Sage Construction and Real Estate

The Benefits of Document Management

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Picture it—rooms full of cardboard document boxes or rows of filing cabinets. You are tasked with finding one piece of paper or file, have to spend precious time looking through drawers for the file, and all the while there's a chance that the last person to pull the document may never have put it back in its proper place. For long-running construction and real estate companies, this is a daily reality.

Electronic document management (EDM) employs a computer system and software to organize, store, manage, and track electronic documents and scanned images of paper-based information, according to the Association for Information and Image Management. The electronic storage option allows workers to use keywords to search for files without ever having to leave their desks.

Most document management systems allow users to modify and manage systems and typically incorporate many physical filing procedures, such as storage location, security and access control, and version control, the AIIM says. Another benefit of maintaining electronic files is the ability to keep a record of who has accessed the content.

One example of how a document management system can further help operations is when a particular item—such as a contract, estimate, or proposal—needs group approval. Sharing an electronic version of the file can ensure that the correct people review the document and can create an audit trail that allows everyone to see one another's edits while also preserving the document in its original form.

Document Management and the Construction Industry

EDM systems offer many applications relevant to the construction industry, including keeping track of important documents such as blueprints, receipts for supplies, bids, permits, and more.

One design engineering and project management company was able to reduce its manual data entry by 85 percent and save up 50 staff days per year by eliminating its paper-based systems, *USP* magazine reports. On Line Design and Engineering, which had 580 staff members handling approximately 2,500 financial documents, applied a document management system to make its purchase-to-pay process more efficient and free up more document storage space.

"Since our formation in 1982 the business has grown rapidly; however, we still rely on paper processes for our financial documents," On Line's finance director, Steve Laird, told the magazine. "As a consequence we started to encounter issues around document retrieval and an ever-decreasing lack of storage space, which was impacting our efficiency levels."

The electronic storage option may also help simplify operations for a construction company, *ConstrucTech* magazine reports. A project team that uses several databases to store information may be creating unnecessary work for its members if data is being entered multiple times—or, in some cases, omitted—and if it takes more time and effort just to find a piece of information.

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The Green Factor

More companies are moving away from paper and digitizing functions, from payroll to invoicing to project management. One reason is the business world's increasing focus on cutting down waste by adopting environmentally friendly, paperless processes.

According to the United Nations Environment Program, industrialized nations contain 20 percent of the world's population but consume 87 percent of the world's printing and writing papers. The cost of actually using paper—taking electricity and ink into account—is actually 13 to 31 times the initial price of the paper itself.

Eliminating paper-based processes can help a company reduce its costs on paper, ink, toner, and expensive maintenance and repair of copiers and printers. Digitizing paper files also means businesses that are short on space do not have to spend as much on off-site storage units. In addition to cutting overhead, this option makes it easier for employees to access information, no matter where they are located.

Advantages of Document Management

Electronic document management systems do away with the time-consuming process of sifting through paper files at the risk of discovering the document was not properly put away by the last person to pull it. EDM systems allow files to be recalled at the click of a mouse, while providing information on when and by whom the file was last viewed and/or marked up.

Documents can be scanned and stored to create an electronic database accessible to users across an enterprise. Cloud-based EDM systems can also allow out-of-office users to access company and project-related documents through a wireless connection.

Document management systems can be useful for every department within a construction company. The accounting office can better track revenue and expenses by being able to pair order forms with resulting bills from suppliers and store receipts, and project managers can share updated blueprints instantly with on-site supervisors.

EDM systems also help companies make sure confidential information is protected, and can ensure compliance with legal regulations, according to PaperGear.com. Additionally, because files are computer based, electronically backing up files can help reduce the risk of losing important documents in the event of a fire or natural disaster.

Intelligent Document Management From Sage

In order to encourage more efficient operations, Sage Construction and Real Estate document management software gives customers a web-based solution for managing and sharing workflows, documents and conversations among members of project teams.

The software functions much like a corporate intranet by centralizing all project-related information and documents in a secure, online location through a Software-as-a-Service model. No matter where team members are located—in the office, at home, or in another country—everyone can access the data and track changes on the shared platform.

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Sage software also aligns with many companies' efforts to go green, as it allows team members to share ideas and conduct research without having to print, reproduce, distribute and store numerous paper files over the course of one project. The solution allows for greater visibility into the project process, with the storage and invoicing of documents and the option to establish rules-based routing.

Finally, members can receive automatic electronic notifications and alerts based upon user criteria, such as whenever changes are made to a project item, such as a drawing, document, or meeting date.

Conclusion

Whether a project lasts two weeks or spans months, no matter if the team consists of three members or dozens, an electronic document management system can help entities keep track of the documents, reports, and correspondences involved from the planning to execution phases. EDM software can help ensure that no project member misses out on key information.

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