instead of guesswork. This improves the quality of decision making and the scope for successful results.

Integration

We've spoken about the integration of document management software with other business management software applications. By integrating this software, information can be accessed immediately from the other application's interface without having to toggle between different applications.

Integrated platforms

Integrated applications make integrated platforms. Instead of buying disparate applications and deploying them separately, organizations can deploy integrated platforms that can help them with end to end business process management. Using one single solution, multiple business processes can be managed.

6. Document Management Solutions – A Comparison

With so many vendors in the market, selecting the right DMS solution might become a bit overwhelming. In this section, we've compiled a list of the most-desirable features of a DMS and see how SutiDMS stacks up against two of the industry's leading and most standardized solutions.

Features	SutiDMS	Company A	Company B
Manage documents and multi-level folders	Y	Y	Y
Drag & drop functionality	Y	Y	Y
Document version control	Y	Y	Y
File routing & approval	Y	Y	Y
Checkin / Checkout	Y	Y	Y
Role-based access	Y	Y	Y
OCR document capture	Y	Y	Y
Disposition and retention schedules	Y	N	Y
Active directory authentication	Y	Y	Y
Electronic signature approval	Y	Y	Y
Document compression & encryption	Y	N	Y
Bulk file upload	Y	N	N
Single sign-on	Y	N	N
Remote mobile access	Y	N	N

Exhibit C. Comparison Chart

As we can see from the comparison chart in Exhibit C, SutiDMS is a comprehensive solution that offers its users more features than the alternatives. Moreover, these features are some of the essential automation components (like disposition and retention schedules) that make a DMS more valuable for users.

7. Image Sources

Exhibit A

<http://www.cmswire.com/cms/document-management/aiim-paperless-office-still-a-pipe-dream-as-mobile-capture-market-gets-set-to-explode-021975.php#null>

Exhibit B

<http://www.cmswire.com/cms/information-management/forrester-predicts-saas-will-own-all-other-cloud-segments-011005.php>