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Plotting Your SharePoint Roadmap:

The path forward for managing documents and records within your organisation via SharePoint

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“Where do you start?”

INTRODUCTION

So, you have the go ahead to proceed with SharePoint as the electronic document and records management solution (eDRMS) for your organisation. Like any system implementation project, careful planning is a critical success factor.

Where do you start? A business requirements gathering phase will allow you to develop an overall understanding of the organisation’s information management (IM) needs, and will reveal the key issues that the SharePoint eDRMS solution must address. A roadmap that will highlight the steps required for the organisation to achieve its IM objectives is also a must. This roadmap should demonstrate traceability between the business requirements, emergent issues and the proposed eDRMS solution deployment.



THE ROADMAP

The roadmap will be different for each organisation, and will be influenced by many factors, including the level of regulatory compliance to be achieved. It should include some, if not all, of the following:

- Implementation approach
- Implementation costs
- Records management technical and business-related components such as:
 - o the business classification scheme
 - o the retention and disposal authority;
 - o file naming conventions
 - o physical records management
- Migration approach for existing documents and/or records
- Email management
- Remote access requirements
- Supporting policies and procedures
- Staffing requirements
- Change management approach
- Training
- Accessibility needs
- A governance plan (essential for a SharePoint implementation!)

“The roadmap will be different for each organisation.”

It is important that the roadmap addresses the organisational overlay, and to recognise that the solution itself is a small component of the overall project. If the people and processes are not supported, the project will fail, regardless of how good the system design was.

We have found that phased SharePoint implementations work best. Start with getting the basics right.



“This capability alone can be a giant step forward for your organisation, and facilitates a fast, tangible return on investment.”

“SharePoint has great out-of-the-box functionality..”

PHASE 1: Enterprise Search, Collaboration, Basic Document Management and Records Management.

A priority for most organisations is enterprise search functionality, which allows users to search multiple repositories (shared drives and current intranet) from the one search interface. This capability alone can be a giant step forward for your organisation, and facilitates a fast, tangible return on investment. Other common priorities include providing online collaboration capability, and document management functionality such as version control. This phase should also consider the organisational records management requirements.

A product like RecordPoint could be implemented as it extends the Records Management capability of SharePoint with minimal impact on the end user.

PHASE 2: Intranet

Among SharePoint’s many capabilities is web content management for internet and intranet sites. Often the temptation in an eDRMS project is to get the intranet implemented first and then address document management. A first-rate intranet has a well-designed information architecture, good search functionality and up-to-date, relevant information. Ensuring your intranet features current versions of useful documents is essential.

SharePoint has great out-of-the-box functionality that enables documents that reside anywhere in the system, including SharePoint team sites, to be easily surfaced on intranet pages. It’s important to mention here that SharePoint blends document management and intranet functionality. The intranet becomes a nice presentation layer for key documents - like policies and procedures - that reside in SharePoint already.



PHASE 3: Integration, Workflows and Enterprise 2.0

Now that your users are becoming more confident with SharePoint (and are therefore updating their information more frequently), they will no doubt develop an appetite for new features. Many organisations have line-of-business systems that generate or use documents that need to be managed as corporate records. Examples include the HR or finance systems, or a property management system. By integrating these systems with SharePoint, you can expose selected information to users.

Another Phase 3 opportunity is implementing workflows. This could include simple workflows to streamline business processes. You may also consider using Enterprise 2.0 technologies like blogs or wikis to further enrich collaboration throughout the organisation.

“By integrating these systems with SharePoint, you can expose selected information to users.”



KEY PROJECT STEPS

OK, so you now have a plan in place. What are the key project steps for achieving a successful result?

Here's a few to consider:

Step 1. Define success and establish a steering committee

Determine early on what success looks like for your organisation. Ensure that it aligns back to the business case that was first developed to secure the project's approval. A steering committee of stake holders should be established and consulted throughout the project to assist with decision making (and sometimes for sanity checks).

“Determine early on what success looks like for your organisation.”

Step 2. Demonstrate SharePoint's capabilities

Be sure to demonstrate SharePoint and its enormous potential to your stake holders. Provide the users with well-presented cheat sheets to get them up to speed quickly with new terminology for document and records management, and for SharePoint itself. Cheat sheets should address:

- What is SharePoint?
- What is document management?
- What is versioning?
- What is a content type?
- What is metadata?



Step 3. Business Requirements Gathering Workshop 1

Soon after your SharePoint demo, set up a requirements gathering workshop. Ensure you have provided a list of questions in advance of the workshop. This will give the team time to think about their answers beforehand.

If Team Sites are within your project scope, the workshop should uncover specific needs around document libraries (repository where SharePoint stores and groups documents), document templates metadata and other functional design elements of the sites.

The workshop should focus on:

- What kind of documents do you create?
- Do you have security requirements around any of these documents?
- What kind of metadata do you need to capture about these documents?
- Are these documents based on templates?
- Are these documents associated with a repeatable workflow process?

It will be unlikely that all questions will be answered in your first workshop. Normally it is good to plan follow up workshops to address outstanding questions and explore other relevant areas.

“... give the team time to think about their answers beforehand.”



“... enable the team
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Step 4. Develop a prototype

Where possible, develop a prototype based on the design established in previous steps. This will enable the team to properly visualise the solution and will enable more informed decisions in Step 5.

Step 5. Business requirements gathering workshop 2

Present the prototype. Allow the team to finalise the design and outstanding items from workshop 1.

Step 6. Design RecordPoint rules

If RecordPoint is the records management solution that is being implemented then this step defines what rules need to be set up in RecordPoint to ensure that documents are being records managed and retained in accordance with the organisations retention and disposal schedule. This step is normally done with the organisations records manager.

Step 7. Document the design

Ensure the detailed design is documented and signed off by the team. Congratulations. You are now ready to move from the Design to the Build Phase. Let the fun begin!



CAUTION: Don't neglect users during your project

While it seems obvious, users are often the last to know about new projects, which may generate resistance to using the new system. Ensure that users are involved and consulted throughout. Start the change management plan early. Develop a logo and motto for the project and ensure that regular updates are given to users in multiple formats (newsletters, posters etc). Remember that, ultimately, you need strong buy-in from users for the SharePoint implementation to be a great success for your project team and for the organisation.

In closing, if your organisation gets the fundamentals right, it is in a much better position to address the 'cool stuff' possible in phases 2 and 3 of your roadmap. A great SharePoint roadmap makes for a great start to your journey.

“While it seems obvious, users are often the last to know...”



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Deirdre Slattery, Principal Consultant, Unique World

As Principal Consultant for Records & Document Management, Deirdre is responsible for understanding and recommending solution/s to solve business challenges around information and records management. Deirdre is responsible for ensuring a deep understanding of the clients' business environment and relevant Microsoft Technologies, maximising the opportunities for successful implementations. Prior to working with Unique World, Deirdre was an Information Management Consultant with Gen-i, leading a number of large scale EDRMS implementations.

Deirdre has been working in the document and records management field for over nine years in the public, private and not-for-profit sectors, focussing on regulated industries. This experience has allowed Deirdre to gain expert knowledge in how to best implement EDRMS in a range of organisations, developing a sense of specific business processes and requirements. Her background is with the EDRMS application TRIM, which she worked with for seven years.

Since joining Unique World, Deirdre has applied her expert knowledge in identifying gaps in available 'best of breed' records management applications, consequently informing the development of RecordPoint.

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