For the People: Driving Digital Government with ECM

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Introduction

Good government finds its center of gravity in people. Today, the habits and preferred ways people access government information has changed. There has been a shift from paper to pixels, creating a growing expectation for digital native services, access to content anywhere and at any time, and the ability to access information on any device.

As a result, government agencies worldwide are under increased pressure to digitally transform their key processes, critical operations, and delivery of services to best meet the needs of their citizens. Notably, citizens include not only those who access government services client side, but also government employees who manage these services on the backend.

Getting with the Times

In recent years, the United States government has mandated the digitalization of government services and all government information in efforts to build the 21st century platform for digital governance.[2]

Despite increasing volume on the pledge for digital revolution, a large number of national governments and local municipalities are out of step with digital directives, and remain anchored to paper-based processes and operations. In this focused article, we turn a critical eye to organizations working at the speed-of-paper, and take a look at how content and information management solutions effectively serve public citizens, government workers, or government interests by cutting down on response times, removing collaborative boundaries or restrictions, improving security, heightening operational awareness, and reducing costs and inefficiencies. *(Figure 1)*

Figure 1. What do you believe are the biggest benefits from content and process management?[1]
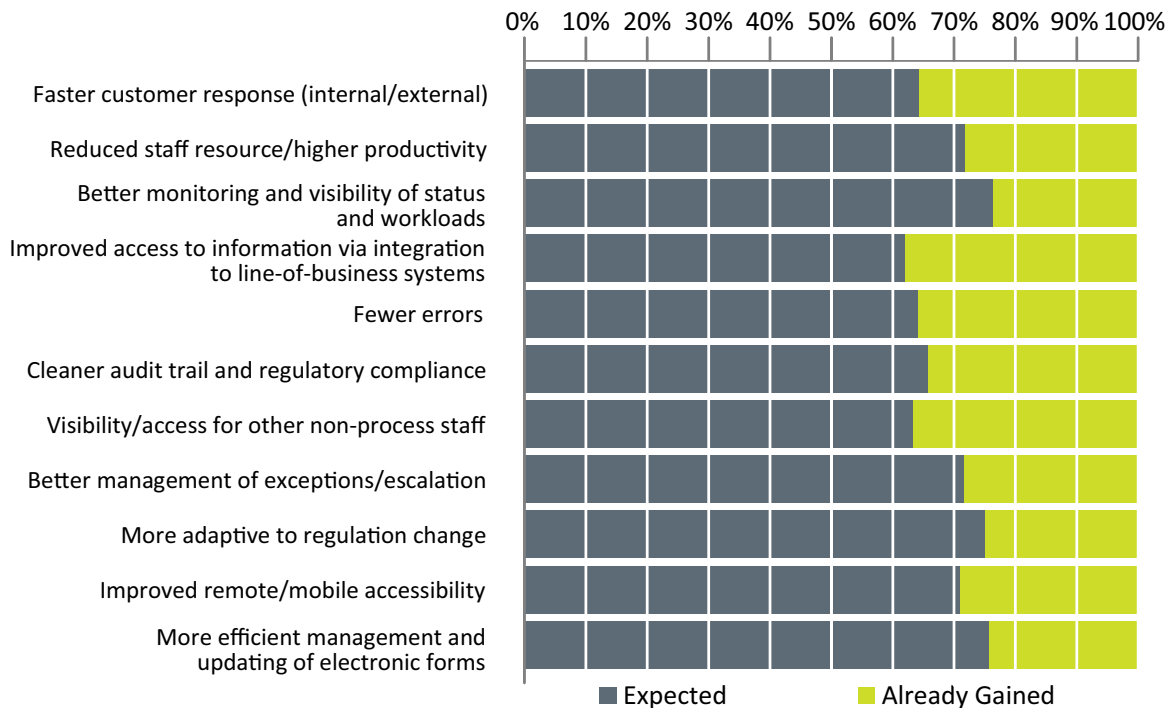
Enterprise Content Management

Digital transformation in government requires the development and maintenance of a strong information ecosystem. In a number of government agencies, enterprise content management (ECM) is the core of this, and helps drive digital strategy. For instance, in a recent AIIM survey titled What I Have - What I Need, when asked to name the greatest benefits from content and process management 76% of respondents pointed to better monitoring and visibility of status and workloads. In addition, 75% expected better adaption to regulation change, and 72% cited reduced staff resource/higher productivity and better management of exceptions/escalation equally. *(Figure 1)*

Some organizations have converted this potential ROI into current benefits. For example, 38% of organizations polled describe improved access to information via integration to line-of-business systems, 37% use visibility/access to other non-process staff, 36% report faster customer response and fewer errors, and 34% have a clearer audit trail in place. *(Figure 1)*

Timing is Everything

Information is a right bestowed on the people, whether they're public customers receiving services or government workers managing the execution of services and requests. Removing paper from agency operations through digital transformation and ECM helps to accelerate requests for information—such as exercising the Freedom of Information Act—and works to benefit both of these citizen groups.

Internally, government workers are better able to pass the baton to relevant people and departments to complete daily-tasks, solve agency problems, as well as lower costs and improve productivity of public services. In turn, improved response times translate to greater customer satisfaction, a lesser time burden on individuals, and the ability to better serve the needs of more people.

Working Together

ECM solutions offer a variety of collaboration improvements. Version control and the ability to share feedback seamlessly across departments is an invaluable power in a government agency setting. Consider the bond between law enforcement and court offices, or public health offices and care providers. Secure, accurate and rapid sharing of information keeps costs down and efficiency up. Beyond the agency walls, supplying external partners with cloud, mobile, and other remote access options adds flexibility to collaboration, and leads to more creative and productive joint efforts.

The Full Picture

Thirty-seven percent of respondents report visibility/access of information to other non-process staff as one of the top benefits of ECM.[1] Greater visibility of information assets shared throughout relevant departments and teams in government agencies aids in planning or public works.

Unlatched to physical paper, digital born documents and resources are intrinsically trackable, support multiple or concurrent users, and provide a greater view of document timeline or history. Changes can be easily made and easily seen, promoting efficiency, and project overviews are granted an effective vantage point to help make informed decisions. On the client side, paper forms are traded for e-forms, which allow secure, definitive tracing of version history, fewer errors, convenience, and less storage and processing costs associated with paper.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Today's government agencies must be prepared to undertake a digital transformation to keep pace with the changing consumer landscape: a world where cloud computing, even-smarter mobile devices, and seamless collaboration are commonplace. People comprise the centerpiece to government administrations–both public citizens and public servants—and governments must adapt to most effectively serve their needs.

In the United States, on the issue of digital government, President Obama offered the following mission statement: "I want us to ask ourselves every day, how are we using technology to make a real difference in people's lives." From the top, agencies must understand and unify their goals, motivations, and vision for attaining a higher standard of digital operations, purging paper-based systems and methods, and creating services expressly for the people.[2]

To achieve this, ECM solutions are an effective tool to bridge the digital gap. In this way, we can improve response times, lower costs, enhance collaboration, promote anywhere anytime content access, and heighten visibility of information. To help government work better for the public, and in equal measure, work better for government employees, ECM solutions must be used to their full potential; keep in mind the following best practices:

- Assess the needs and requirements of content users as they relate to agency interactions—both internal and external parties.

- Engage the user community for feedback on current paper processes and how future digital strategy may impact their day-to-day activities.

- Investigate options to include cloud and mobile device use wherever possible.

References

[1] AIIM White Paper What I Have ~ What I Need www.aiim.org/research

[2] The White House, Office of the Press Secretary; The Forum on Modernizing Government [Press Release] https://www.whitehouse.gov

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