HP TRIM Software has major impact on record management at Ministry of Justice

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Objective:

The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) is responsible for the courts, prisons, probation, criminal law and sentencing in England and Wales. Due to changes in legislation the MoJ decided that it needed an Electronic Document and Records Management (EDRM) system that would improve its storage of information.

Approach:

- The MoJ deployed HP TRIM Software, an Electronic Document and Records Management (EDRM) system.

Business outcomes:

- Implementation of electronic records management provides the MoJ with a disaster recovery system.

- The ability to track and locate information saves time and improves the ability to share information.

It is now six years since the former Department for Constitutional Affairs (DCA) first deployed an Electronic Document and Records Management (EDRM) system. Now that the DCA staff have all moved into the new Ministry of Justice (MoJ) the department is still confident that it has an effective tool that will deliver greater efficiencies and smarter working, and one that meets its needs well into the future.

Until recently, the former DCA HQ (now MoJ) stored all of its records - literally millions of documents - as paper in large registries. If anyone wanted to access a record, a request was made to registry staff who would find and retrieve the relevant information. Over recent years, the development of networks and the sharing of email led to some records being stored locally on their office PCs. There was a danger that these personal data stores would increase and affect the MoJ's ability to find, share and properly manage vital information.

Faced with this problem, in 2000 the MoJ set up an internal team supported by IT specialists to consider its record keeping options. The team calculated that in the next five years the MoJ would create an additional 40 million pages of information for storage. Handling this with a paper based storage system would be difficult and expensive.

At that time, the MoJ was also being driven to change by central Government's e-government program that, among other things demanded that by 2004 all newly created public records should be capable of being stored and retrieved electronically. The final push came from the need to comply with the advent of Freedom of Information (FOI) legislation.

Trusted and easy to use

The MoJ decided that it needed an EDRM system that would enable it not only to store, find and retrieve information more readily but also to share that information with departmental staff and, when necessary, with other departments and the public.

The initial search for a system was carried out by the MoJ's two major systems and service suppliers. Both agreed that only HP TRIM from HP Software fully met the MoJ's requirements and complemented the existing mix of desktop software in place or planned within MoJ as well as those of the Government's e-government initiative. The product was proven and able to grow as needs increased, and already being used successfully by the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (formerly the Department of Trade and Industry).

A three-month pilot project took place followed by 15 months of running live involving 47 MoJ users, to ensure the product performed as expected and to help the MoJ to gauge the extent of the change management that would be needed to implement EDRM department-wide.

The MoJ believed that people would not only have to change the way they worked but also be convinced that it was a change for the better.

On-time, on-budget and accepted by users

Following rigorous testing in the pilot phase, the software has rolled out to 3,000 MoJ staff throughout England and Wales and HP TRIM now supports an administration and policy department that has grown five fold in size since first deployment. The roll out of the EDRM system to the MoJ's headquarters employees was on-budget and on-time. It ensured that the Department complies with Government policy on public records access and more easily accommodated the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act. These were top priorities for the MoJ when it started searching for a suitable Electronic Records Management System.

Over time, the software has steadily gained user acceptance with 3,000 users now having saved 1.25M electronic documents and 200,000 paper records tagged. This process has been helped by HP TRIM's ease of integration with Microsoft®Office, which is already being used at the MoJ. To save any sort of Office document in HP TRIM, users simply select 'Save as' within the Office application and are presented with an EDRM option menu that helps them index and store their document.

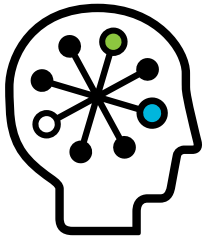Much of the project's success is also due to the MoJ's structured approach to implementation, education and training. Extensive awareness campaigns were run over several months explaining the role and importance of electronic records management. With the relatively high staff turn-over this process of training/education never ends and the records team uses every tool at its disposal ranging from monthly statistics showing user activity to online learning to promote EDRM. "One of the biggest immediate benefits of having electronic records management is that we now have a disaster recovery system with a mirrored data store in another building," explained Sue Reynolds, senior records and information manager in the MoJ's records management services department. "With paper records, a disaster such as a fire would have resulted in their permanent loss. While the vast majority of new records being stored by the MoJ are now electronic, the Ministry does still have some legacy paper files. By migrating an index of paper files into HP TRIM, staff are able to track and locate these physical assets; thus saving time and improving the sharing of information.

The future

The new MoJ is now much bigger than the DCA and Daniel Beaumont, head of records management and DRO at MoJ, says that the challenge over the next couple of years will be to work with the new IT suppliers to build a more stable platform so that we can upgrade HP TRIM, absorb hundreds of new customers and continue to increase user acceptance.

The department specifically wanted an EDRM which was very robust in terms of records management (the department is now responsible for this area in government) and not just a document management system.

"One of the things we have learned over the years is that we need to make much of the vital records management invisible to the users by automating most tasks and careful configuration (e.g. auto-finalization of documents; auto-annual closure of files etc). All our users care about in their day-to-day work is being able to capture documents and to be able to search and share them with colleagues. My records team do a huge amount behind the scenes which the user never sees. Many of our records for example are now four or more years old and we will shortly be using the sophisticated triggers and retention scheduling much more extensively and so gaining one of the key benefits of an EDRM," concludes Sue Reynolds.

Technology for better business outcomes

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