

E-Document Management Space Saving Solutions

for

Educational Institutions

Informational White Paper

by



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Objective:

The objective of this document is to provide an overview into the importance of designing and implementing a cost effective, efficient and comprehensive, structured program for the organization, management and destruction of all data and documentation to district, state and federal requirements.

About the authors:

Rick Howard, Superintendent of Comanche Independent School District, and Carol J. Hecht, Vice President of Harding Document Management Services, have been working together for several years to solve the document management and space saving challenges encountered by the school district.

Having successfully implemented an electronic solution to this overwhelming challenge, Rick and Carol present the knowledge they have gained in this Informational White Paper.

We are pleased to provide this important information, which was presented at the Texas Association of School Administrators' Mid-Winter Conference on January 22, 2008.

The Comanche ISD Experience

“When I arrived at Comanche ISD in the spring of 2000, I found my office to be in the corner of an abandoned band hall with no HVAC ducting to it. As long as I could leave my doors open, it was tolerable. But to have a private conversation required closing the doors and doing without heating or air conditioning. That may not have been so bad since it usually kept those really tense meetings with mad parents pretty brief!

As I explored for an alternative office, I found the old instrument storage area of the building to be served by the HVAC system, but it was completely overrun with boxes of old files. With Harding DMS' help, those files were removed and the space converted to a suitable office for me to inhabit. First challenge was solved.

My office is here somewhere.



Records storage at the campuses was even worse with most of the high school records located under the stadium bleachers in completely untreated, non climate controlled areas. Other records were stored in stage areas and at the bus barn in no organized manner. When a request for a record came in, the time demand on staff to locate the requested information was enormous (and hazardous!).

This is the campus record storage center?

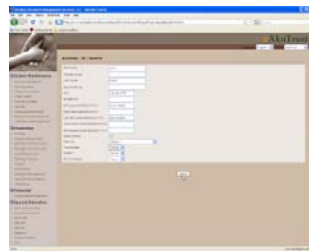


Through a phased approach dictated by our own budget constraints, Harding DMS removed all those old files, sorted through them to weed out material eligible for destruction, cataloged all files, boxed them up and stored them in a secure, climate controlled off-site location. Now when we need an archived file that is not available on our electronic retrieval system, we simply call Harding DMS and its staff conducts the search and sends a copy of the file to us; much more productive way of locating a document.

Simplifying that to a whole different level, we have now completed the scanning process of all permanent records into a digital database, completely searchable via the Internet through a secure portal that fully complies with HIPAA and FERPA access requirements. Now in just a matter of moments, those records appear on our screen ready for printing, faxing or emailing *AND* we have a much better record of who sees those files than we ever had with the hardcopies stuffed in boxes that were stashed in every nook and cranny around the district.



Secure Portal



Student Record Search



Record Access Log (FERPA)

Not only do I have valuable space available for other purposes, I don't have to worry about moving, organizing, retaining, destroying or damaging any more records. The records are kept current yearly. Harding DMS has taken me completely out of the records management business, all at a cost I directed with available funds over time. If you have ever been a victim of a flood, fire or other catastrophic loss to your facilities, or know of someone who has, you can appreciate the significance of this practice.

The Business of Education

Education is big business that requires assistance to introduce *best practices* into its business processes with particular emphasis on document, information and knowledge management.

Superintendents bear the same responsibilities for the efficient, effective and productive day-to-day operations of your organizations as the CEO's and Presidents of IBM, Dell or Microsoft. They also face certain challenges. These include:

- District growth
- Increasing responsibility to protect and find information
- Voluminous documentation
- Inadequate process and methodologies for record management
- Budget constraints
- Inappropriate or no record retention policy
- Failure to destroy records
- Appropriate use of technology to access records and information
- Campuses operate autonomously

These complex areas of responsibility require a strong administrative infrastructure and the employment of comprehensive, written plans, policies and procedures intended to ensure the availability and security of critical data through the use of technology.

Responsibility for Regulatory Compliance

Data management and communication both within technology and interdepartmentally are critical to efficient operations of any business entity, particularly within the educational arena. *The responsibility for records management and compliance with state and federal regulations ultimately rests with the Superintendent.* Since the “buck” and liability stop with the Superintendent, knowledge of the current practices of each department and campus within the District relative to the generation and storage of documentation is essential to becoming virtually paperless.

Critical Questions

- Does your district have written retention guidelines and policies for each department or campus?
- Where and in what manner are your district’s records stored?
- How difficult is it to find and retrieve records and information?
- Have you included the conversion of your paper records to digital media in your strategic plan?
- Has the conversion process begun, or are you procrastinating due to where and how to use budgeted dollars?
- Do you have explicit policies and procedures for the management of e-mail and electronically generated documents?

If the answer to any of these questions is either “No” or “I don’t know”; you may want to consider taking some action to rectify the situation.

The real question is “how much risk can you afford to take?” Is there a budget line item for risk? What about the impact of Katrina students that entered your districts with no record of courses taken, passing grades, immunizations, or special education needs and participation? Imagine if your district was destroyed by flood or fire just like in Louisiana? Your students were sent to other districts with no record of their achievements or disabilities; who was most impacted – your district or your students?

Starting Point

A Plan of Action based on current departmental practices is a start. Where are the boxes buried and what challenges do your employees face in the performance of their duties?

The performance of a business process analysis and assessment by a third party is an objective vehicle to provide a detailed explanation and evaluation of current practices,

technology used and recommendations for change. The consultant and personnel discuss responsibilities and challenges faced in the performance of their duties. Thus, any changes in procedure and technology introduced will be positively received and used by personnel who believe that their “input” was valuable to administration in making change. Knowledge is power and, as such, relevant information needs to be shared with those who can effect change.

Input + Buy in = Successful Implementation

Record and Information Management

Record management is a district wide structured method for creating, using, organizing, retrieving, maintaining, retaining and/or disposing of data in accordance with regulatory requirements. It is the creation of standardized procedures for the identification, organization and management of active and archive records.

Records management involves far more than just the conversion of paper records to digital media or the management of electronic documentation. It includes compliance with federal and state regulations governing the minimum length of time diverse record series are to be retained; the security procedures used to prevent loss of data; actions required to ensure that in the event of a disaster, the district will be able to operate without significant loss of data; and the employment of a disaster recovery system that enables the district to immediately reconstruct its electronic and/or paper records. Records management impacts day-to-day operations and the performance of every employee's duties.

What is Record Management?

- Work flow processes
- Document creation
- Procurement of convenience copies
- Compliance with regulations
- Information retrieval
- Security of records and information
- Business continuity
- Disaster Recovery
- Record Retention Policies and Procedures
- Legal Hold
- Accountability for and consequences of lost information

How many times have a secretary and companion gone to the dungeon or a “rat and/or insect infested” warehouse to sort through old boxes of documents to find required information and/or backup. Time is money and the money spent in this function throughout the district can amount to millions of dollars depending upon the size of the district. Additionally, have you ever considered the value of the real estate used to store file cabinets and boxes of records? Some districts have even built facilities to house their documents. What if the trips to the warehouse are to locate data that should have been destroyed? How do you quantify the potential liability to you and the district?

Record Retention Policies and Procedures

Record Retention Policies, Procedures and Guidelines are a “living” document that specifically addresses active and archive document retention from generation to destruction. The beginning of this manual outlines guidelines and procedures for the maintenance, contents and destruction of electronic records, including e-mail. The balance of the manual contains a departmental breakdown of retention periods by record series. This “living” document addresses:

- Active and archive document policies
- Procedures for record maintenance and destruction
- Policies for e-mail and other electronic generated records
- Retention periods by department and record series
- Security of records and information
- Business continuity and recovery
- E- Discovery

E-Discovery and E-Mail

E-Discovery is a generic term that includes the collection and production of electronic files in a litigation and/or investigation.

The definition of the term “document” under the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure has been amended to include electronically generated and stored documents. These documents are business records and are subject to discovery as the result of open record requests or litigation. Despite their electronic storage, they are subject to the record retention periods established by the Texas State Library and Archival Commission.

Likewise, e-mail has transformed productivity and became an indispensable part of today’s business processes. It is a major means of communication of corporate records and business critical information. E-mail is subject to discovery. It is important to establish criteria for the content, use and retention of e-mail in an effort to significantly limit your liability.

Development of Standardized Methodology for Active and Archive Records

With a plan of action for Records Retention Policies and Procedures, the next step is to determine what’s to become of the stampede of paper coming at you from all directions.

Developing a centralized standardized methodology and location for the organization, identification and storage of all records, old and new, is the next step. Be aware that active records are more critical to the day-to-day operations of the district than are archive records, but they require equal consideration.

Consequently, an electronic system to handle both active and archive records seamlessly throughout each department in the district is the strategic goal.

Enterprise Record Management (ERM)

The solution to this challenge is Enterprise Record Management. ERM is an umbrella term referring to the tools and methods used to capture, manage, store, preserve and deliver information in support of business processes.

In selecting the ERM solution that best serves your needs, consider a solution that is SaaS (software-as-a-Service based. A robust SaaS based platform provides cost effective advantages over traditional on-premises software applications. For Electronic Record Management, the SaaS platform provides secure access controls and security of electronically stored records, but it is also fast to deploy, is cost effective, and encourages “*best practices*.” Understanding document workflow and processes are critical to the successful implementation of a records management system that:

- Automates the creation, posting and management of a record
- Provides standardization of policies, procedures and organization of documents
- Ensures only the required documents are filed and maintained
- Secure document check-out and check-in controls
- Eliminates paper and reduces physical storage requirements
- Automatically assigns retention periods
- Records are stored in accordance with state electronic record regulations
- Enables interoperability with current technologies and systems
- Eliminates the reliance on paper records as the sole source of data
- Disaster prevention and data security as a result of redundant, off-site backup
- Business continuity through immediate data recovery from remote location

Summary

It is mission critical that every district design and implement a cost effective, efficient and comprehensive Enterprise Record Management program specifically designed to provide immediate access to records and information that the district requires to meet its daily business objectives.

Learn More

Learn more about Enterprise Record Management, its efficiencies and the significant cost savings to be realized from its use by contacting us at:

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