

## Opinion

# Waving goodbye to the dumping ground

By Lynda Rathbone



A FEW years back, collaborative work spaces and shared network drives became really popular. Everyone was doing it. I know I had to contribute to my project workspaces when I was at Cable & Wireless. We had to use our shared network drives as space was running out on things like our e-mail servers, so we were discouraged from sending attachments and were sending links instead.

Well, several years on it seems like these shared spaces have become dumping grounds. I have been getting a few calls lately, from companies looking to re-organise and consolidate them with the corporate intranet. Interestingly, some are thinking about purchasing a document-management system (DMS). A few years ago, I remember that only the really hardcore, document-rich businesses – law firms, medical-records companies, pharmaceuticals etc – were thinking this way. I realise there are cheaper systems on the market now, but with advancements in content-management-system (CMS) functionality, many organisations have abandoned multiple systems. Instead, they can use a DMS with CMS capabilities for the website, or switch to a CMS that manages intact documents too.

But is choosing the right technology to manage your documents the real issue? It's certainly an important part of the solution, but not before your organisation addresses two key points: workflow and content definition.

Let's start with workflow. It's easy to share and, usually, sharing is good. Just save the data to a network drive and you're away. And it's nice to think that all your users will look at your shared document-space guidelines and comply accordingly. But often the reality is that they don't and never will do, unless you make them. Workflow around your documents must be created and enforced. An information structure that isn't reliant on company organisational structures, or employees' initials and dates, must be put in place. This way documents should be retrievable for months and, in some cases, years to come.

The process must also ensure that users have entered good metadata: document description; keywords; and, making the distinction between author and expert. The person uploading the document will forever be the point of contact if these two fields are not created early. The workflow process must reflect who to contact about the document, both for administrative and research purposes.

Taking this one step further, I would like to challenge organisations and users to think about what content they are creating with these documents and why it is being shared. Does it need to be? Should it be managed as an intact document or placed on the company intranet site for a wider audience? Perhaps you could create a content page to house links to documents, so they remain in context with other valuable information. But do we really need to be creating all these documents anyway?

This is a nice transition into content definition. Are documents considered to be content within your online environment? Does content include documents? It sounds like a silly question to ask but it's important. If documents are being stored on shared spaces simply because it's easier than using a CMS, I believe you're missing a great opportunity. In order to derive knowledge from the information you hold as an organisation it has to be structured and contextual. And, it must have ownership. These things are easier to accomplish by moving some of your publishing to the web, using CMS templates and creating web pages for your content instead of moving your documents to a new CMS or a DMS. A broken business process will not be fixed by buying better technology.

I'm certain the debate will continue over what's best and why, as vendors come out with newer, whizzier CMS/DMS functionality. Just keep in mind that it's still all down to good business practice, your users, what they need to get from the data and how it is optimised for retrieval. If you have any comments e-mail me at: [lynda@foursquaremedia.net](mailto:lynda@foursquaremedia.net) ■

## IN BRIEF

### FileNet introduces latest ECM suite

FileNet has launched the latest version of its P8 web content management suite, FileNet Web Content Manager 3.0, an object-based solution with enhancements that include complete integration with the software provider's business process management technology.

The product also features an integrated user interface, which includes content entry templates and component level architecture. [www.filenet.com](http://www.filenet.com)

### Gartner cites key emerging technologies in 2005 Hype Cycle

Gartner has recommended that businesses keep an eye on technologies that enable the development of collaboration, next generation architecture and real world web. The analyst house highlighted the three key themes in its recently released 2005 Emerging Technologies Hype Cycle. Podcasting, really simple syndication and desktop search were just a few of the 'buzzword' technologies named in the report. [www.gartner.com](http://www.gartner.com)

### Hummingbird to host series of breakfast seminars

Hummingbird has announced that it will give a series of complimentary executive breakfast seminars, *Managing the Entire Lifecycle of Your Contracts*, at various cities throughout the US.

The sessions, which will highlight the importance of building a sustainable ECM framework for managing enterprise content across its entire lifecycle, will begin in September. [www.hummingbird.com/cmebs](http://www.hummingbird.com/cmebs)