

Checklist for ECM Success — 14 Steps



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Checklist for ECM Success -14 Steps

ECM, Enterprise Content Management, is the technologies used to capture, manage, store, preserve, and deliver content and documents related to organizational processes. The goal of ECM is to improve the effective management of business content.

Making an ECM implementation work requires planning and attention to detail. While this may look like any other technology implementation, it is not. ECM is a complex set of technologies that work together. The best way to create the right solution is to identify organizational goals and priorities. Common drivers include enabling easy access and retrieval of content, as well as, reducing risk and meeting regulatory requirements.

This checklist will help guide your organization through the process of implementing ECM.

1. ECM Program and Project Management

Program Management – Keeping Your Eye on the Goal

ECM is an ongoing strategy, involving multiple projects designed to gain control of the organization's unstructured information within the context of an overall strategy.

- Have you identified a specific project that will add business value and address a portion of ECM?
- Did you select the project for business value rather than simplicity? Does the selected project support the business strategy?
- Did you produce a business case for each of the programs separately? Does the business case identify the reasons for implementing ECM?

Project Management – Keeping on Track

It is also important to not try to take on the world with your project. Your project can be subject to scope-creep unless you are careful to identify a scope that is very specific and well defined.

- Have you identified the scope of your initiative including geographic, organization, legacy content to be migrated, information classes, and time tables? Is the scope of the project well defined? Make sure you have a well-defined scope so that you can avoid scope creep.
- Did you plan your project phases, activities and deliverables? Understand your planning may change as the project progresses.
- Have you considered how you will guard against scope creep? There will be tradeoffs that will need to be made. Think about which ones are necessary and only allow them.

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2. Information Governance Framework – Protecting Assets

Much like an ERM (Electronic Records Management) project, you should have a clear understanding of the content your organization has to manage. It is important to understand how the content will be accessed and used. When you have determined the use of your content, make sure to establish policies for access and security of your content. Content is an organizational asset.

- Have you identified the information owner and will you be able to hold him/her accountable?
- Have you determined the lifecycle of the content? According to your policies, some information will need to be kept and other information will be able to be discarded.
- Have you considered the security and access controls that will need to be in place to protect your information while allowing the information to be shared?

3. Management – Getting Management to Buy-in

All levels in an organization are accountable for the content they have control over making everyone a content steward. There are a few important appointments that should be made to ensure the success of your project into the future.

- Do you have a Chief Information Officer (CIO) appointed?
- Have you established an Information Governance Board, which may be a sub-group of the Executive Board? Does your Information Governance Board have representatives from Legal, Records Management, and subject experts from your lines-of-business?
- Have you identified a program/project owner who will be accountable to the Executive Board for delivering expected benefits of ECM-related implementation project/program?
- Do you have the role of Information Manager defined?

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4. Concept of Operations (ConOps) – Communicating About the Project Is Key to Success

The Operations function of your project facilitates communications and agreement of stakeholders to the ECM vision and leads to permission to begin the project by ensuring that the project contributes to the overall content management and business strategies.

- Have you considered the future vision for after the project is implemented? What will you need to incorporate in 5 years?
- Will there be organizational changes and content governance structure changes? Can the people affected by organizational changes be repurposed to other functions in the organization?
- Will the project result in new business processes, behaviors or ways of working? Have you begun to think of how you will conduct training so that everyone will be able to use the new processes?
- Will new tools, applications, and IT infrastructure be needed?

5. Information Survey – Getting to Know Your Content

An information survey will provide a present-state of what your content is and where it's located within your organization and how well that is aligned with business needs. Identifying the location of content allows for the development of an improved business case while clarifying business and system requirements. The information survey helps you to identify:

- What content and business flows are present?
- What content is not present? (Information gaps)
- How long it should be kept and what can be destroyed?
- How to rationalize information (eliminate duplication, planning migration, more effective flow)?

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As you plan your survey, be sure to structure it so that you get the information that you need:

- Have you agreed upon the purpose and scope of the survey?
- Did you decide how you will understand the business goals, business processes, activities, and required information (e.g., one practical approach to an information survey is to study the flow of work)?
- Have you agreed upon the necessary level of details for collections and users?
- Have you decided how you will communicate and motivate managers and users involved in the project?

One way to gather the information is to use information survey logs which should include:

- What content is generated/received?
- Who holds it?
- How it is held?
- Where it is held?
- What formats are used?
- Who is responsible for the content?
- What content does the organization need to support operational objectives? Business objectives?
- What processes and information flows currently exist?
- What should be kept? For how long?
- What can be destroyed? How should it be destroyed?

Once you have developed and used your survey, look at the results of your survey, did the survey help you to:

- Rationalize the information?
- Improve how you will manage the content?
- Clarify your business and system requirements?
- Identify groups and user information?
- Develop your BCS?
- Develop your business case?
- Prepare you for your pilot installation and roll out?
- Identify information gaps?
- Help you to eliminate duplication?
- Identify an effective information flow?
- Identify information that should be kept and information that is not core to the business and can be discarded?
- Help you to plan the migration to the new system?

6. Business Case – Making the Project Real

It is important to make sure you can describe to management how your ECM project will support the organization's business strategy. Your business case will help convince senior management to support the project. It communicates important information to people in business and on your ECM project. Your case study should also include the benefits resulting from your ECM project.

- Quantified in financial terms
 - Used for cost-benefit analysis in business case
 - Financial targets set and subsequently monitored
- Quantified in non-financial terms
 - Important for differentiating between alternatives
 - Benefit levels may be assessed subjectively
 - Numeric targets set and monitored
- Non quantifiable or intangible benefits
 - Important for differentiating alternatives
 - Benefit levels may be assessed subjectively
 - Targets set and monitored for indirect or "shadow" measures

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- Have you developed a business case for your organization? Does your business case provide clear recommendations? Does your business case support your organization's business strategy?
- Have you provided recommendations?
- Did you include a description of ways that you will be able to measure success of the project? Have you considered how you will show the benefits are realized?

7. Business and System Requirements – Knowing What You Need

A Requirements Document will become the basis for the system development design. This document will help keep the project focused and ensure you implement the technology appropriate for what your organization needs.

- Have you outlined the ECM vision for your organization?
- Does your Information Survey describe the business goals, processes, and activities, and provide the required information?
- Have you used a standard format for presenting survey results to ensure proper structure for stakeholder requirements?
- Did you interview senior stakeholders and representatives of the end user community to understand what they need from the content?
- Have you drafted a business and systems requirements specification based on the above? Did you review the requirements specification with your implementation team until consensus is gained? (Consensus is not anonymity or 100% agreement.)

8. Business Classification Scheme – Making It Easy to Find the Content

A business classification scheme (BCS) allows users to file, find, and share information. A BCS is:

- the structure an organization uses for organizing, accessing / retrieving, storing, and managing its information
- based on the organization's business functions and activities used to classify documents and records

View the development of a Business Classification Scheme in phases: 1) determine your overall approach; 2) create a high-level view across the organization; 3) build a detailed plan in a pilot; 4) roll out in the pilot area; 5) refine and repeat. This process will take time to complete. The more time you put into the scheme the better it will be and the easier it will be for users to file or find information. Your BCS will change as your organization changes.

- Did you create a business classification scheme (BCS)? Is it based on your organization's business functions and activities?
- Did you involve records management staff AND get opinions from business, legal, etc.? The more individuals from your organization that you involve the better your BCS will be.
- Don't expect to get it right the first time. Have you established a review process and schedule? The changes in your business will impact your BCS. How will you make sure your business and your BCS are aligned?

9. Users and User Involvement – Getting Everyone on the Same Train

ECMS needs to hold many details about users:

- Each user has one or more "role"/category
- Each user is in one or more "workgroup"
- Workgroups facilitate access control
- Information on each user generally includes:
 - Contact details
 - Workgroup(s)
 - Role(s)
 - Security clearance
 - Access rights by class/folder

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Users should be involved in the outline of the current situation and needs and in the trial use of potential ECM systems. Real involvement, not lip service, for involved users is needed for success.

Involved users will lead to a good Concept of Operations and an appropriate ECM system to move into a detailed trial with.

- Have you described your current situation of managing content?
- Did you include the needs your organization has in managing its content?
- Were your users involved? How will you keep them engaged and involved in your ECM project?

10. IT Infrastructure Components – Aligning the Technology Pieces

When planning, managing, or operating an ECM IT infrastructure using a structured framework for any analysis will help you to ensure all aspects of introducing or changing ECM are considered and addressed. Most organizations have the following IT components:

- Desktop/Laptop/smart phone/tablet (Other front-end devices – handheld scanner, etc.)
- Network (include Internet, SAN, LAN, firewalls)
- Server/Datacenter (include external services)
- Cloud/Software-as-a-Service
- Each infrastructure component will have each of the three **capabilities**
 - **Process:** the process required to function and operate
 - **Resource/skill:** the right people, right skills
 - **Hardware/software assets:** the physical assets
- Did you establish a set of disciplines and tools to support a specific task or set of tasks in the development process for ECM projects?
- Did you establish a set of disciplines, tools, and standards required to run an ECM application?
- Did you identify a set of disciplines, tools, and standards required to keep your ECM production environment up and running?

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11. Model Offices & Pilots – Ensuring the Project Will Work

A **Model Office** involves users, trainers, content managers, and admin staff to create a new working environment, and develop new procedures and ways of working. It helps:

- ECM software comparison/selection
- Refine functionality and user interface

This is more of a laboratory setting, with users away from their desks. Through the use of pilot implementations, you will begin to roll-out the new ECM environment to the group of pilot users you have selected.

A pilot is so important to help you to see how the ECM environment will work with your established IT infrastructure. To make sure your pilot provides the valuable information you need prior to implementing ECM in your environment, it is important that the pilot users maintain as normal a work life as possible. This means that they will work on the pilot while at their own desks and will do normal work tasks. The documentation and training you will provide for the full implementation may need to be refined in light of the experience you gain from the pilot.

- Does your pilot provide a real-world evaluation of the new ECM environment?
- Are you able to provide a realistic assessment of the performance achieved through the pilot?
- Does your pilot test the entire project, including process changes and not just the technology?
- Did you gather user feedback on functionality and performance? Did the users make recommendations for improving the project?
- Did your pilot implementation ensure that the functional and performance requirements of your ECM system were met?
- Are your users satisfied with the systems and ways of working?
- Is your BCS usable? It is all right to make modifications to the BCS based on your pilot experiences.
- Did the pilot validate your business case?

12. Roll-out – Get Ready, Get Set, Go – Implementing Your Project Plan

You have done everything to ensure that you have a successful project implementation. You will need to develop and follow a roll-out plan. Don't forget to communicate to everyone in the organization as the project is being rolled out. Communications at this time are possibly even more critical than at earlier stages of the project. Try to get your project champion to help rally the troops to support the project.

- Does your roll-out plan address the following items?
 - ECM Design
 - IT Design
 - System Configuration
 - System Build
 - Support Development
 - Training Development
 - Data Migration
 - System Testing
 - User Acceptance Testing
 - Local Preparation
 - Training
 - GO LIVE

13. Roll-out Fall-back plan – Be Prepared for Anything and Everything to Happen

No matter how much you plan, glitches will happen. The important thing is to not let these glitches derail the project but to use them as ways to further tighten your project implementation. If you and your project team have taken some time to consider the potential risks and to develop contingency plans, you will be prepared for when the glitches happen.

- Did you analyze the potential risks you may face? Did you develop scenarios under which total or partial back out may be needed?
- Did you develop contingency plans for most likely scenarios? Did you review the contingency plans with key stakeholders?
- Did you produce a “Fall-back Plan” for your most likely scenarios and outline contingency plans for them?

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14. Post Implementation – What's Next?

So, your ECM project is implemented, what's next? Unfortunately, ECM projects don't ever end. They are continuous and assume new directions as more of the organization begins to use the new system. As your project is implemented and more of your organization hears about it, you will need to continue to carefully adhere to your implementation schedule. Good projects can catch on like wild fire.

- Have you revised your procedures and processes to reflect the experiences you have gained through your pilot implementation and the implementation to date? Are new procedures and processes needed?
- Has your organization found new ways for creating content, capturing metadata, and searching and retrieving content? Has this been shared throughout the organization?
- Will you need to tune your workflows in light of the experiences you have gained? Are there new workflows that will need to be introduced?
- Have you assessed the value and impact your new system has on your organization?
- Have you developed a plan for on-going training?

Conclusion

Making an ECM implementation work requires a lot of planning and attention to detail. ECM is a complex set of technologies that work together. The best way to create the right solution is to identify organizational goals and priorities.

How well your employee's adapt to – and adopt – a new technology implementation will determine whether that new implementation boosts your effectiveness and bottom line or fails and becomes a wasted investment. Learn more about how to accurately and effectively manage your organization's content, and adapt to change, with an enterprise content management strategy.

No matter how many technology projects you have implemented in your career, you may gain some additional insights on your ECM implementation by taking AIIM's ECM Training Course. The course will allow you to stay abreast of industry trends and will share with you best practices for implementing this complex set of technologies.

Be a hero.

World-Class Professional Development and Training

The course is designed for anyone who is involved in the assessment and implementation of ECM initiatives and developed from the best practices of AIIM's 65,000 strong community of members. A successful ECM implementation requires a strategy and structure for how to capture and manage information. The Practitioner Course covers these basics and prepares you for the Specialist Program, which digs deeper and goes further into best practices and implementation practices revealed in the Practitioner Course.

The ECM Master Training Program combines the elements of the previous two programs in addition to a case study exercise.

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About the Author



Betsy Fanning (bfanning@aiim.org) is the director of Standards and Chapter Relations for AIIM. In this position, she is responsible for the standards and technical reports produced by AIIM as ANSI (American National Standards), ISO, and AIIM Recommended Practices as well Best Practices. At the international level, she is the secretary for ISO TC 171, Document Management Applications and ISO TC 171 Subcommittee 2, Application Issues and is the administrator for the U. S. Technical Advisory Group to TC 171 that represents the United States at the international meetings. She is also responsible for building liaison relationships with other

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Prior to coming to AIIM, Betsy held positions with DynSolutions, a Correspondence, Document and Records Management Company, and Westinghouse Electric. In both of these companies, she has implemented imaging, workflow and document management systems. In 1994, Betsy was awarded AIIM's Distinguished Service Citation and was inducted into AIIM's Company of Fellows in 2008. Betsy has a Masters in Library Science from the University of Pittsburgh and a Bachelor of Science in Education specializing in Library and Information Sciences from Clarion State University.



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