



Ernie's Corner



Welcome to the first issue of Crawford Courier, CrawfordTech's quarterly newsletter. Through our newsletters, we want to keep you educated and informed on industry news and provide you with updates on what's happening at CrawfordTech.

First Issue Highlights

IT can easily and efficiently archive mission-critical customer communications in [IT and the Transaction/TransPromo Document: Archiving the Lifeblood of an Enterprise](#)

Marketers can keep common look-and-feel and branding between hardcopy and electronic deliveries and add significant value to the electronic deliveries in [Electronic TransPromo Documents Deliver for Marketers](#).

Operations management can quickly, efficiently and economically make major updates to their transaction document jobs in [Re-energize the Enterprise with Document Re-engineering](#).

We're also pleased to provide industry news from three experts:

Pat McGrew of Kodak on [getting \(and keeping\) customer's attention in marketing](#).

Mike Porter of Print/Mail Consultants on how [Document Re-Engineering software can be a goldmine to Document Operations](#).

Kevin Craine of Craine Communications on how considering documents, technology and people is a key factor in [demystifying Document Strategy Design](#).

CrawfordTech Highlights

CrawfordTech is continuing to grow and expand. We're very proud that during 2008 we:

- Were awarded [Xplor Innovator of the Year](#) for our Document Re-engineering family of products
- Launched our [Enterprise IMB product family](#)
- Opened our first [European office](#)
- Launched our [PRO Workflow product family](#)

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Upcoming Events

We hope to see you at:

GraphExpo in Chicago, October 26-29, 2008; we'll be in booth 2394.

Gartner's Print & Imaging Summit in Bonita Springs, FL, December 3-5, 2008.

To see what shows we'll be attending, please visit our [Events](#) page.

Feedback

We also want to hear from you. If you'd like to see an article on a specific subject, make a comment, or just want to let us know what you think of our first newsletter, please email me at ernie@crawfordtech.com.

- Ernie

IT and the Transaction/TransPromo Document: Archiving the Lifeblood of an Enterprise

-OutputLinks

While data and information are the lifeblood of an enterprise, organizations are also archiving more and more of it - everything from e-mail messages and Word documents to a variety of forms, graphics and daily correspondence. In fact, the use of digital archiving systems has become widespread, making it a significant issue for those companies that manage high volume transaction output, such as transpromo and transactional documents.

"The data contained within corporate print streams is a veritable memory of how an organization conducts business," said Ernie Crawford, president of Crawford Technologies (CrawfordTech), which is headquartered in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. "As a result, archiving high-volume print streams has gained great scope and importance, especially as the risks of regulatory non-compliance and litigation have increased. Enterprises are looking to expand their archives to include a widening array of corporate documents and information, and the IT department is at the center of this effort."

According to Crawford, more and more business is conducted electronically, and as legal requirements for document retention become increasingly strict, document archiving has become more prevalent, especially for those enterprises that deal with high volumes of output, such as bills, statements and other crucial customer communications.

"In the past, companies maintained archives of critical information on paper. Now, digital documents are the mainstay of corporate repositories," says Crawford. "File servers have replaced filing cabinets as the primary means to archive and access corporate information, making the role of the CIO and the IT department even more critical to a business."

The Challenge

Today, companies often use a single repository for all their documents. However, most imaging and content management systems are an unsatisfactory option for IT, as they're not designed to archive high-volume production print runs.

Common Archive Options

- Option No. 1: content management applications, which focus on function-specific documents or departementally-based workflow versus the specialized attributes of enterprise print and mail
- Option No. 2: document imaging applications, which typically function after the fact, scanning paper into image files. In the end, neither option is suitable for archiving high-volume production print runs, presenting a key challenge for IT.

As a result of selecting one of these options, an enterprise loses significant functionality due to the mismatch between the capabilities of a generic archive system and unique functionality required for production print documents. As a result, mission-critical documents and information are either left outside of the scope of retention or require separate archives that need specialized integration and customization. But CrawfordTech has changed all that.

CrawfordTech is a leader in document manipulation and re-engineering solutions, including data mining of print streams, archiving and retrieval, print stream conversion and workflow processing. The company's wide range of robust and flexible products allow organization's to boost revenue, build efficiencies and bolster customer service.

The Solution

PRO Dynamic Document Archive, by CrawfordTech, is the latest advancement in print stream archival and retrieval solutions. PRO DD Archive can work with virtually any document archival or content management system to provide a comprehensive solution to manage, store and retrieve advanced print stream applications, such as IBM AFP and Xerox Metacode. The open set of modules, each of which can be integrated, used and managed independently, can be tailored to any computing environment and lend its features to a wide array of business applications.

"Because PRO DD Archive is designed specifically for advanced production print stream archive and retrieval, it has become a leading choice for organizations in a wide variety of industries, including insurance, utilities, manufacturing, financial, output service providers and government organizations," said Crawford.

CrawfordTech's PRO DD Archive

PRO DD Archive retains print stream data in its original format. This means that important production metadata like page definitions, tray assignments and finishing information is not lost in the archive process. General purpose archive solutions typically focus solely on online display applications and overlook this critical aspect. As a result, companies find that they must establish duplicate repositories - one for display and one for print archive. By providing a single storage source for both print stream retention and online viewing, PRO DD Archive eliminates archive redundancy and administrative overhead.

The PRO DD Archive solution saves storage costs as well. The software compresses even the largest and most complex print streams by up to 90 percent. Once archived, documents can be presented for viewing in a variety of formats, including industry standards PDF, TIFF and XML, and transformed for printing in a wide range of common protocols including Xerox Metacode, IBM AFP, PCL and Postscript. In addition, PRO DD Archive supports sequential or direct access to pages and subdocuments using the interactive PRO Dynamic Document API. The result is unmatched retrieval and conversions speeds and nearly unlimited flexibility for both online viewing and production re-printing purposes.

Finally, the PRO DD Archive solution offers speed and flexibility after retrieval. Documents can be retrieved and execution of Transpromo strategies for our corporate, government and service bureau clients. converted to display formats in one second or less, meeting the SLA requirements of customers and Customer Support.

Offering flexibility, ease of integration and performance, CrawfordTech's PRO DD Archive integrates transparently under the covers of any architecture. It allows users to create, store and view content on virtually any computing platform - Windows, Linux, Solaris, AIX, HP-UX and z/OS. Storage and retrieval speeds are the highest available in the market, and the features can be integrated for a wide range of applications including enterprise content management, imaging and COLD systems, automated document factory applications, customer relationship management and electronic document distribution.

CrawfordTech offers three architectural scenarios for document archiving - Entire File Conversion, Individual File Conversion and Dynamic Document Archive - which address the various intricacies of transaction print archive management. All three of these architectures are in use by their customers around the world.

To have CrawfordTech review your archive situation and formulate an architectural approach that makes sense for your enterprise, call toll-free at 1-866-679-0864 or 1-416-923-0080, email them at info@crawfordtech.com, or visit them online at [PRO Dynamic Document Archive: Print Stream Archival Solution](#).



Electronic TransPromo Documents Deliver for Marketers

- *OutputLinks*

Transactional-promotional documents are more than just a hot topic at industry conferences. This hybrid of transaction documents, called transpromo - printed bills and statements strategically merged with personalized promotional offers - has become a reality. However, while this innovative tactic for communicating with customers continues to evolve and gain popularity among enterprises and marketing professionals, one can't help but wonder how electronic bill presentment and payment fits into the transpromo mix.

Why Electronic Transpromo Documents

Certainly, the printed transpromo document works for today's enterprise, and it can be hugely successful, turning your bills and statements from an expense to a profit generator. However, it's the savvy marketing professional who realizes that print is just one element of a total transpromo campaign. The current focus on multi-media campaigns because of the higher response rates and better results shows that a coordinated campaign, with attention to insuring your hardcopy and electronic components maintain the same branding, is key. Just look at some of these facts, which seem to indicate that the electronic transpromo document should not be ignored:

- The percentage of payments received through electronic means is growing and slowly displacing the payment check payment, according to the Ascent Group
- Check volume is decreasing, mainly because of the growth in acceptance of alternative payment methods, says a study by the Federal Reserve Bank, NACHA and the TowerGroup.

Indeed, electronic document delivery is quickly becoming a preferred method of customer communication for organizations around the world. However, managing the transition from paper-based documents to digital documents is not always easy. Companies must find ways to effectively manage the co-existence of paper and digital transpromo documents while transitioning customers to new electronic delivery channels.

Electronic Transpromo Documents Get Results

According to Stephen D. Poe, vice president of product management for Crawford Technologies, Inc. (CrawfordTech) in Canada, electronic marketing and communication are key components for an enterprise's transaction documents. "By delivering statements and bills electronically, companies not only cut printing and mailing costs, but they also gain the ability to present documents that perform well beyond non-individualized direct mail and paper-based envelope inserts," he says.

Poe points out that with an electronic transpromo document, customers are only a click away from engaging in targeted transpromotional offers - something that's simply not possible with paper. "Paper documents simply lack the immediacy and connectivity of their electronic counterparts. The result is a dramatic rise in customer response rate." Overall, electronic statements can achieve an elevated level of sophistication, including images, color and messages that align marketing campaigns in both print and electronic channels. Companies find that this also encourages online adoption because customers tend to embrace systems that give them a high level of convenience, confidence and satisfaction.

The Electronic Envelope

Poe's company, CrawfordTech, is an expert on the subject of electronic transpromo documents, and they've been helping customers around the globe for years, working with them to utilize information contained within their enterprise

to maximize return on investment in existing technology and systems. In fact, as an award-winning provider of transpromo and transactional document solutions, CrawfordTech recently announced the availability of its new Electronic Envelope solution, which allows transpromo/transaction producers to not only duplicate the printed transpromo experience electronically, but also go beyond the hardcopy document with exclusive marketing functionality only available through electronic delivery.

"Recipients of a CrawfordTech Electronic Envelope delivery get a cleaner and more understandable transpromo document," says Poe.

While paper transpromo documents lack the immediacy and connectivity of their electronic counterparts, the Electronic Envelope allows marketers the freedom and affordability to increase customer communications and marketing and selling efforts at a lower cost and with more immediacy than was ever possible using printers, paper, envelopes and inserters.

Also, during an Electronic Envelope support call, customer service agents can refer to the exact customer document online and be more pointed in their efforts to "sell" over the phone. Tracking mechanisms provide even more advanced marketing features, such as prompting an out-bound call once an Electronic Envelope has been opened or changing the personalized messaging each time a customer comes back to view their statement online.

"The additional benefits of the Electronic Envelope come into play when organizations take advantage of the extended functionality to enable much more sophisticated marketing messaging and marketing campaigns through greener electronic delivery," says Poe.

Undoubtedly, organizations can profit from CrawfordTech's Electronic Envelope by delivering parallel marketing content and branding through their hardcopy and electronic deliveries and providing their customers with a consistent experience, whether they tear open a paper envelope or open a PDF file.

"CrawfordTech sees the Electronic Envelope as being especially important right now," says Poe, a certified Electronic Document Professional. "A downturn in the economy and moves toward greener processes make electronic delivery that much more attractive for delivering both cost reductions and saving trees."

Crawford Technologies' Electronic Envelope solutions are configured to leverage existing technology environments wherever possible. And implementing the Electronic Envelope allows organizations to utilize CrawfordTech's award-winning PRO Document Enhancer product family to make required changes to their transaction production jobs. The PRO Document Enhancer is a post-composition processor, so no changes are necessary in the document composition stage, whether the customer is dealing with a legacy application or a document composition engine.

Take the Next Step

Rather than scale back marketing efforts after adopting electronic delivery, companies can find increased value and benefit by scaling up electronic transpromo marketing activities thanks to the elimination of the costs and physical barriers found in paper-based customer communication - such as printing and postage expense, warehousing and inventory, the number of stations on an inserter, or the size of an envelope - all of which have held back marketing activities in the past.

Founded in 1995, Crawford Technologies, Inc. is a leader in document manipulation and re-engineering solutions, including data mining of print streams, archiving and retrieval, print stream conversion, mailstream optimization and workflow processing. Crawford Technologies is located in Toronto, Canada. For more information, call toll-free at 1-866-679-0864 or 1-416-923-0080, email them at info@crawfordtech.com or visit them online at [Electronic Envelope Solutions Brief](#).

Re-energize the Enterprise with Document Re-engineering

- Stephen D. Poe

Document re-engineering provides many benefits, enabling COOs and operations management to improve business processes within their organization.

No matter the market or the industry, companies depend on documents as essential tools to manage their business, and their effectiveness has a direct influence on the bottom line. At the same time, the process of creating, producing and distributing high-volume documents is often burdened with costly inefficiencies. Paper, postage and processing expenses take an ever-increasing toll. And with recent and upcoming changes in postal regulations, companies stand to spend even more if they are not attentive to the process.

However, it's today's experienced COOs and operations managers who are using document re-engineering to reenergize their enterprise when it comes to electronic delivery, printer, inserter and postal optimization solutions. Document re-engineering is enabling enterprises to improve production efficiencies, optimize utilization of printers, maximize postal discounts, get the most out of inserter equipment usage and create electronic deliverables that match hardcopy versions.

Three Types of Document Re-engineering

Here is an overview of hardcopy, electronic and print stream document re-engineering, and one innovative solution that is being used by companies all across the globe.

1. Hardcopy Document Re-engineering

The re-engineering of hardcopy documents generally focuses on adding, deleting and/or modifying elements on individual pages. These elements can include anything from text and graphics to advanced barcodes and modified address blocks.

For many organizations, mail stream optimization is the most compelling reason for hardcopy document re-engineering. With postage expense typically representing the highest single cost in any mailing, trimming those expenses is one clear and present return on investment.

And with postal services driving new standards and techniques like intelligent mail barcodes and delivery point validation, companies will need to keep pace or pay the price. Inserter efficiency and printer load balancing also prompt document re-engineering aimed at automated factory-like effectiveness.

2. Electronic Document Re-engineering

The re-engineering of electronically delivered documents typically focuses on adding missing content such as terms and conditions or inserts, removing hardcopy-oriented objects such as barcodes, and adding enhanced marketing messages through targeted URLs.

Repurposing legacy printed documents for electronic presentment is perhaps the most compelling reason for companies to take on electronic document re-engineering. The savings in paper, processing and postage are often more than enough to justify the effort. And with customers expecting more and varied communications, many companies seek to leverage enterprise information in new and more dynamic ways.

Electronic document re-engineering provides a marriage of data and documents simply unmatched in the paper-only world, eliminating the obstacles that prevent companies from taking advantage of document reengineering. We provide the tools and flexibility needed to achieve substantial savings, exceed customer expectations and optimize the operation of your shop.

3. Print Stream Document Re-engineering

The re-engineering of print streams is focused on enhancing and improving the performance of production process downstream without the need for expensive and time consuming application reprogramming upstream.

Even with the awareness that improvements could be made, many companies simply lack the resources needed for the recoding effort or the focus required for truly meaningful improvements. In any case, enhancements for document production systems seem always to fall to the bottom of the pile.

But as increases in postal rates continue to challenge operating budgets and regulatory requirements prompt the need for tighter mail piece tracking, companies seek the flexibility and ability to re-engineer existing print streams to meet the changing demands.

A Powerful Document Re-engineering Solution

Crawford Technologies Inc. (CrawfordTech), the leading provider of transactional document reengineering solutions, focuses on three document re-engineering solutions: IMB, Electronic Inserts and Improving ADF Efficiencies, all implemented using its award-winning document re-engineering product, PRO Document Enhancer, which is currently installed in production at over 20 customers worldwide.

CrawfordTech and its PRO Document Enhancer presents three document re-engineering solutions:

1. Postal Optimization - IMB

USPS regulations require the use of Intelligent Mail Barcode (IMB) by January 2009 to retain maximum postal discounts. IMB is more than just ZIP routing data; it also contains other information for use by both the USPS and the production facility---but only if all the necessary data can be gathered and put in the IMB. With this solution, information can be gathered and used to maximize the benefits for both the production facility and the USPS.

2. Printer Optimization - Electronic Inserts

In order for organizations to take advantage of today's high-volume color printers, simply adding color to the previously black and white document format is not enough to justify the additional costs. With this solution, three types of electronic inserts are added to complete the envelope electronically: reproduced pre-printed stock, added T&C information to meet legal/regulatory requirements, and dynamically printing inserts.

3. Inserter Optimization - ADF Enhancement

Today's sophisticated ADF systems require a high degree of system integration and communication between all the components. This communication is frequently accomplished by exchanging control files between components.

However, these control files must be created, and must contain accurate information about each document in the print stream. Additionally, each vendor has its own preferred format and structure. Initially, creating accurate control files to meet your different vendor formats can be a challenge. However, with this solution, control files can be generated without application program changes. Your enterprise can maintain maximum flexibility in the heterogeneous ADF environment found in most production shops.

Certainly, document re-engineering solutions eliminate the obstacles that prevent enterprises from making important improvements to high-volume document production processes. Document re-engineering can provide many benefits—



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-from saving money and bolstering operating efficiencies, to gaining new customers and adhering to changing postal regulations.

To see how CrawfordTech can help your company with document enhancement and re-engineering strategies, call toll-free at 1-866-679-0864 or 1-416-923-0080, email us at info@crawfordtech.com, or visit us online at [TransPromo](#), [Document and Statement Re-engineering](#)

Stephen D. Poe, EDP, is VP of Product Management at Crawford Technologies.

Are You Talking to Me?

-Pat McGrew

Really! Are you talking to me? Are you trying to get my attention with your marketing campaigns in my mail box, your radio advertisements, or billboards? Do you think I am actually reading those inserts you stuff in the envelope or spend the time to decipher the 8pt text message slammed between the transaction line items and the remittance slip?

I promise you that if you think you are talking to me, I'm not getting the message. Perhaps you think that just by using my name in a message that I'll be curious enough to see what you have to say, but I'm actually smarter than that. So are most of my friends and colleagues. I want to make this point at the outset because we have been talking about one-to-one marketing for more than a decade and still most companies have messaging programs that simply won't resonate in today's messaging frenzy.

That's where the TransInfo/TransEd/TransPromo continuum comes in to play. It's basic crawl/walk/run for marketers, operations folks and even the IT department because you are all involved!

Let's start with the definitions. TransInfo takes what you know about your customer and adds appropriate informational content, based on your relationship with that specific customer, to the transaction document. TransEd takes the next step and adds customer-specific education to the document using charts, graphs and texts to communicate information that will make the recipient a better customer. Finally, TransPromo happens when you've earned permission to market new products and services.

So, what if I told you that TransPromo doesn't have to be one-to-one?

It doesn't. In fact, in many situations you'll be more effective if you communicate in one-to-ten thousand or even one-to-fifty thousand mode than if you try to drill down to an audience of one.

The idea behind the TransInfo/TransEd/TransPromo continuum is that you use this regular monthly appointment with your customer to enhance your relationship, make them more loyal, and keep them as a customer longer than your current average. The concept relies on the idea that the transaction billing and statement provider is in the best position to know the customers, their spending and payment habits, and their life cycles.

To be effective, it isn't necessary to know every individual purchase or the exact regular spend. It is important to first identify who you are trying to market to. Which of your many types of customers do you market the most money from? What do trend lines show you about relative spend per customer over time? Is there a specific set of postal codes where people tend to spend more?

You can run this exercise with your own data. Clearly it will vary by the business you are in. Folks who finance cars have different data points than department stores or health care providers or the local credit union. In each case, however, there are things that everyone "just knows" about the customers and job one is to find out if those widely held beliefs are based in the facts of the data. Once you know who your customers really are and how they spend, it's time for step two.

Now we need to draw the battle lines and identify which customers go into which buckets. There will always be your high spenders, but it may be possible to nudge low spenders into the next higher bucket. It is likely possible to get slow payers to pay a bit faster (See InterQuest's new study for proof points).

And, if you usually lose a certain type of customer that you'd rather keep, it's very likely the causes for their departure are buried in the data!

The story here is that you need to first take responsibility for what you already know about the classes of customers you have. You don't need to know what Pat McGrew spent with the British car parts supplier over the last couple of decades. But knowing that Pat McGrew drops a LOT of money on British car parts should give you some insight into how to market to me! I am here, come talk to ME!

Pat McGrew, EDP, is the Data Center and Transaction Segment Evangelist at Kodak's Graphic Communications Group. Her email address is Pat.McGrew@kodak.com.

Document Re-engineering Software: A Document Operations Goldmine

- Mike Porter

Document re-engineering products can be valuable tools for operations managers. The ability to alter or enhance the printed output without modifying the custom software that created the original documents has a lot of advantages. In many organizations it is impossible to get a document operations project to even get onto the IT development schedule. There are just too many higher priorities to take up the resources. The document operations projects keep getting pushed back and never get done. With document re-engineering software along with the vendor's professional services department or an independent analyst, a document operations department can begin realizing the benefits of print-stream modifications without waiting for IT resource availability.

Document re-engineering products are very versatile. Depending upon the organization's requirements, they can be used to make small changes in documents that enable significant productivity improvements - such as updating inserting machine control marks, or entirely reformatting pages, combining or separating print streams, etc. Here are just a few cost-saving or productivity improving ideas that could be easily implemented with the use of document re-engineering software:

Reduce page-counts: Reformat the print by slightly reducing font size, narrowing margins, or altering line-spacing to trim statement page counts. The software can also be used to suppress printing accounts with no activity or zero balances if this is allowed.

Combine mailings: The last postal rate case created a significant opportunity to save money by sending one two-ounce piece of mail over mailing two one-ounce pieces. The document re-engineering software can combine separate print streams, sort into account number sequence, change the inserter control marks, and modify page numbering so that the formerly separate documents can be mailed in the same envelope. Even single print streams that may contain multiple mailpieces going to the same address can benefit from this technique.

Selective duplexing: Avoid paying maintenance clicks for blank pages by moving print around to utilize every side of every sheet of paper. This will also improve printing and inserting performance by reducing the number of sheets that are moved through the machinery.

Change from inserts to onserts: White space analysis features in the re-engineering software can be used to eliminate the costs associated with printing and inventorying inserts. This also improves inserting productivity by eliminating the need to refill insert stations. Quality improvements are an additional benefit as onserts eliminate the possibility of loading the wrong inserts into the mail inserting machine at production time.

Update postal barcodes: Document re-engineering software can be helpful in implementing the new USPS Intelligent Mail Barcode. In the future, the IMB will be required to be included in your documents in order to qualify for the best postage rates and the most economical services.

Add mailpiece tracking/quality control measures: There are numerous features that can be added to your document print stream that enable more comprehensive quality control such as barcoded or OCR sequence numbers to be read by cameras, batch control balance pages, or even the creation of an electronic file used to drive an automated document factory system or file-based inserting.



Select and separate production exceptions: Find and separate high-value checks that require manual signatures, separate high page-count statements that need to be processed as flats or mailed in boxes (and generate cover pages for different envelope window placement or shipping labels), separate premium accounts that get processed on color printers or with different paper stock, etc.

Suppress hardcopies of electronically-delivered documents: A file that contains account numbers of customers who have downloaded their bills electronically by bill-print day can be used to suppress the printing of their hardcopy statements. Alternatively, electronic versions of hardcopy documents can be selectively created, using the print file that is matched with a separate list of electronic billing subscribers.

There are usually many improvements that transactional document printing and mailing managers would like to make to the jobs they run. Document re-engineering software can help them to achieve those improvements at a reasonable cost and a manageable timeline.

Mike Porter is President of Print/Mail Consultants, an independent consulting firm that helps companies nationwide be more productive, adapt to changing requirements, and lower costs in their document operations. He recently published his first book, "Take This Job and Stuff It! A Practical Guide for Document Operations Managers".

For more information, visit www.printmailconsultants.com or email Mike at mporter@printmailconsultants.com.

Demystifying Document Strategy Design: Documents, Technology and People

-Kevin Craine, MBA

Most organizations do not consider themselves to be in the document business. Nevertheless, documents are really a second venture for nearly all organizations. Imagine your organization without documents, how would you survive? Whether printed on paper or viewed with a PC, documents are the means by which business processes begin and end and are the foundation of business revenue.

Now is the time for organizations to rethink the way they manage their documents. How we manage our documents has a lot to do with how we manage our businesses. Document re-engineering to increase efficiencies, make the most out of postal discounts, and inject transpromotional capabilities is often the key to mining the value of information, reducing the cost of managing that information, and increasing the effectiveness of your communications. But designing a document strategy is not easy. What has been missing is a clear road map to guide strategic design efforts. Existing approaches tend to be either purely technical in scope or primarily conceptual in nature. While jargon and theory can bring to light aspects that one must understand or consider when designing a strategy, they do not bring the would-be implementer any closer to actually doing anything to put theory into practice. For many, the quandary becomes, "I know a document strategy is important, but how do I develop one?"

Documents, Technology and People

One way to demystify the design of a document strategy is to focus your efforts on three specific areas of inquiry: Documents, Technology and People. These three elements are essentially the "what, how and who" of your document strategy: what documents are important, how they are produced and who cares about how they perform in the process?

Documents are, naturally, the subject of your strategy. They are what you are aiming to improve. In order to increase the strategic value and tactical effectiveness of your documents, it stands to reason that you should determine which ones are most important to your organization. Which "vital few" documents have the most influence on the performance of your organization? Which relate directly to core functions, important initiatives and troublesome problems? If you could pick only a handful of target documents, which would you choose? You don't have to re-engineer every document, only the most essential.

Technology enables the document process. Computers, printers, databases, networks, and all their associated systems and programs are the technological means by which documents are created, produced and processed. These systems can often combine into a confounding mix of hardware and software. What technology is used to produce your target documents? What are your current capabilities? What trends in technology might influence or improve your process in the future? Gathering this information will provide a technical basis for your strategy and direct your recommendations regarding equipment purchases, software upgrades and system changes.

In the end, people are the reason why documents are produced - without cavemen there would be no cave drawings; without people there would be no documents. It seems reasonable, therefore, that the people who populate the document process in your organization are the best people to describe the process. Who are the people who make up your "document constituency" - the people who create and produce your documents and care about how well they perform in the process? From authors to readers, to production personnel, technical gurus and executive stakeholders, each have specific, varied, and often unstated, interest in your document strategy. The needs and interests of your document constituency are important beacons to guide your strategy.

Documents

Which "vital few" documents drive essential business functions?
Which relate to or influence corporate measures and initiatives?
Which have the highest potential return on your effort?
Which have the best probability for success?

Technology

What technologies are used to produce your target documents?
What are your existing capabilities?
Are resources underutilized or overworked?
What new technology is available to improve your processes?

People

Who are the people that care about how your documents perform?
Who are authors, readers, producers and stakeholders?
What are the needs of this "document constituency?"
How well are those requirements being met?

Issues to Consider

Consider there may be hundreds, if not thousands, of documents within your organization. Some are more important than others. Some are obsolete while others have a lifetime of importance. Some documents drive critical business functions while others live a life of their own because "we've always done it this way." Regardless, documents are a pervasive element of everyday work and their sheer numbers can dampen the spirits of the most enthusiastic document strategist. Determining your most vital documents will provide a manageable target for your document strategy.

Technology is also pervasive and complex. Depending on your company, document processing can involve everything from legacy mainframe systems to the latest Web-enabled solution. Documents may mutate between paper and digital incarnations in seemingly random and incomprehensible ways. Understanding your current document technology, as well as the range of possibilities presented by new and developing technology, will lead you to informed decisions and valuable recommendations.

Perhaps most importantly, people have the biggest and most varied role in the document process. As such, they should be featured prominently within the design of your strategy. The population of your document constituency - authors, readers, producers and stakeholders - are widely varied but vitally important. Each will approach things differently and have at times conflicting needs and objectives. Let these people point the way as you chart the course of your strategy.

Use a Fluid Approach

Use a Fluid Approach

The approach I describe in "Designing a Document Strategy" will help demystify the design of a strategy tailored to your particular organization and set of requirements. The framework, however, is not a linear process. The interaction between documents, technology and people is fluid and will overlap, so the design of your strategy should be done using a similarly fluid approach. In other words, as you learn more about your documents you will learn more about the technology used to produce them. As you become familiar with the people who have a stake in your documents you

The story here is that you need to first take responsibility for what you already know about the classes of will begin to understand which documents matter most to your organization. As you learn more about your current capabilities you will be better able to ascertain how trends in technology might improve your process in the future. Documents are created with technology to be used by people, so it makes sense that these three factors surface as guiding beacons for a document strategy. Mapping the course of your plans with these perspectives will help direct the latitude of your effort and ensure that your design process is comprehensive yet manageable. As a result, your directional decisions will be more pointed, practical and profitable.

Kevin Craine, MBA, is the author of the popular book, "Designing a Document Strategy."

For more information visit: www.document-strategy.com