

## On the Record with SharePoint: Adoption and Long Term Sustainability

Over the last several months, we have discussed SharePoint content and records management topics that introduce new ways of thinking about information lifecycles, content governance, retention management, information retrieval, and the destruction of electronic information. These concepts are critical for the successful implementation of SharePoint. Just as critical, however, are concepts like change management, communication, and training. This column will address the adoption and long term sustainability of SharePoint as an enterprise content and records management platform.

### Adoption

In 1989, Fred Davis published the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) which was an information systems theory that models how users come to accept and use a technology. The model suggests that when users are presented with a new technology, there are specific factors which influence their decision about how and when they will use it, notably:

- **Perceived usefulness (PU)** - Defined by Davis as "the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would enhance his or her job performance".
- **Perceived ease-of-use (PEOU)** - Defined by Davis as "the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would be free from effort".

Davis' study was originally developed in response to the adoption process for new technologies such as personal computers. It was later replicated and extended by Davis and other researchers to test its applicability for user acceptance of information technology in general. Although other dimensions such as 'effectiveness' have been suggested, the model has been shown to have predictive validity for intent to use, self-reported usage and attitude toward use.

[Wikipedia: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Technology\\_acceptance\\_model](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Technology_acceptance_model)]

So, what does the Technology Acceptance Model have to do with SharePoint? If SharePoint becomes the enterprise standard for content and records management, won't users be required to adopt the solution? The answer to this question may be 'yes', but the method with which you introduce it and how you engage users in the process of implementing SharePoint will have a significant impact on how quickly and how effectively they utilize the solution to achieve desired business goals and objectives.

### Change Management

"I don't know what it looks like; I just know it looks different and better than what we are doing today". That is how one CIO responded when asked about his vision for the future of information management within his organization. Within this statement, there is an underlying message about dissatisfaction with the current state and a desire to make a change.

Change, making something different from what it is or from what it would be if left alone, can come in many forms. Change can be organizational, process related, system or technology tool focused as well as role-based. Or, in the case of SharePoint implementations – all four! Enterprise content and records management will probably include:

- Organizational structure changes,
- Policy enhancements or modifications
- Compliance and work process/workflow improvements,

- Technology tool(s) implementation, and
- Job or role-based modifications to assign new responsibilities and accountability for information management.

Change management is a methodological approach for introducing change in information worker values, beliefs, and behaviors in order to achieve a desired business outcome. The ‘desired business outcome’ is the organization’s future state which can only be achieved if individuals change their day-to-day work processes and behaviors. In other words, corporate change comes from individual change.

There are many methods and models for change management. Most recognize the importance of strong project management associated with large, complex change as well as the importance of clear organizational leadership and sponsorship. One model that provides a logical and useful approach is the ADKAR Model from Prosci ([www.change-management.com](http://www.change-management.com)). ADKAR is a research-based approach for individual change management which can be easily mapped to a communication and training plan according to 5 critical elements which lead and reinforce change:

- **Awareness** – begins with understanding why
- **Desire** – involves personal decisions
- **Knowledge** – requires knowing how
- **Ability** – requires capability to take action
- **Reinforcement** – ensuring sustainability of the change

Users will more readily embrace the change process necessary to effectively implement SharePoint if clear information is available and the process for introducing change is well defined. The definition of audiences and the delineation of key messages provide a foundation for communication planning and are a critical component of the process.

### **Communication**

Status quo, no matter how miserable, has an amazing staying power. The uncertainty of the future state can paralyze otherwise forward-thinking individuals. To minimize the disruption of significant change necessary for enterprise content and records management, you need to communicate, communicate, communicate.

You may have heard the quote, “Perception is everything”. That sentiment may be a little strong; maybe it should be stated as “Perception isn’t everything, but it sure is convincing” or “What we perceive, we believe”! Davis, in his Technology Acceptance Model, tied the word ‘perceived’ to both usefulness and ease-of-use. The word ‘perceive’ is a verb that entails discernment or understanding. *What* you communicate – and how much users respect and trust *who* is communicating – will significantly impact perception.

So, what are you going to tell everyone? That is a good question. The communication plan developed for your SharePoint implementation should include many messages that need to be well-timed and well-placed throughout the project. Identification of audiences, messages, media/communication options, and a communication milestone plan are all critical elements. The overall objective is to communicate what, why, and how – all necessary for *Awareness* and *Desire* (including ‘What’s in it for me’) in the ADKAR Model.

Don't wait until you are actively engaged in a SharePoint implementation project to begin this work. You should start thinking today about the overall 'Value Proposition' of this approach to enterprise content and records management. What are the vision and benefits? What is the motivation or driving factor(s) for change (for both the organization and individuals)? What does the work environment look like after implementing SharePoint? What policies, processes, tools, and roles will be affected? What are you going to change and how will the change be implemented?

Many organizations skip right over communication and go directly to training on new software tools and technology. In this case, users are often confused about why they are being asked to do things differently and how the technology tool fits into the big picture.

### **Training**

Training is part of the continuum of change management. It addresses *Knowledge* and *Ability* in the ADKAR model. The goal of training is to drive proficiency which is an individual characteristic regarding skills as well as performance. In a SharePoint environment where we are introducing content and records management capabilities to everyone – potentially in multiple locations world-wide – it is unrealistic to develop a training approach that will require training each person individually. For this reason, the most effective training is role-based.

Role-based training places individuals into role groups based on the function they perform. This can be influenced by policies, processes, and tools. The role groups should have a clear purpose and defined relationship to the organizational change. For example, Records Coordinators (who historically assisted with physical records management) may play an enhanced role in a SharePoint solution by carrying responsibility for helping end users assign Content Types and understand the retention rules associated with Content Types and information lifecycle rules. If that is the case, Records Coordinators must be trained on the definition of Content Types, how they relate to retention rules, which Content Types apply to their area of responsibility, and how SharePoint will manage content that is a record in the organization (i.e. designated, managed, and protected as a Record in SharePoint).

A critical element of training success is validation that the value proposition communicated earlier in the project matches reality. If users have formed the perception (based on what you told them) that the solution is useful and easy-to-use, then make sure it is! This will require a coordinated effort with the planning and design stages of the project as well as your technology configuration and implementation strategy.

Significant up-front planning work is needed. Proven models, standardization, and best practice approaches, such as the Gimmel SharePoint Enterprise Framework, help ensure that perception matches reality so your organization can achieve its business goals and objectives. The Gimmel SharePoint Enterprise Framework is a critical component of technology/solution sustainability; being able to establish a content governance approach that can be maintained, extended and improved over time. Sustainability, however, goes beyond technology.

### **Sustainability:**

When considering long term sustainability, many organizations resort to models built around auditing and compliance policies, standards, processes, and procedures. Although these are important elements of the overall content and records management program, they don't address the concept of *Reinforcement* introduced by the ADKAR model.

Reinforcement is much more personal. It acknowledges the importance of recognition or reward. Organizations must consider how to reward users for improving their effectiveness, efficiency and competency in information management. In order to do this, the organization must value what it desires the users/individuals to value. This is often built into performance assessment or appraisal processes, quality improvement initiatives, metrics or measurement programs, and payment or bonus incentives. Collaboration with Human Resources professionals is a critical component of sustainability for all of the roles that must be coordinated organization-wide in order to achieve success.

#### **Conclusion:**

Enterprise content and records management in SharePoint will introduce change that must be managed in order to achieve the desired business goals and objectives. This requires a dedicated focus and well-defined plan and series of actions related to the processes of adoption and sustainability. Don't risk failure or limit the results of the significant time and effort your organization is investing or will invest in SharePoint; it is the individual users who will make it possible to transition from your current state to the desired future state. Engage them now and lead the change!

#### **About the Authors:**

**Karen Strong** is a Solutions Director for Gimmel Group. She has been in the ECM/RM industry for 27 years working with clients to solve complex records and information management challenges. She has done pioneering work in the areas of ECM/RM process analysis, organizational readiness maturity assessment, and program/project methodology development. She is currently working with clients on innovative approaches for communication, training, and change management to ensure the long term sustainability of enterprise-class content and records management solutions utilizing SharePoint. ([karen.strong@gimmel.com](mailto:karen.strong@gimmel.com))

**Mike Alsup** is a Sr. Vice President with [Gimmel Group](#), an ECM and RM systems integrator. He blogs at ([kqj109.wordpress.com](http://kqj109.wordpress.com)). He welcomes comments or scathing remarks at [malsup@gimmel.com](mailto:malsup@gimmel.com).