

On the Record with SharePoint

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This is a new column focusing on the enterprise content management (ECM) and records management (RM) dimensions of SharePoint, including both Microsoft Office SharePoint Server (MOSS) 2007 and the upcoming release of SharePoint 2010. We will also be exploring the broad solution ecosystem that exists for SharePoint content and records management. We recognize that SharePoint offers a wide range of capabilities that are important to our domain and we will reference other important sources of information for our readers. I will be the primary author, but will collaborate with several other authors to cover the topic.

Our Market Assumptions

Here are the market assumptions which outline our rationale for this column. We recognize that there is room for interpretation in these trends and that other market outcomes are also likely.

1. SharePoint will consolidate the broad ECM repository business
 - a. There will be important markets for several ECM vendors in transaction processing-related imaging as well as significant markets in check imaging, cloud computing, engineering, medical records, etc. But the broader ECM market will gradually consolidate to Microsoft SharePoint. SharePoint will be considered as a key component of the technology infrastructure by most organizations.
 - b. SharePoint has a core of valuable components that will change the market dynamics for many current ECM providers, particularly in email management, legacy ECM repositories, and ECM development tools, but it will re-catalyze the market for best-of-breed components that add value to the core SharePoint ECM capabilities. There will be a fine opportunity for many new and existing vendors, including products for capture, work flow, line-of-business application integration, records management, search, migration and conversion, and many others.
 - c. There will be a run-off over many years for the migration of legacy ECM platforms based on the budget appetite of the organizations who are buying the solutions. The ECM repository business will not consolidate to SharePoint dominance overnight.
2. SharePoint will re-energize the overall ECM market
 - a. SharePoint will ignite the enterprise ECM market. A very small portion of the electronic content in large organizations is currently in ECM repositories. Most of it is in share drives and email and Microsoft is offering SharePoint as a compelling path forward for these repositories. SharePoint also provides a platform for departments to implement solutions to replace their share drives.
 - b. Microsoft does not exercise the same proprietary command of conferences and training materials that other ECM vendors have employed. They actively court the engagement of independent providers of conferences and training materials. They see this as part of the commoditization of the ECM services market, which they actively support.

- c. SharePoint is a systems integration product that requires significant levels of many types of professional services to implement. The opportunity for SharePoint systems integrators has a naturally limited life span as more and more individuals develop the required skills in SharePoint. Microsoft is actively courting systems integrators to build these skills and this activity will encourage market participants to become certified.
3. SharePoint 2010 provides a compelling platform for compliance and enterprise records management
- a. At the recent SharePoint Conference in Las Vegas, Microsoft engineers demonstrated the capabilities of SharePoint 2010 to manage electronic records. The innovations in SharePoint 2010 include the Managed Metadata Service, Content Type Hub Service, new capabilities in the SharePoint Records Center, the ability to declare and maintain records within any SharePoint site, and many others. Many of these capabilities will also be incorporated in Exchange 2010. The overall result of this is that organizations will have important new enterprise tools for records management in their core environment.
 - b. Microsoft engineers also described the scalability of this environment to support hundreds of millions of documents. While this scalability requires several components that will take years to fully implement in most organizations, it is clear that SharePoint ultimately will be able to support most of the records management requirements of large organizations.

SharePoint: Why and How?

Our clients are investing in SharePoint solutions to address their content collaboration and knowledge management requirements. This is a strategic investment, allowing departments to leverage their current technology investments while combining new processes and technologies to meet additional business objectives. But a SharePoint ECM Program is as much about policy, human behavior, organizational dynamics, and clearly defined goals and objectives as it is about technology. A successful SharePoint ECM Program is one that has a strategic vision in mind, but is achieved through incremental, measurable successes.

This column will identify the challenges in implementing SharePoint for ECM on an enterprise-wide basis and will describe a vision, framework, and overall approach for addressing these challenges. We will describe the work activities necessary to implement enterprise content and records management solutions that address requirements in this area.

Defining the Business Problem

The central business problem we are addressing is that the management of the entire information lifecycle across the enterprise from beginning to end in multiple applications and repositories is complex. The following chart illustrates how this problem might currently look from a user perspective:

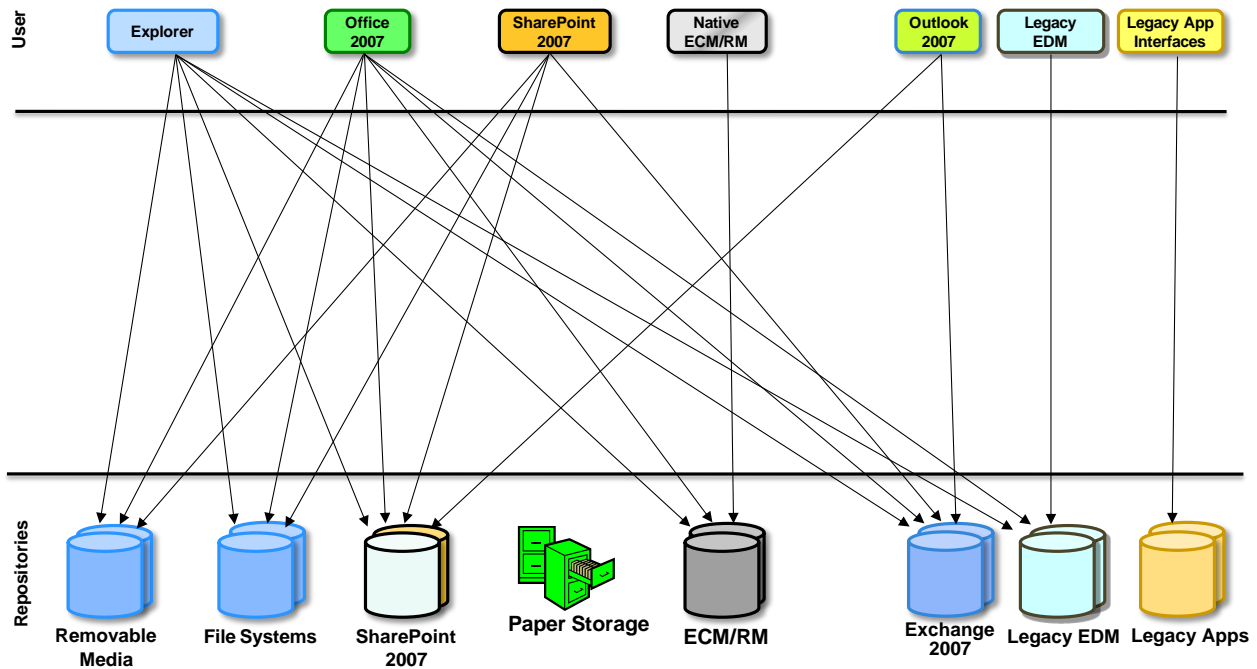


Figure 1. User's View of Enterprise Content Today

Users have favorite desktop tools that they use to create, access, and manage information with varying levels of access to a variety of repositories where information is stored. This environment has evolved as a result of silo'd approaches to document challenges, but it works well enough from the perspective of most users.

We have seen many separate problems in this type of environment at our customers:

- **Content is difficult to accurately classify.** Many classification decisions have traditionally been left up to individuals who are not aware of the importance of accurate classification or the rules and classification options that should be applied to their content. Additionally, it is very difficult to maintain the taxonomy and classification alternatives and present them to individuals at the moment of classification. The legal penalties for bad user classification decisions can be severe.
- **Content is difficult to find.** People access and manage content in many different repositories, including individual PC's, email folders, shared folders, various computer systems and platforms, and physical file rooms. As a result it is difficult, if not impossible, to search for content in multiple locations except to search each repository separately. Therefore, information retrieval is disjointed, and there is no unified content index or common user interface to help users locate documents.
- **Users are comfortable with their desktop tools** including Internet Explorer and the Microsoft Office Tools, especially Word, Excel, and PowerPoint, Microsoft Outlook. They resist managing their content through other interfaces. Any solution to manage content through its lifecycle must support all of the tools that are used to create it and all of the repositories in which it is stored.
- **Content is difficult to manage through its lifecycle in the enterprise.** It frequently migrates from one repository to another, through multiple versions, and many of the classification decisions can only be made in the context of complex business processes at a specific point in time.
- **The big content management problem in most companies** is not in their large legacy document management systems. Instead, it is in the massive quantities of documents that are stored in repositories that are much less well managed, such as shared network drives and email systems.

These repositories traditionally provide very few content management functions to help with the accessibility and administration of electronic documents.

- **Organizations are buried in documents.** Even if new solutions will eventually emerge that fully manage documents through their lifecycles, the current volumes of documents are such that practical solutions are needed today. Most documents will never be business records and need to be disposed of as soon as their value to the organization or process is complete.

These problems are even more complex at the enterprise level. Documents are created by multiple business processes, in a variety of locations, and by thousands of individuals. They are also received from external contractors, suppliers, and partners and may be delivered to other partners and governments based on business, contractual or regulatory requirements. In many organizations, there are complex requirements related to the tracking and control of documents. In addition, the content being exchanged between organizations is in a variety of media, including paper, email, faxes, and electronic documents, which are not managed in an integrated manner. As a result of ineffective content management, opportunities for process improvement, risk reduction, and competitive advantage are lost. We believe this leads to a clear business case for the consistent use of technologies to ensure the accessibility and protection of critical information assets, while meeting departmental specific requirements for organizing, processing, storing, retrieving, distributing, publishing, securing, and archiving content.

What would an Enterprise Solution look like?

The Enterprise Usage Model – the following model of enterprise content usage captures many of the key elements of information lifecycle applications and processes:

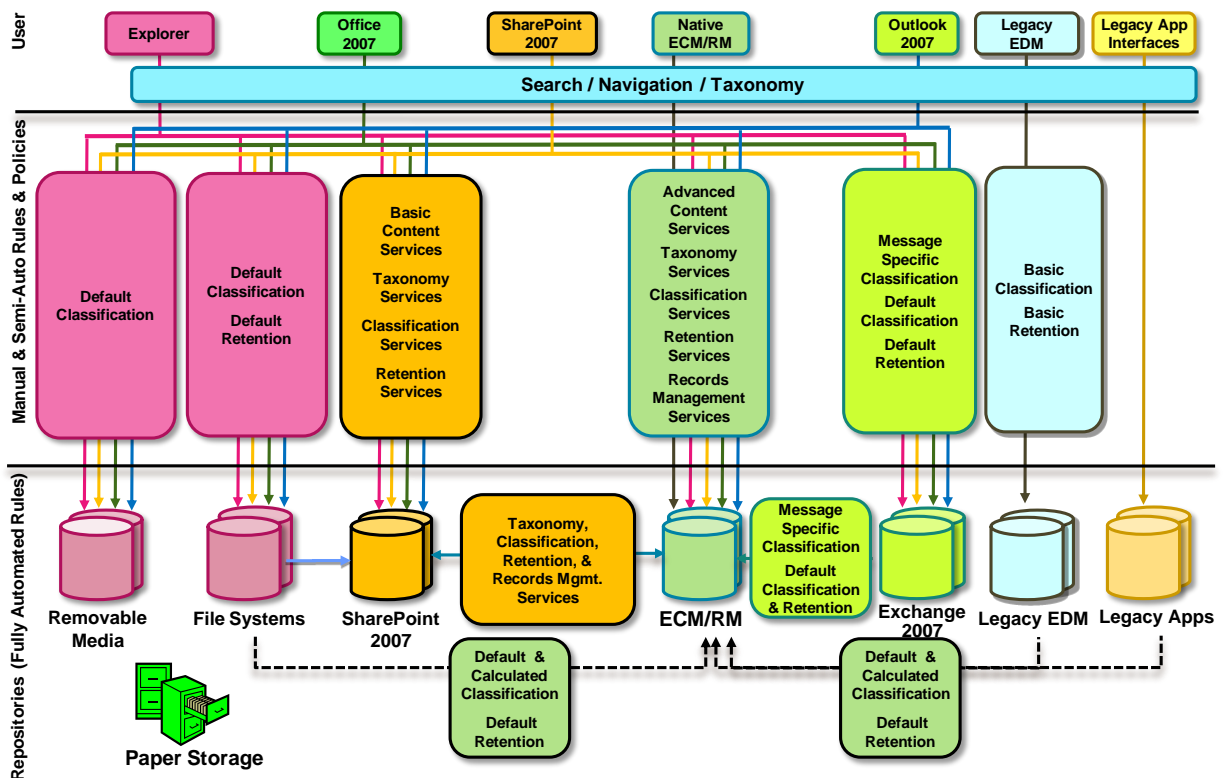


Figure 2. Enterprise Usage Model

Users are able to create, classify, retrieve, and manage documents through supporting components. This model includes the following important concepts and elements:

- Each user is assisted in the navigation and classification of content by a user interface that is personalized to their roles and responsibilities.
- There are manual and semi-automated rules and policies to guide the classification of documents in the various repositories for which a user has access rights.
- The repositories include the use of rules that enable the automated migration of documents between repositories according to policies established through enterprise governance.
- Defining an Enterprise Usage Model provides a basis to standardize the usage and migration of content through processes and repositories throughout its lifecycle. The model also provides the context for the design and management of a SharePoint Solution Framework.

What would make a SharePoint Solution Framework “Enterprise”

There are several criteria that a SharePoint Solution Framework must satisfy to support the requirements of an enterprise.

- **The Solution Framework must enable enterprise governance and policy.** As the scope of the SharePoint application grows from departmental to enterprise implementations, it is critical that policies related to records and retention management, electronic messaging, inactive media, and hold orders be consistently enabled and enforced. In addition, the governance policies and procedures must be easily followed by organization participants.
- **It must define an Information Lifecycle Model.** With the complexity of business processes, it is important that simple and straightforward rules apply to the classification and management of enterprise content from creation to disposition across multiple repositories. Frequently, the classification of documents can only be made in the context of a business process, but the classification must be separate from the business process itself. Additionally, the classification of content must be achievable with a practical minimum of user involvement or the users will not accept the solution.
- **It must enable a SharePoint solution ecosystem to be supported.** This defines the common set of technologies to be used for the user interfaces, processing, data management and storage of content across the enterprise. This will also provide the standards to apply for the consistent implementation of departmental applications. User interaction with the solution must facilitate straightforward classification and retrieval of content or the solutions will not be utilized and users will not be satisfied.
- **It must define an enterprise program to coordinate and support SharePoint.** There are many dimensions of a program that must be defined, including governance, business requirements, technical requirements, SharePoint operations, and program management. Most of the failures in implementing SharePoint solutions result from not adequately addressing one or more of these areas. In addition, a SharePoint Program should also address the following:
 - Support for records management programs, including both paper and electronic records, must be enabled. In most cases, this includes the deployment of standard file plans and retention schedules across the organization.
 - Support for legal and electronic discovery programs must be enabled. Most large organizations need to be prepared to respond quickly to requests for discovery and document production. Discovery is significantly more expensive if the plans and procedures for responding have not previously been defined.

- A SharePoint Program plan defines the steps to be taken and prioritizes the path to the implementation of SharePoint solutions that satisfy the business and technical requirements of the organization.
- Support for SharePoint operations needs to ensure that each SharePoint solution that is implemented results in improvements to the overall SharePoint Solution Framework. This includes capturing policy, process, and technology improvements as well as lessons learned.

Conclusion

Successful SharePoint ECM programs will require the implementation of integrated enterprise content management and records management capabilities in order to support the capture of required information throughout the full lifecycles of documents. The implications of this requirement are staggering. Enterprise content management solutions are, by definition, systems that capture all of the important documents and content processes in an enterprise. In many organizations, this will include thousands of processes and tens of thousands of users. This will frequently require significant levels of investment and years to achieve.

Furthermore, enterprise content management and records management systems do not just “happen” as a result of early pilots and departmental implementations. Critical steps related to planning, analysis, design, and architecture must be made in the context of an enterprise effort. Charting the path to successful SharePoint solutions for enterprise content and records management problems includes:

- Planning and Strategy
- Enterprise Usage Models
- Enterprise Information Lifecycles
- Streamlined File Plans and Retention Schedules
- Enterprise SharePoint Solution Frameworks
- SharePoint Solution Ecosystem
- SharePoint Methodologies and Implementation Approaches

Future columns will flesh out these elements and components for our readers. Next month, we will focus on the Enterprise Information Lifecycle. We look forward to your feedback and suggestions.

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