



The National Archives

Information and Records tools: background note

The National Archives has worked with the rest of the UK government for over 10 years guiding them in managing their electronic records. The immaturity of early technical solutions led to a focus on influencing the development of suitable new technology. The work in this area by The National Archives and initiatives from other countries resulted in the development of electronic document and records (EDRM) systems designed for filing, storing, and controlling security, deletion and export of electronic documents and records.

Understanding of the range of issues involved in managing electronic records has grown since EDRM systems were first implemented in government departments. Implementing EDRM systems across government has increased the level of awareness of what is required and raised questions about the effectiveness of the approach taken. It is now recognised that there is a need to look at the whole of the information management process, and re-focus on managing all types of information from the time it is created. In this new context some existing EDRM system implementations look either outdated, underused or both as they do not support fully an organisation's business needs.

Organisations need to use technology to help manage information effectively. It is challenging to choose appropriate technology in a constantly changing technical environment, but is important to get right. When evaluating the software and implementation options available a number of factors need to be considered; these include an understanding of the organisation's business needs, costs (e.g. licences, configuration, migration, additional resources), adapting existing technology, intuitive interface and the possibility of buying into an existing solution on a shared service basis. It is likely that the solution chosen may include some EDRM functionality but an EDRM system alone is unlikely to fulfil all an organisation's information management requirements. Organisations evaluating their information management requirements should consider whether new solutions are required or whether existing solutions can be adapted, improved or added to.

Technology will provide part of the information management solution, but more needs to be done for an organisation to manage its information effectively. A culture needs to be established where information is valued as a corporate asset and information management is recognised as a key corporate function supporting evidenced-based policy making, decision making and accountability. To do this it is necessary to ensure that important

information is kept, information risks are managed appropriately and options for information re-use are considered and acted upon.

The National Archives is continuing to work to improve the technology, process and culture of managing information by doing the following:

- Working with industry
- Working together with the wider public sector
- Working with international experts
- Working with other National Archives across the globe

Public sector bodies requiring more assistance on managing their information can access The National Archives guidance at

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/electronicrecords/advice/default.htm>

Alternatively, government departments can contact the Records Management and Cataloguing Department at

records.management@nationalarchives.gov.uk and other public sector bodies can contact the Records Management Advisory Service at

rmadvisory@nationalarchives.gov.uk.