The brave new world of electronic document and records management at Metro North Hospital and Health Service — Brisbane, Queensland

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In May 2014, I landed a plum job, one that most record managers dream of — implementing an electronic Document and Records Management System (eDRMS) from scratch. Joining the project team at Metro North Hospital and Health Service (MNHHS) and driving the formation of the Enterprise Records Management Team has been the biggest learning curve of my career. The journey has been crazy at times and highly challenging. However, as the saying goes, with great risk comes great reward. Our eDRMS implementation has successfully raised the profile of corporate recordkeeping within MNHHS and set a benchmark within Queensland Health. Here is our story.

What is an eDRMS?
An eDRMS is a system capable of managing physical and digital records throughout their lifecycle (i.e. creation, management, use, storage and ultimate disposal). As the name suggests, it contains both document management and record management functionality. An eDRMS can also bring business efficiencies by automating business processes or approvals via action tracking or workflows and integrating with other business systems.

The initial driver for the eDRMS project at MNHHS was to improve recordkeeping compliance and to improve auditing requirements in the process for managing correspondence in the Office of the Chief Executive. However the benefits of an enterprise wide eDRMS were obvious and consequently the scope for further stages of the project was expanded.

MNHHS project facts
Implementation of the eDRMS required the establishment of the following:
- an internal project team of two (Senior Project Manager and Senior Project Officer)
- an implementation partner – team of three
- Stage 1 timeframe – eight weeks – correspondence process – 70 users
- Stage 2 timeframe – seven months – rollout to 230 people
- creation of the Enterprise Records Management Team (ERMT).

Stage 1:
Where did we start? Defining the need
Stage 1 had a narrow focus, being limited to the process for managing correspondence in the Office of the Chief Executive, and involved an analysis of the current situation. Points of pain identified by stakeholders in this phase included:
- searchability of records
- traceability of records
- scalability of records
- duplication of records – no single source of truth
- auditability of records
- security and access concerns
- business inefficiencies – no tool to monitor completion of tasks or monitor deadlines.

Stage 2
From little things big things grow
In Stage 2 the scope was widened to rollout the eDRMS as a repository in place of network drives due to network drives being unstructured and uncontrolled environments. We identified the information management and security risks and targeted high-risk and high-value business groups.

Stage 2 established the MNHHS ERMT. The ERMT manages the eDRMS configuration, front-end system administration and undertakes all necessary “checks and balances” to ensure ongoing compliance.

In addition, the ERMT:
- develops and implements corporate recordkeeping governance
- monitors and improves compliance with legislation and standards
- maintains eDRMS configuration and solution design
- advises stakeholders on best practice recordkeeping practices
- develops training materials including checklists, help cards, user manuals and coordinates training sessions
- manages the eDRMS Helpdesk and provides support to users.

My advice
It is vital to know the existing information management environment in your organisation before commencing an eDRMS implementation. An assessment will assist you to ascertain whether the business is mature enough for an eDRMS and, if so, the information gathered will assist you to prepare the business case.

Clearly articulate the business need(s) and any technical requirements or constraints. Stakeholders should be consulted for analysis of business processes, especially if business process mapping is identified within scope. This will also help determine the eDRMS configuration and solution design. The key elements of business process mapping undertaken by MNHHS include:

- searchability of records
- traceability of records
- scalability of records
- duplication of records – no single source of truth
- auditability of records
- security and access concerns
- business inefficiencies – no tool to monitor completion of tasks or monitor deadlines.
Our key challenge was to raise recognition of the value of corporate (administrative) records as a dynamic source of organisational knowledge.

1. **Process identification** — acquiring a full understanding of the steps required in a defined business process (this is otherwise known as “current state” or “As Is”).

2. **Information gathering** — identifying objectives, risks, controls, key decision points and desired outcomes in a defined process.

3. **Interviewing and mapping** — understanding stakeholder views on the defined process (e.g. what works well, points of pain and potential improvements) and actual design of the process maps/flowchart.

4. **Analysis** — leveraging and utilising eDRMS tools to enhance the defined process and improve efficiencies where possible (otherwise known as “future state” or “To Be”).

**eDRMS benefits**

Our business case identified the following high level benefits:

- Benefit 1: decrease in corporate risks associated with legislative non-compliance
- Benefit 2: improved quality of service
- Benefit 3: increase in reporting capabilities specific to corporate records contained within the eDRMS
- Benefit 4: improved records and information management compliance
- Benefit 5: improved efficiencies leading to a reduction in the cost of managing corporate records
- Benefit 6: improved access to records and information allowing the organisation to make informed, evidence-based choices.

**Business outcomes**

For the best chance of success, an eDRMS implementation needs to fit within your organisation’s information management framework, be sponsored and championed at a senior level and be managed by a motivated and skilled project team. Ideally this will combine project management methodology and eDRMS subject matter expertise.

Our key challenge was to raise recognition of the value of corporate (administrative) records as a dynamic source of organisational knowledge which ultimately supports the facilitation and provision of high quality, evidence based health care services.

The business outcomes identified within our eDRMS rollout included:

**Improved compliance with legislation, standards and policies to provide:**

- protection from potential breaches, penalties and/or loss of reputation associated with non-compliance
- ability to access information from within a central repository
- reduced reliance on using uncontrolled, unstructured and non-compliant network drives for capturing corporate records.

**Improved data collection and information quality:**

- remove duplication of data sources (“single source of truth”)
- reduce duplication of corporate records
- reduce the multiple points of data entry relating to corporate records.

**Improved access to corporate records:**

- improve ability to search for corporate records
- concurrent access to digital corporate records
- consistent naming conventions for corporate records
- search capability for corporate records.

**More efficient use of resources required to manage corporate records:**

- reduce print, toner, photocopy and paper costs
- more efficient business processes with improved scalability
- ability to become compliant without incurring excessive labour overheads
- reduce storage and retrieval costs of corporate records
- reduce points of failure associated with corporate records processing
- improve searchability of corporate records
- improve information sharing capability.

**Get the word out!**

**Develop a change management and communication strategy**

A solid change management and communication plan is essential to the success of an eDRMS implementation.

Our strategy was rolled out in four general phases:

- raising awareness
- skill building
- follow-up and support
- post-implementation review.

Information awareness sessions were held to introduce the concept of an eDRMS and reinforce good record-keeping
practices. They were a forum to explain everyone’s role within the new process and allow stakeholders to share and clarify their concerns and perceptions of what the eDRMS could and could not do.

Skill building (training) sessions were developed to cater to the needs of each user group (e.g. end-users, super users and system administrators). Different approaches were considered (e.g. 1:1 sessions for senior managers and executives).

**Stage 3**

**Where to now?**

MNHHS is currently scoping for a Stage 3 rollout of the eDRMS. Our vision is to roll the eDRMS out to an additional 1,500 users over a two year period. The initial planning phase involves scoping and identifying targeted business groups within MNHHS who currently capture and create high value/high risk records within shared network drives. Compliance with recordkeeping legislation and standards remains the primary driver for Stage 3, along with business process efficiencies gained by using an eDRMS rather than an uncontrolled and non-compliant network drive.

Having “lived the dream” and reflected on lessons learned in the project from day one, my tips for continued success include:

- Don’t rush – ensure you allow sufficient time for business analysis and project activities. Your reputation is only as good as your last deliverable!
- Articulate your business case well – identify the need and vision for the project. Outline benefits/risks/costs/return on investment/implementation schedules.
- Work with your Executive to gain support and sponsorship. Identify your “best fit” within the organisation.
- Recruit your team well. You need a motivated, multi-disciplinary and skilled project team, ideally with a mix of ICT skills, eDRMS expertise, business analysis, information security, change management and training.
- Ensure project governance and artefacts are defined and of high quality.
- Don’t underestimate the importance of change management and communication – get a plan!
- Develop a thorough rollout/implementation strategy and plan. And stick to it!
- Get comfortable with being uncomfortable - expect a bumpy ride at times. When you go through your lessons learned, you will be surprised at what was thrown at you!

**Get comfortable with being uncomfortable - expect a bumpy ride at times**

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