

Success Story

The Regional Municipality of York Migrates to eDOCS™ for Improved Business Processes

Multi-tiered architecture of Open Text Document Management system offers the Region a comprehensive set of standard functionality

The Regional Municipality of York is located just north of the City of Toronto, Ontario. Comprised of nine municipalities, it has a population of close to one million with approximately 25,000 businesses located within its borders. The Region has an annual budget of \$1.7 billion and employs 2,600 full-time staff.

York Region began to look for an electronic document management system (EDMS) in 2001, realizing quite early that an EDMS would be a key tool to help it address several operational challenges, as well as meet its obligations under new regulations established by the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. In late 2002, the Region implemented an EDMS based on an earlier document management system from Open Text.

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*- Alan Davidson,
Corporate EDMS Project Manager,
Regional Municipality of York*

"We were able to visit some other government sites with an EDMS in place—including the Ministry of Indian and Northern Affairs. Open Text's document management system stood out as an effective, easy-to-use solution," says Denis Kelly, Regional Clerk, York Region. "We selected Open Text technology primarily for the broad range of functionality and its competitive cost. Their solution met the functional requirements that were part of our RFP."

York Region wanted a solution that would help improve business processes in general. Firstly, the Region wanted to bridge the information silos across regional departments and locations. Secondly, the Region recognized that a substantial shift from paper to electronic records was taking place. They needed a solution that could manage the wide range of document types being created. Fast searches were another consideration. Finally, the solution had to be cost competitive.

The pilot and initial implementation of the EDMS realized some significant benefits for the Region, automating the Council and Committee paper-based system, and enabling the staff to better manage and access electronic content and address legislative pressures. In 2004, the Region undertook a study to review the current implementation and determine areas for improvement and opportunities for additional value.

Migrating to new platform

In mid-2004, the Region was ready to make the move from its current document management solution from Open Text to the multi-tiered architecture of Open Text Document Management, eDOCS Edition™ to take advantage of the comprehensive set of standard functionality it provides.

"We decided to upgrade because the technology platform is a better solution for the environment here and the new functionality proves very useful in our organization. The public and private folder work spaces are

Industry

Municipal Government

Customer

Regional Municipality of York

Business Challenges

- Transition to latest version of the Open Text document management system
- The Region required no disruption of service to staff
- Large number of documents and emails on shared network drives

Business Solutions

- Open Text Document Management, eDOCS Edition™

Business Benefits

- Improved business processes across the organization
- Significant reduction in amount of time spent on document-related activities, including search and retrieval, check-in/check-out, versioning, and applying appropriate security controls
- Client-focused approach ensured EDMS alignment with business needs

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great features,” says Kelly. “It offers easier sharing and more control over documents. Users have more control over individual documents and can also share groups of linked documents with people in other departments.”

The Web administration tool in the latest DM version makes it easier for the IT administrative staff to manage the system remotely.

The initial pilot based on the earlier document management system, with 53 users in 2002, expanded to 350 people using the new DM system in all departments of the Region. By the end of 2005 the Region had 600 users on the DM system. At the beginning of 2009 the Region had 970 users. Over 500,000 electronic documents are in the system with some 250 to 300 added daily. There are close to 90,000 individual activities per month on the system. The total documents include all Council and Committee records going back to 1971 when York Region was first established.

EDMS Implementation

The Region’s initial implementation strategy was based on identifying business processes that moved across the respective information silos within the organization. This proved to be very effective for a well defined set of activities. “As our implementation experience continued to mature, it became apparent that a blended approach of both business process and department/division strategy is required to be successful,” says Alan Davidson, Corporate EDMS Project Manager, York Region.

Business Process Approach

In the budget process, all departments can now work from one spreadsheet stored in the Open Text DM repository rather than submit separate documents as in the past. This reduces the time it takes to finalize a budget and removes a lot of the complexity for the people charged with harmonizing each department’s needs.

“There was a problem with version control in the past before we implemented an EDMS. Each individual department submitted their own budget documents to the Finance Department. It became a bit of a nightmare to manage them all. Compiling all the individual departments’ documents into one consistent budget book was a big challenge,” says Kelly.

The Council and Committee process is another key area where the DM system is used extensively. Some 110 Council and Committee meetings take place each year, with an average of 600 staff reports going through those meetings. The Open Text system makes it much easier for everyone to be on the same page when arriving at decision points. Other processes where the DM system is used include project management, reviews of legal agreements, construction projects, land use approvals, meeting agendas and notices, facility management, research and precedents, and even performance reviews.

Davidson points out that it is important for organizations to understand how staff does their work when conducting the training sessions to ensure the DM system will be used effectively. “Staff will recognize the benefits of the EDMS and may start using it for work that is not associated with an original business process, knowing that they will gain efficiencies by putting documents associated to other projects into the system. However, this practice can lead to challenges from a system’s administration standpoint if the documents are not named correctly or the proper retention rules are not applied. As part of the training process, you need to ensure that users are applying the correct naming conventions and business rules whenever they save documents into the EDMS so there won’t be a problem for people trying to find and share those documents in the future.”

Department/Division Approach

The department/division strategy focuses on implementing for an entire information silo. The Environmental Services Department is comprised of five business units that were implemented in parallel. Staff within the business units now have a common set of naming conventions and business rules and are able to collaborate effectively on documents within the EDMS environment.

Strategies for Migrating Documents from Network Drives

“Our client groups tend to be either project or program based. Project-based groups prefer to migrate their documents into the EDMS. This provides all the benefits of a single repository for project management. Program-based groups prefer to work on a go-forward basis—after a certain date all new documents will be saved within the EDMS,” says Davidson.

All documents migrated into the EDMS must be classified and have the appropriate retention applied. Documents stored on network drives may not be classified correctly, requiring significant effort to classify and apply retention at the individual document level.

Davidson points out that their success to date is based on recognizing that an EDMS is not simply an application deployment but a change management exercise. “At the end of the day, if the Open Text EDMS solution does not meet the client’s expectations, the problem lies with the implementation and not the application.”

The Future

The Region is currently in the process of upgrading from version 5.1.05 to version 5.2.1. “The new upgrade will allow us to take advantage of other Open Text products such as the email management tool and the file management tool. We expect to complete the EDMS implementation by Q4, 2010,” says Davidson.



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