



Drowning in Paper

How Implementing an Enterprise Content Management System Can Help Human Resources Departments Secure Employee Information and Work More Effectively

Drowning in Paper: How Implementing an Enterprise Content Management System Can Help HR Departments Secure Employee Information and Work More Effectively

WILLIAM J. ADAMS

In this article, the author explains the benefits of enterprise content management for human resources departments.

Human resources (“HR”) departments are often burdened by extensive paper files and inefficient work processes, which leave staff struggling to complete tasks in a timely manner. Staff spend most of their time copying, routing and handling paper, instead of performing their more important duties.

Many HR executives and staff do not know that there is a way to eliminate paper and automate business processes. Or they may worry that it is not secure or flexible enough to accommodate their unique work environments. But with modular capture, distribution, process management and integration tools, digital enterprise content management (“ECM”) solutions can help HR departments of all sizes manage information, increase information security and accelerate the disposition of legal cases.

William J. Adams, an attorney in Southern California, is general counsel for Compulink, the parent company of Laserfiche. Mr. Adams can be reached at jack.adams@laserfiche.com.

This article explains the benefits of an ECM system for HR departments. First, a generalized case study of a typical HR department shows how inefficient paper-based processes are transformed with an ECM solution. Next, the functionality of best-in-class, enterprise-quality solutions are reviewed. And finally, the unique benefits of ECM for HR departments struggling to cope with the challenge of e-discovery are discussed.

CASE STUDY OF A TYPICAL HR DEPARTMENT

For the last 10 years, Susan has worked for the same company as vice president of HR. As she arrived at her office at 9:00 a.m., she recalled with great relief that it was just one year ago that she had to arrive at 7:00 a.m. to keep up with her department's work. Susan had keenly felt her company's growing pains as they had grown from a group of 50 people to over 500. She had almost given up on the difficulties of keeping up with all the paperwork.

Each day, Susan began by facing a never-ending pile of paper, mainly consisting of applicants' resumes. As the company grew, so did the number of resumes she received. They came in various formats, including letters, forms, faxes and printed e-mails. She would take about half an hour to review and sort the resumes into 10 piles that would be distributed to the departments to which the applicants appeared to be best suited. She then gave the stacks of paper to her first assistant, who would make a file folder for each applicant and would copy the resumes for each department. Since all resumes were considered confidential, the company required Susan's assistant to personally deliver each group of resumes in a sealed envelope to the appropriate department head. That was usually her assistant's morning's work. By noon, she would return to Susan's office with the earlier day's applications marked by the department head with his or her comments and directions: "Not interested," "Give to department Y," "Set up interview for next week," etc. One of her clerks would then pull and update the applicant's file, set up interviews and distribute the resumes to other departments and then refile the folder.

As soon as the rest of the employees arrived at 9:00 a.m., there were

more problems to be solved. One day it would be a person complaining of being harassed by a co-worker. It could be sexual, physical, emotional, or any other of the many ways people can mistreat one another. These matters are sensitive for all concerned and must be investigated carefully and confidentially. Any harassment claim must also be fully documented, as litigation is always a possibility. So either Susan or her second assistant would proceed to investigate and document the incident(s), which required the preparation of memos, statements, photographs and diagrams.

All of this documentation needed to be placed in a special file that would be reviewed by Susan, the chief operating officer, and the general counsel. In some cases, copies were made for the company's outside employment law attorneys. Copies also needed to be made of each document for all employees who provided information in the investigation for retention in their personnel files .

As the day wore on, mounds of paper were accumulating concerning all of the matters that an HR department must deal with on a daily basis: workers compensation, pension and 401(k) questions and changes, company benefits and advertisements for new employees, all of which required placing paper documents in the proper files, as well as copying and distributing paper copies to various people for action or their comments.

As one can imagine, the copy machine was constantly in use. Because of the many paper copies floating around, it was very difficult to keep the information confidential, and it was impossible to know if an unauthorized person started rumors or disclosed confidential information that may or may not have been true. Keeping information confidential wasn't the worst of it; trying to find a paper file a year or two later was nearly impossible. File cabinets and storage boxes were taking up expensive real estate. And staff spent weeks of time trying to compile information for management or complete federal and state reports.

On a good day, Susan was able to wrap up work and head home by 6:00 p.m. That all changed the day she talked with a colleague from a different company who was using an ECM system. Her colleague told her that the system was used not just by the HR department, but by the entire company, and that it had substantially reduced paper use and storage

because it stored digital images of scanned paper files. With this system, any document or file could now be found in seconds by any person authorized to look at it, thanks to a variety of search methods including full-text search, metadata search or folder structure search. Their system even included fuzzy search support, so even if names were misspelled in a document, they were still easy to locate. Naturally, Susan wanted to know more about how her department — and, indeed, her entire company — could benefit from its own ECM system.

Susan's story is fictionalized, but it is a quite typical example of common issues for HR departments who use paper filing systems. This scenario of shuffling, moving and copying paper is a typical one for companies that haven't implemented ECM technology. They should, because it can assist them in meeting every legal requirement for providing the records to show compliance with the laws enacted by the U.S. Congress and state legislatures, as well as guarantee security for the confidential information under their stewardship.

One of the major concerns of any human resources department is maintaining confidentiality of each employee file and information. A best-of-class ECM system permits only people with the appropriate permission to access files or documents. Without the appropriate rights, users won't be able to see files or folders, and information won't show up in repository searches. With audit trail technology, the ECM system records who accessed a particular document, when it was accessed and if it was printed, e-mailed or faxed. This type of technology is very important for proving a document's accuracy as a business record during the litigation process.

Since her company implemented an ECM system throughout all their departments and offices, Susan's work processes have changed considerably. She and her staff no longer copy and manually route resumes and job applications; instead, her assistant simply feeds them into a scanner. As the documents are scanned, the company's ECM system reads the documents, uses optical character recognition ("OCR") technology to index the full text for search, automatically creates a file structure and files the documents, and then, based on the information on the application, automatically routes it to the appropriate department for review. The

system also automatically sends an e-mail to the department head, letting him or her know that an application is awaiting review. Once the department head reviews the application, a simple change of a template field automatically routes the application back to Susan to schedule an interview. With the system, Susan can also review comments made on earlier applications and have her clerk proceed to set up interviews of those who have passed the screening process. When the applicant's file is closed, Susan can automatically place into the file any letters or e-mails sent, as the ECM system features drag-and-drop functionality from Microsoft Office applications.

The company's ECM system also simplifies the handling of harassment claims. As a named user, Susan can access the harassment claim file that was compiled by her second assistant from her desktop computer. With digital documents, there is no need to copy and send the file or any documents that were later added. Best of all, Susan does not need to copy or rearrange documents to set up a litigation file. She can simply do that with a few mouse clicks, and it does not change or rearrange any of the files in the HR department. However, the files are now organized in a manner that will best show the sequence of events to a judge or arbitrator. If an attorney or officer of the company needs statistics to show how the company has complied with both the law and company policy, HR can provide it by simply searching for data from its employee records that are held in the digital database.

And, speaking of company policy, the company employee booklet is constantly being changed to accommodate new rules, regulations, benefits and operating needs. It used to take months and reams of paper to go through the process of making changes. Now the ECM system allows all of that information to be transmitted, commented on, changed and approved within days. Only the people who need to see the information can do so. Thanks to the system's comprehensive user- and group-based security functionality, no unauthorized users can access the files until the new rules are published.

Remember those file cabinets and storage boxes stuffed with old files? They are mostly gone now, as they are stored digitally in the ECM system. This system has DoD-certified records management functional-

ity that enables Susan to set a retention period for each document. Once Susan sets the retention period, the system automatically tracks the document's life cycle and reminds Susan of the date when it is eligible for destruction.

Because of the company's ECM system, employees who used to shuffle paper have now been promoted and moved to various operating departments. One of the operating departments has taken over the space that used to house the file room. And the best result is that the company continues to grow without its previous growing pains. Susan now arrives at 9:00 a.m. to a clean desk. Without having to spend her time shuffling paper and routing job applications, Susan can focus on the other problems of the day. She can go home with a clean desk at 6:00 p.m., without the weight of tons of paper on her shoulders.

THE FUNCTIONALITY AND BENEFITS OF ECM FOR HR DEPARTMENTS

As Susan's example shows, HR departments are often burdened by extensive paper files and inefficient paper-based work processes. With modular capture, distribution, process management and integration tools, ECM solutions can help HR departments of all sizes manage information, increase information security and accelerate the disposition of legal cases. Let's discuss the specific functionality crucial for HR departments relating to security, including access and feature rights, redaction tools and audit trails to monitor user actions within the repository.

Access Rights

An ECM system should allow HR organizations to assign access rights to specific folders, as well as to specific documents, at both the group and individual level. The use of groups with inherited or predefined rights allows system administrators to quickly assign viewing privileges, while individual-level security allows specific users, such as managers, to view documents that the rest of the group cannot. For example, access rights would allow the system administrator to deny most employees access to HR files, while allowing human resources staff members to

view the personnel files of everyone in the organization except other HR personnel. HR directors can view all personnel files, except those of the most senior executives, whose files might be limited to the COO, president, or even the chairman of the board, if desired.

A full-featured ECM system will not allow users to see objects for which they do not have viewing privileges. This protective feature is especially important for organizations with systems containing confidential files and folders.

Feature Rights

An ECM system should also let system administrators limit the actions that users are entitled to perform on folders and documents at both the individual and group level. Feature rights determine a range of actions, including adding pages, annotating, copying or deleting records. For example, a system administrator could allow various department heads to have viewing privileges, but allow only the HR Director to have annotation rights to those files.

Named User Licenses with Windows Active Directory Integration

Named user licensing is based on the number of people who will be using the system, making it possible to calculate the cost of most systems by doing little more than counting employees. Because ECM systems with a named user licensing model easily scale to accommodate new users and high-volume repository growth, organizations quickly adapt to changing business conditions — without creating extra work for IT staff. Each named user license is assigned to an individual staff member who is always able to access the information necessary for them to manage their sphere of responsibility.

If a named user licensing model provides Microsoft Windows Active Directory integration, it will streamline administration by enabling administrators to assign access rights to Windows accounts. Since user licenses are tied to Windows Active Directory accounts, there is no need for users to remember an additional username and password. Instead,

users are automatically authenticated into the ECM system with their Active Directory credentials. This enhances security by minimizing the risk of password loss, and simplifies tracking of user actions within the system.

Redaction Tools

Redaction (blackout or whiteout) is a security feature applied within documents to make certain portions of the document inaccessible, except to authorized users. With whiteout redactions, instead of a visible thick black line through the redacted text, a viewer will not know that information has even been redacted. An ECM system should offer the ability to redact portions of a document's image and/or text. Users' ability to view redacted text would depend on their security rights. For example, a HR director could make job applications available to various departments, but allow only HR department staff to see sensitive information such as the applicant's name and address. Redaction allows the extension of security from folders and documents right down to the character level, enabling comprehensive security and maintaining the privacy of scanned images.

Audit Trails and Reporting

As an additional level of security, an ECM system should offer the ability to generate audit trails and reports that detail system activity. An ECM system should be able to log all users, documents viewed, actions performed and the time they were performed. A full-featured ECM system will log unsuccessful attempts to perform actions and can provide electronic watermarks to authenticate printed documents.

Audit trail abilities are especially important when an organization has many different users and confidential documents. Audit trails also play significant roles in demonstrating regulatory compliance.

Central Storage for Multiple Document Types

With a best-in-class application, an HR department can store scanned paper documents, e-mails, spreadsheets and PDFs in a central, secure dig-

ital repository. This will help HR staff when it comes time to access this information, as authorized users can instantly access any document they need, from employee handbooks, policy manuals, accident reports and signed documents to peer reviews, progress reports and reprimands, all with a single click.

Types of Documents Managed by HR Departments

Employee Recruitment

- Resumes
- Applications
- Interview notes
- Health histories
- Drug screenings
- Letters of reference
- Job descriptions
- Signed offer letters

Travel and Expense

- Time sheets
- Expense reports
- Receipts
- Vacation requests
- Sick leave requests

Employee Relations

- Peer reviews
- Progress reports
- Recommendations
- Reprimands
- Direct deposit forms
- Checks

Benefits Management

- Benefit elections
- Flex plan submissions
- Investment forms
- Insurance documentation

Hiring Documentation

It is advised to capture, secure and centralize all applicant information—from e-mails to letters of reference and handwritten applications—in an ECM system in order to quickly identify the best candidates. A best-in-class system provides distribution tools that make sharing information with hiring managers and other team members quick and easy.

Reimbursement

The process of scanning and distributing paper receipts and expense reports accelerates the reimbursement process. With optical character recognition technology, scanned paper documents become instantly searchable — which puts an organization’s spending history at the fingertips of authorized employees.

Indexing and Retrieval

An ECM system is uniquely positioned to help employees quickly search through thousands of documents in order to pinpoint the information they need. Many employees use search tools that are nearly identical to commercial search engines designed for use with the internet. Although these search engines are efficient at helping consumers find information — such as the Web pages of all the retailers selling a certain product — they are not geared toward the specialized searches necessary in many business environments.

Most commercial search engines support only basic keyword searches.

The user types in a word or phrase, and the engine returns a group of matching documents. Typically, the engine ranks results according to its own logic; depending on the user’s needs, this ranking system may or may not be helpful. Often, users must spend a significant amount of time sifting through the results in order to find the information they are looking for.

An ECM system allows users to better focus their searches on the particular problem they need to solve. For example, suppose that a staff member in the HR department needs to find minutes from a meeting at which the attendees discussed electronic job application kiosks. A keyword search on the terms “electronic” and “application” has the potential to return a number of documents that are not relevant to this user’s needs.

To narrow the search and find the relevant document more quickly, the employee needs more advanced search capabilities.

Retrieval is where the quality of the indexing system is most evident. Some ECM systems let users search only by indexed keywords, which requires a person to know how the document was categorized and what template fields were assigned to it. A powerful indexing system will make it possible for users to find any document based on what they know,

even if that amounts to no more than a word or phrase within the document. The more an ECM system adapts to an organization's existing procedures, the less upheaval and training are involved for users of the system, and the greater the likelihood the system will be used on a regular basis.

Full-text Indexing

Full-text indexing allows users to locate any word or phrase that appears in the document. By providing full-text indexing, ECM systems can eliminate the need to read and manually index documents using keywords. To enable full-text indexing, the software must have the capability to perform OCR. The OCR process translates printed words into alphanumeric characters with near-perfect accuracy, enabling each occurrence of a word to be tracked by the application. OCR dramatically reduces the cost of manual indexing while providing improved search capabilities.

However, OCR cannot process handwriting or images. Moreover, when a computer performs OCR on a document, it typically uses English as the default alphabet. If multiple languages are required, the document management system should support OCR and full-text searches in these languages. To avoid creating extra work, a well-designed system should provide the ability to automate the OCR and full-text index processing of documents.

Template Field Searches

Template field searches enable users to comb through millions of records in seconds to find necessary documents. The ability to use index field information to locate documents is important in cases where a topic search is more expedient than finding every occurrence of a particular word. Template fields are based on metadata, or simply, data about data. In the context of an ECM system, where the data are the content of employee files, metadata might include the employee name, the type of document (application, employee review or benefits document) and the department the employee belongs to.

A best-in-class ECM system should allow users to customize tem-

plates, create multiple templates to categorize different document types and support different types of field data within each template, such as data, number and alphanumeric characters. Template fields can be used to categorize documents, track creation or retention dates, or record subject matter, among other information. An ECM system should enable pull-down boxes of common key words to speed and automate data entry. A best-in-class system should also have user-definable template fields.

Folder/File Structure

Along with enabling full-text and template field searches, an ECM system should enable users to locate documents by browsing the folder/file structure. A best-in-class system lets individual departments electronically recreate their existing filing system through a nested folder structure. A flexible folder structure eases the transition from paper filing to electronic filing, which makes the transition to the ECM system smoother.

Simplified and Streamlined Business Processes with Workflow Automation

Every day, staff search for the information they need to collaborate more effectively. The manual processes of searching, faxing, photocopying and distributing documents are costly and time-consuming — and they keep staff from making productive use of the information they've found.

Workflow functionality automates business processes so staff spend time on productive activities, instead of labor-intensive document handling processes. With workflow, documents are automatically moved, copied or deleted based on predetermined rules designed by users. Notifications ensure prompt action and simplify supervision. When combined with audit trail tracking, workflow functionality provides all the information needed to accurately assess business processes and identify bottlenecks, maintain performance comparisons and track document-related activity to improve quality, accountability and productivity.

Quality workflow functionality provides the ability to:

1. Design simple or complex workflow routing rules on a graphical canvas, choosing from a broad palette of workflow actions.
2. Maintain integrity of routed documents, given that they never leave the repository.
3. Assign field values or annotations and change security access to repository documents from a workflow.
4. Specify search criteria for locating a repository document that should be processed by a workflow.
5. Specify routing to groups, task and notification escalation, serial or parallel routing, and conditional loops.
6. Use Windows Workflow Foundation activities to extend Workflow functionality to all line-of-business applications.

In an HR department, staff could set up workflows to automate routing job applications or conducting employee reviews. A best-in-class ECM system will provide a flexible, highly functional and fully integrated workflow module to automate, streamline and optimize the most paper-intensive business processes.

Support for Enterprise-Wide Records Management

Since 2005, records management has become increasingly important for organizations due to new compliance regulations and statutes. While government, legal, financial and healthcare entities have a strong history of records management, general record-keeping of corporate records has been poorly standardized and implemented. Scandals at companies including Enron and Arthur Andersen, and, more recently, at Morgan Stanley, have renewed interest in corporate records compliance, litigation preparedness and other issues. Most legislation and regulations have been enacted with no road map for compliance.

Fortunately, there is a records management standard that has begun to emerge as the de facto standard across most industries. The United States Department of Defense (“DoD”) developed a records management standard, DoD Standard 5015.2, as a requirement for records management

applications (“RMAs”) implemented within its departments.

Unlike requirements of other organizations, the DoD developed very specific criteria, as well as a formal testing process to determine whether a records management application meets the standard. Because of the formal testing process and the strictness of the requirements, organizations outside of the DoD have used the 5015.2 standard as a starting point for evaluating records management applications for their own use. Knowing that a DoD-certified records management application has been rigorously tested against a standard that is much more demanding than the regulations they must comply with provides a great deal of comfort to compliance officers and records managers.

Once a file plan has been established in an organization, a records management application will manage the document life cycle as defined within each record type. Users simply file records in the appropriate folder and they will be prompted to enter any required metadata that hasn’t been automatically captured, and the records management application will take over. Records managers can run reports detailing where records are in their life cycle, which records should be reviewed and which records are eligible for transfer, accession or destruction. Additionally, all system activity is logged, providing an audit trail that tracks the entire life cycle of the records that can be used to prove adherence to the records management plan and adherence to legislation and/or compliance regulations.

While some organizations’ records management requirements might not be as detailed as the DoD standard, records managers can use all or some of the tools provided to implement a solution that fits their exact needs. The right records management application will provide all the tools necessary to design and implement a DoD-compliant file plan for the management of all imaged, electronic and physical records.

Image-Enablement of Existing HR Applications

The introduction of new software and databases often creates logistical challenges for an organization’s computer support staff. A quality ECM system should offer packaged integration tools for simple image enabling, to minimize the burden on IT support staff of trying to match documents prepared in the past with documents prepared under an updat-

ed system. To minimize disruptions to business operations, it is essential that an ECM system integrate smoothly with other software applications.

Integration with business-critical applications is the key to enabling streamlined and collaborative processes to access information enterprise-wide. Choosing a system with an open architecture and packaged integration tools makes it easy to image-enable existing applications — while minimizing the burden on IT staff.

A quality system should provide organizations with information to make integration easier. This information might include a complete set of documentation, tools and sample code to speed systems integrations and customizations addressing specific business needs, or it might include packaged integration solutions that deliver basic image enablement without a major investment of time or money. Packaged integrations can range from plug-ins for popular software programs to additional modules supporting popular features, such as electronic signatures.

Back-End Integration

Because capturing and indexing documents is the most expensive component of implementing a document management solution, anything that can be done to eliminate or minimize these costs will provide a nearly immediate return on investment. Information that already exists in digital format in primary applications can be utilized to automatically index and file documents as they are captured. In most cases, this type of integration requires a very small investment and will eliminate most of the costs associated with indexing documents.

Front-End Integration

Front-end integration is especially important for organizations that utilize documents in a supporting role. These organizations want a document management solution that is as transparent as possible, given that staff members don't want to learn a new system just to gain access to supporting documentation. Because staff members already have a primary application, such as accounting or inventory control, to complete their daily tasks, the best way for them to access documents is through this familiar application. Image-enabling primary applications allow staff to

quickly access the documents they need by simply clicking a button or pressing a function key.

The value of front-end integration is primarily realized in a reduction in training costs. Because staff members already know how to locate records in their primary application, they will not need to learn how to locate documents in the document management system. They will have to learn how to request the type of document they want and, if necessary, how to work with documents in an electronic format. However, this requires less time than teaching them how to utilize the complete system.

Functionality Checklist

A best-in-class enterprise content management system will allow HR staff to:

- Access all information from a single interface.
- Protect sensitive information with powerful security features.
- Automate and simplify paper-based work processes.
- Reduce liability with transparent, DoD 5015.2-certified records management tools.
- Integrate existing applications with the ECM repository.

USING ECM TO COPE WITH THE CHALLENGE OF E-DISCOVERY

At one time or another, every organization faces litigation, and when it does, their records management program will be significantly tested. According to a recent study conducted by the law firm of Fulbright & Jaworski, LLP, companies with at least \$1 billion in annual revenue are engaged in an average of 147 lawsuits simultaneously, while companies with average revenues under \$1 billion juggle an average of 37 lawsuits

at a time. On top of that, nearly one-third of firms surveyed spent more than two percent of gross revenues on legal expenses, while 10 percent spent more than five percent.

While companies in the healthcare, energy and technology industries top the list in the number of lawsuits, organizations in other fields are not immune — and many are completely unprepared. Operating in today's litigious environment poses a major test to any organization's electronic records management system. Yet a recent Business Performance Management Forum and AXS-One Inc. study found that 36.4 percent of senior executives surveyed have no technologies or plans in place to manage a legal discovery order involving electronic records. Also, 33 percent said they had no corporate policy in place covering electronic records management in general, and 20 percent did not even know if they had a policy.

To cope with the burden of e-discovery, an organization must develop consistent processes for managing, storing and deleting data, and must be able to determine the cost of accessing relevant information. There is no one-size-fits-all end-to-end solution, but any solution should help an organization sift through large collections of unstructured data, such as e-mail and Microsoft Office documents, and quickly identify the most relevant information.

An ECM system with a fully integrated records management component can play a key part in overall e-discovery planning. ECM systems protect and preserve both physical and electronic documents. Physical documents are scanned into the system and maintained in electronic form as either TIFF or ASCII files, both of which are non-proprietary and unalterable. Electronic documents, including e-mail messages, can be maintained in their native file formats, maintaining existing metadata and hidden information, or converted into archival-quality images. Audit trail capability can guarantee that documents kept in native file formats are not deleted or modified, maintaining their value in the e-discovery process.

Best-in-class ECM solutions offer advanced indexing and searching capabilities, so organizations that implement an ECM system in concert with other solutions — whether e-mail archiving or automated litigation support systems — enjoy both superlative information management

capabilities and a quicker, more comprehensive response to litigation. Effective programs often yield verifiable cost savings that pay for the initial program investment many times over, not to mention the significant cost savings of averting litigation and other compliance risk issues.

Adding records management capabilities to a document management system further strengthens an e-discovery plan. Records management applications commonly provide specialized security and auditing functionality tailored to the needs of records managers, including:

1. Improved efficiency in the storage, retention and disposition of records and records series.
2. Detailed reports of which records are eligible for transfer, accession or destruction.
3. Audit trails to track all system activity and the entire life cycle of records.

Records management functionality enables the application of systematic controls and policies concerning the life cycle of those records that detail an organization's business transactions. Records management applications enable records managers to file records according to a determined scheme, to control the life cycle of records, to retrieve records based on partial information and to identify records that are due for final disposition.

With proactive life cycle management, native file formats are used only during the collaborative (active) phase of a document's life cycle. Once the information is no longer active and moves into the retention phase, it is converted to archival format (either TIFF or ASCII) and the electronic document is purged. Thus, when a document is required for discovery, the archival image can be presented, along with associated metadata. Preserving an archival image, along with index data, removes the liability of having to produce an electronic file that may include comments and revision history.

If an organization chooses to utilize proactive life cycle management, it must formally document the procedure in case of eventual litigation. Once litigation is reasonably foreseeable, staff must stop the conversion

of electronic documents into archival images and must maintain all electronically-stored information (“ESI”) in its native format, at least until the meet-and-confer conference when both parties can agree on the production format.

In e-discovery, generally the information that is most expensive to recover should have been destroyed years ago. With a records management solution, staff are able to enforce retention policies more easily, so that information is purged when it should be. Over-retention leaves an organization vulnerable to higher long-term costs and risks. Eliminating obsolete or duplicate documents can reduce storage needs by up to 80 percent. With appropriate retention policies, the liability of obsolete information is minimized and the cost of discovery is reduced.

It is absolutely essential for all organizations to develop, document, institute and verifiably enforce a data preservation policy, and an ECM system with a DoD 5015.2-certified records management component can play a key part in this plan. By enforcing a records management policy — including automating retention and destruction processes — and proactively managing electronic alongside physical data, an e-discovery program will be easier for all parties to understand, explain and work within.

CONCLUSION

In an environment where increasing productivity, efficiency and profitability is crucial to long-term success, an ECM solution is a business-essential aspect of day-to-day HR department operations. It is a solution that cuts costs, reclaims storage space for revenue-generating activities, allows staff to redirect labor to more productive tasks and simplifies compliance with regulations.

ECM solutions can work as effectively for an HR department of 10 people as for an entire enterprise with a staff of thousands. The key is selecting the system that is flexible enough to fit an organization’s workflow, security and records management needs.

In addition, a best-in-class enterprise content management system can help organizations deal with HR liability issues. Using an ECM sys-

tem can save millions of dollars in staff time and legal expenses when staff digitize and archive judiciously and practice due diligence.

The ultimate benefit? With ECM, HR departments will have a happy staff that won't have as many headaches trying to locate their paperwork. They will work more efficiently and more intelligently, by using their skills instead of shuffling paper.