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Enterprise Content Management (ECM) Planning

Planning is the most critical phase of any ECM implementation project. Rose suggests spending sufficient time and brainpower at the planning phase. During this phase, most of the decisions are made to customize specific features in a particular way. You define the security framework, custom-content types, folder structure, categories, workflow, reporting, business rules, and collaboration. During planning phase, you will scope your implementation, prioritize the requirements, and finalize the project plan.

Define Selection Strategy

Before beginning to audit vendor choices, clearly define the organization's selection strategy. Examples of items in that strategy might include:

- Purpose of the system selection process;
- Expected outcomes; and,
- Success criteria. Once defined, pay close attention to these items during vendor analysis.

Analyze and Define Requirements

Identify Business and Technical Requirements

High-quality requirements are essential to ensure a single, agreed-upon description of expectations from the selected ECM solution. High quality requirements definition also results in a clearly documented project scope that enables accurate implementation planning, funding, and timeline scheduling. Business requirements define the organizational goals and objectives that the selected ECM solution must support. Technical requirements describe how the selected ECM will work and how it will interface with other systems and software.

Define Current and Future State

In defining current state, conduct multi-disciplinary interviews and structured focus-group sessions to discuss and document key decisions and the impact of those decisions. Make sure to also clearly define and document the decisions that remain unresolved. These efforts result in the creation of a document that defines current



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operational strategies, processes, and a gap analysis documenting current opportunities for operation improvements. These defined criteria, combined with the desired future state, will serve as the road map to your ECM solution selection. The future state document defines final organizational strategy for the system selection and the desired post-implementation state. It is important to address scalability when you are defining and documenting your future state. Without a doubt, your organization will change over time and it is critical that the chosen ECM solution be able to evolve and grow with the organization.

Develop a Project Scope and Request for Proposal

After putting in the effort to create your organizational strategy, current state, and future state, the time has come to match these criteria against potential vendor abilities. This matching approach ensures vendor technology alignment with organizational vision. This is one of the most important parts of a successful technology implementation, as without this alignment, future vision cannot be clear, and effective vendor selection is compromised. The process of evaluating potential ECM vendors against the defined future state includes:

- Developing a base case functionality plan for each of the solutions being considered;
- Establishing criteria for selection of a new ECM system based on operational, technical, and financial needs of the organization; and,
- Evaluating the vendor's ability to meet these established criteria.

Most organizations will now prepare project scope document(s) and Request for Proposal (RFP) documents that are then distributed to the vendors under consideration. These detailed documents provide vendors with your organization's document management needs in a defined and established document. Examples of items included in an ECM RFP might include:

- ECM business objectives
- Number of users
- Collaboration capabilities
- Software/hardware infrastructure and standards
- Content types/volumes
- Content life cycle and workflow requirements
- Metadata
- Potential document creation issues

The completed RFP vendor responses should provide the details necessary for your software selection committee to understand each solution's capabilities.

Analyze and Evaluate Vendor Responses

Internally, the software selection committee should:

- Review, screen, and score the vendor proposals against the evaluation criteria outlined in the RFP;
- Document the team's thoughts on the impact of each technical system's architecture on your current systems; and,
- Define the proposed interrelationships between the proposed ECM solution and the organization's current systems

Upon review of the submitted proposals from selected vendors, your organization will have the vendor's best answer as to how their ECM product aligns with your organizational strategies – as opposed to a vendor selling your organization on what it believes your organization should do. Vendor RFP responses should always include cost estimates that focus not only on the software and hardware, but also on implementation services and maintenance costs. Once the software selection committee has analyzed and evaluated all responses, the committee creates a vendor short list that includes those vendors that meet not only organizational needs, but also:



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- Specializes in document management and ECM;
- Has experience and a proven record of accomplishment; and,
- Vendor business longevity.

Finally, each vendor finalist should be required to present an on-site presentation and scripted demonstration of how their proposed solution will work in the organization's environment.

Select Vendor Of Choice

With your organization's strategy, your knowledge of your current state, your expectations of the future state, your developed criteria for success, detailed vendor responses, and your understanding of impact and interrelationship of each system with your current system, you can now make an educated ECM solution decision and approve the vendor-of-choice.

Develop a Communication Strategy

With a vendor-of-choice determined, the time has come to define and understand what, when, and how to communicate the choice and relevant impact to the organization. An effective communication plan and execution will ensure that your organization is aware of the future goals and needs of this important project. As part of this process, define all appropriate constituencies and the messaging objective for each. The groups for an ECM solution will typically include IS management, project leaders, client area stakeholders (and users), regulatory compliance, risk management team(s), and C-level executives. This process should also include preparing a communication plan for the corporate level as well as individual groups. Be certain to identify the key messengers and then conduct training on how to deliver these communications. Finally, deploy the developed communication strategy. Equally important to communication within your organization is the communication strategy between the organization and the vendor. Not only should there be communication around established expectations of the vendor from the organization, but the organization should also obtain equally clear and written expectations from the vendor.

Determine Total Cost of Ownership

Cost is a critical consideration when purchasing an ECM solution. However, while cost is an important issue, it should not be the sole determining factor in your software purchase. When it comes to total cost of ownership, or TCO, it is important to be aware of all of the costs, some of which may be "hidden", that are associated with your investment. Hidden costs can include costs associated with implementation and upgrades, annual maintenance fees, augmenting project or implementation staff, the use of consulting firms, etc. Having a clear, high-level picture, with your eye on the details, will make it easier to plan for, and accept all of the potential costs early on in the project lifecycle and reduce the chance for unforeseen costs down the road. With solid TCO information, you can effectively evaluate your IT investments to ensure the measurement, realization, and optimization of benefits.

Develop an Implementation Plan

The implementation plan defines, and notes duration of, the project phases and tasks on a summary level; describes the implementation tasks on multiple levels; identifies project constraints and defines stakeholder communication occurs. Examples of elements that might appear in an ECM implementation plan include:

- Assumptions
- Approach
- Data Conversion & Integration Requirements
- Change Management
- Staffing Model



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- Training Strategy
- Implementation Budget

Assumptions

A list of assumptions is the first step in developing an ECM implementation plan. These assumptions create the boundaries and definition of the implementation plan, as well as describe, on a high-level, the guidelines for such. Assumptions should also reiterate the key players behind the implementation and define the implementation governance structure. For the governance structure, define the project teams, project team meeting mediums and frequency, and note the decisions and types of decisions that each team has responsibility for.

Approach

An implementation approach developed jointly with the vendor, or an expert third party with experience in project(s) of similar scope, defines the phases and timelines for the entire project. Once the approach is defined and the assumptions are in place, formal plan development begins.

Data-Conversion & Integration Requirements

A key component of your implementation plan should be a complete listing of any data-conversion requirements. This may include creating a data-conversion plan for determining whether previous documents will be back-loaded to the new system or if a “day forward” approach will be adopted. In a “day forward” approach, the organization chooses a cut-off date after which all new documents will be stored in the document management system. In addition, a list of all real or potential integration issues that might come up during implementation should be documented. Be sure to document bi-directional, uni-directional, real-time, and batch integration.

Change Management

In order to sustain organizational change post-implementation, end-users have to buy into and embrace the new system. In order to facilitate and drive stakeholder buy-in and adoption, define a change management approach as a part of your larger implementation plan. Change management activities then begin at the onset of the implementation project. A high-level change management strategy might include:

- Sample assessment tools
- Overall implementation motivation and drive
- Resource allocation and commitment level
- Technical capacity
- Project scope
- Project objectives
- Project pace

Staffing Model

An implementation staff model should be developed that is dictated by the anticipated pace, vendor involvement, and available organization resources.

Training Strategy

This strategy defines the training required to deliver the new ECM solution to the organization’s end-users. It also



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describes how knowledge transfer of discrete system functionality occurs between the ECM vendor and IT staff.

Implementation Budget

Finally, develop a formal, comprehensive implementation budget. The implementation budget defines projected project costs and resource requirements, both internal and external, for the entire project.

Conclusion

Choosing and implementing an ECM solution can be complicated and time consuming no matter where your organization is on the ECM journey. Success of any ECM implementation requires many things including a strong understanding of your organizations needs and ensuring that the chosen solution aligns with the organization's business strategy. Using a structured selection methodology can help reduce errors in system selection and ensure that the chosen solution meets both the current and future needs of your organization.