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DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT

2009 Review of Document Management Systems

Document Management Takes Off, But Firms Still Seek Guidance

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From the July 2009 Issue

Recent surveys have revealed that more accounting and tax firms have procured an electronic document management system (EDMS) than those that haven't. The first caveat, however, is that many of those who have made the leap are still busy making the transition to full deployment. But the fact is they're trying! If you're in the shrinking minority of firms reluctant to jump in, this review of EDMS solutions for accounting and tax practices will provide some useful information to help you understand what these systems can do to help you make the transition to a paperless or digital practice model.

This has become a perennial feature of The CPA Technology Advisor and is my fourth consecutive year of conducting these reviews. The capabilities of these systems have progressed significantly on many fronts. The one characteristic that really stood out for me this year is how so many of the vendors have transitioned

to a focus on fine tuning their features and functions based on a mature base of installations. That's a good thing. Implementing an EDMS successfully is no small task; it is a multi-year journey that will provide significant rewards. Those rewards come in terms of increased staff productivity and enhanced quality

of client service. So take our tour of leading EDMS applications and get a feel for what this collection of best-selling solutions has to offer.

To help you assess each vendor's offering more effectively, we have reviewed their offerings based on four key sets of attributes: usability, file management and organization, integration and relative value.

Usability is the most subjective of the categories. What I look for here is simply how easy the system is to interact with. If the system is not designed intuitively, or takes too many steps to get things done, then it isn't going to score very high. Ease of use is what it's all about as far as I'm concerned. Most of us have become pretty comfortable working within Windows Explorer, even with all of its shortcomings, so it will be important for your staff to perceive the new system as a step forward, not backward. If it's too difficult to work with, they will reject it.

File management & organization features address the methodology that the system utilizes for organizing the electronic documents. Essentially, this is an extension of the usability attribute; however, we can be a bit more objective in this category by describing the way the file storage is organized. Before I go any further, it is important to point out that despite the fact that we refer to these as document management systems, for all practical purposes, they are really file management systems. They are designed to manage the storage and retrieval of all your electronic files: PDFs, Word and Excel files, email messages, QuickBooks files and more. So think of an EDMS as Windows Explorer on steroids.

Integration is an attribute that covers a lot of territory. There are three basic perspectives from which I have assessed each vendor's strength in this area: MS-Office, accounting and tax applications, and extended applications such as intelligent scanning, workflow and portal modules.

Finally, the relative value is a rating of the vendors' solution based on the breadth and depth of functionality relative to the cost of the system. When you combine the scores from each of these four categories, you get a pretty good sense of where each vendor falls in comparison.

Acct1st continues to market its product as a \$1 per day, per user solution. And while the pricing model hasn't changed, some of the usability and functionality has.

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[Autonomy Inc. – Autonomy iManage WorkSite 8.5](#)

Since our review last year, Interwoven was acquired by Autonomy, a worldwide enterprise with \$4 billion market capitalization, 20,000 customers and 2,000 employees. Worksite is currently in use at 11 of the top 30 U.S.-based accounting firms.

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[Cabinet NG, Inc. – CNG-Safe & CNG-Books](#)

CNG-SAFE is a “horizontal” solution designed to work in virtually any industry, but the accounting market is one of the vendor’s primary focuses. The system is available in a web hosted (SaaS model) or in-house solution.

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[CAPSYS – Capsys Capture](#)

Related Article: One of the biggest challenges of writing a review of document management solutions is dealing with the scope of the application. A comprehensive electronic document management solution (EDMS) requires four key components; capture, storage, processing (documents) and distribution.

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[CCH, a Wolters Kluwer business](#)

[– ProSystem *fx* Document ASP](#)

The evolution of ProSystem *fx* Document continues to progress very nicely since CCH acquired it. They’ve recently added a web hosted option for firms that don’t want to deal with the challenges of implementing and managing the server infrastructure required to deliver Document throughout the enterprise.

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Computhink, Inc. – ViewWise

ViewWise is designed to work in many different industries including manufacturing, healthcare and financial services. The entire suite of modules available provides you with the opportunity to establish a comprehensive paperless workflow solution.

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Conarc, Inc. – iChannel

iChannel is a new entry in our document management review, and they have emerged as a formidable competitor in the accounting profession's document management systems market. iChannel is a horizontal solution; however, nearly 50 percent of the vendor's clients are in the accounting and financial services professions.

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Doc.It Corp. – Doc.It

Doc.It takes a very deliberate approach to its design strategy. This is particularly evident in the development of its two core modules. One is the WIP binder for document management of dynamic files that are actively in use for a particular engagement.

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FileVision USA – FileVision

FileVision is perhaps the one product in this review that most closely resembles a content management solution. The scope of modules available includes enterprise content management, intelligent capture, business process automation and knowledge management.

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Personable Inc. – Workflow DMS & SourceLink

SourceLink is a niche solution focused on direct integration with QuickBooks and Microsoft Office Accounting. The team at Personable continues to expand the breadth and depth of functionality.

This year, they have released WorkFlow DMS, which can be used independent of SourceLink.

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[Thomson Reuters – GoFileRoom](#)

If you were to review the archives of my previous EDMS reviews in this magazine, you would find that I have consistently emphasized GoFileRoom’s intuitive, easy-to-use interface.

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[Thomson Reuters – FileCabinet](#)

[CS](#)

FileCabinet CS completes the circle of the Thomson Reuters CS suite of tax and accounting applications. If your firm has one or more of the other CS applications deployed, then FileCabinet CS should be on your short list of potential DMS solutions.

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[Treno Software – Treno Document](#)

[Management](#)

Related Article: Although they’ve been around the document management space for seven years, with a focus on other verticals, we recently discovered Treno Software’s document management solution at the New Jersey Accounting, Business and Technology Show.

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