ENTERPRISE CAPTURE AND SHAREPOINT: A COMPLETE ECM SOLUTION

PART 3: SHAREPOINT — THE BETTER THE METADATA, THE MORE VALUABLE THE INFORMATION

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Part of the reason SharePoint is recognized as one of the fastest growing products in Microsoft's history is that it allows an organization to leverage an asset it already has: its information repository. Employees throughout a company can use SharePoint to update and access information quickly and easily, which is then used to drive business processes down the line to reduce costs and increase efficiency, provided, of course, the information they're accessing is accurate and complete.

Therein lies the rub. An organization can only optimize SharePoint when it combines the delivery of information, often in the form of documents, with the metadata required to ensure the data is accurate and complete, and to manage and maintain SharePoint. In fact, there are three major concerns organizations voice about SharePoint: poor organization, lack of visibility and lack of control.

In the previous installment of this serie, we covered the importance of employing an enterprise on-ramp to deliver content into SharePoint. In this article, we'll examine how capture resolves those concerns by cultivating the best quality metadata, thereby ensuring that SharePoint's information is accurate and complete.

Today's leading capture software automatically extracts information from a document based on keywords, knowledge of the required data format, and the data's position relative to other graphical elements in the document. This is vital for the automatic extraction of data from documents, especially for organizations that work with documents of numerous types and formats. Why? Effective capture is the foundation for automating the process of categorization and information extraction. Without it, a solution can't recognize a document that hasn't first been identified using a complex set of rules, which means a return to manual categorization and extraction, which are time-consuming, error-prone and costly processes.

Once documents are captured, the information is refined through a series of steps: classification, separation, extraction and validation. First, documents are classified through the recognition of specific content, layout or established rules. Once classified, a solution automatically separates sections of a document using self-learning technologies that can be applied to complex documents where keywords cannot be reliably identified, removing the need to insert separator sheets or manually classify by hand.

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Extraction then identifies, recognizes and converts the information into the metadata required for SharePoint optimization. Automated extraction and creation of metadata provides significant cost savings; as mentioned, manual data creation and entry is costly, time-consuming, and error-prone and automating these processes provides greater efficiencies and cost effectiveness.

Finally, validation confirms that the information extracted from each document is correct according to a user's business rules. The result is metadata that's accurate, organized and ready to be delivered to SharePoint.

Let's revisit the issues organizations have with SharePoint: poor organization, low visibility and lack of control over valuable data. Using classification and separation technologies, document capture provides greater control over the content delivered to SharePoint. It enables the ability to route the content to its corresponding library within SharePoint, thereby providing effective management of folders. In addition, extraction and validation increase visibility, ensuring that anything delivered to SharePoint is accurate and organized. By automating the delivery, organizations benefit from better data quality, improved retrieval and data mining, improved management and administration, and lower cost of ownership.

Consider a mortgage application as an example. Mortgage applications typically consist of hundreds of documents, each dozens of pages long, with varying types of layouts and content. In a typical process, an application would enter a financial institution through the front office. The documents within the application are then manually separated and the information they contain is manually entered by a staff member before sending to SharePoint, where the information can be used to drive downstream processes. If the information was entered incorrectly, resulting downstream processes would be delayed or stopped until the information was found, corrected and re-entered. This scenario could lead to mortgage processing delays, which ultimately could mean fewer applications being processed and a reduction in overall profit.

With an integrated capture-SharePoint solution, a mortgage application can be captured when it first reaches a financial organization, where it is identified, classified and separated by sections. The information is then extracted and validated for accuracy. From there, the information is delivered to SharePoint where it can be accessed for the approval process and other departments within the financial organization, including new accounts, sales and customer service.

By ensuring the highest quality metadata, capture's ROI, especially when coupled with SharePoint, is so high and the benefits so immediate, that more and more organizations are moving toward such a solution in lieu of the costly, unwieldy ECM systems in use today.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Allen Carney leads the development and implementation of Kofax product marketing strategy. Earlier, he was VP of Marketing for 170 Systems, a developer of invoice processing automation solutions that was acquired by Kofax in September, 2009. Previously, Allen served as VP of Marketing for NMS Communications, a developer of telecommunications components and solutions, VP of Marketing at Lotus Development Corporation, where he was responsible for Applications and International Marketing, and as VP of European Operations for Atex, a developer of prepress automation solutions. Allen holds a Bachelors of Arts degree from Yale University.