

DATA-DRIVEN INFORMATION GOVERNANCE: RECORDS AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

A major insurance firm started a project to improve its records and information management (RIM) program by more rigorously applying records management principles. Older approaches designed for managing paper records were ineffective when it came to electronic records which, over 15 years, had increased from 1.5 million documents to 70 million. Even though the insurance company acquired a manage-in-place enterprise application and appointed a new records manager, the enormous and disparate store of electronic files needed to be classified.

THE MOVE TO ELECTRONIC RECORDS

It is easy to say that a document retention schedule is “now applied to electronic records,” but paper and electronic records differ in some significant ways. These differences mean paper-based processes are not sufficient for disposition of expired electronic content.

- Electronic records have a format, (document, spreadsheet, application, photo, etc.) that can be useful for classification purposes. Paper is paper.
- Paper files were usually organized by dedicated staff. Electronic documents are often filed by untrained staff with no records-keeping or information-management background.
- With electronic files, the content and the format are only loosely linked—for example, a document can become a web page. Paper is fixed.
- An electronic file can rarely be distinguished from its earlier lifecycle forms (versions). With paper, often only the final version is printed.

ELECTRONIC RECORDS MANAGEMENT IN NINE STEPS

NUIX SHED LIGHT ON THE INSURANCE COMPANY’S DARK DATA TO HELP IT MAKE FACT-BASED DECISIONS TO MOVE THE PROJECT FORWARD.

1. Planning and building the RIM program: The new records manager began by assessing the firm’s content to get a handle on the scope of the task. Using the data stored in many years of email and shared drive data, the manager determined:

- The speed of growth of different content types and their impact on storage requirements
- How much effort it would take to classify and dispose of content

- What workgroup should go first to provide the greatest amount of benefit.

2. Securing management support: While the insurance company had verbal backing from management for the efforts, the records manager realized that he would need to explain the business impact of implementing a new program and purchasing the manage-in-place software. Once again—using data on the shares and email systems—he could calculate the benefits of reduced storage, the increased productivity from easier searching, the expected reduction in fines from data leakage, and the reduced effort to respond to litigation. In addition, Nuix showed how:

- Better application and database management could optimize storage
- Recognition of risk and value contained in data could improve the value of the company to potential buyers.

3. Communicating with the masses: File management activities are too often relegated to the basement, so company employees often don’t know what records management means. To move the program along, the insurance company needed to connect, in a positive and educational way, with the people who created records. The company initiated a communication plan to promote removing unneeded digital junk and addressing abandoned files. When the records management team found junk, they would send a carefully worded email that pointed out the old vacation photos, for example, that needed to be removed. It explained how this cleanup process benefitted productivity in the organization. As well as identifying digital junk, Nuix can answer questions like:

- Which employees create the most valuable content around specific topics?
- Who should be engaged as a records liaison to assist with communication and disposition efforts?

4. Refining the details: The records manager began exploring the details of the retention schedule and discovered that roughly 20% of the categories only addressed paper files—certain submittals, maintenance records, and forms had no electronic copies. At the same time, the schedule category descriptions were intentionally vague so as to be more inclusive. Descriptions such as “all files relating to” a particular function were safe but essentially useless to employees. The manager explored word lists, topics, and near duplicates,

then began to add specific titles and details that would provide information to employees and help the Nuix analytics tools better understand and classify content. Nuix can also answer questions like:

- What is the appropriate retention for a class of files? The content will tell you how long files must live before they are never touched again.
- How and where are employees using nicknames and acronyms to identify content? Should we establish some naming conventions?

5. Inventorying and classifying content: The manage-in-place system could not determine appropriate retention if the files were not identified by a category. Nuix leveraged content analytics capabilities using properties such as location, ownership, content topics and similarity, number and word patterns, file attributes, lifecycle status, and other data points to build and tag content.

- Which of the thousands of network storage devices and shared folders have records of a particular type or category so we can identify and prioritize the effort?
- How can I know what Lotus Notes, Microsoft Access databases, or old Microsoft SharePoint sites we need to investigate for records prior to decommissioning?

6. Purging the junk: Records managers often think of records as the content that “rises to the level” of being a record. This leaves a lot of content unaccounted for that also needs to be managed. Content at all levels of value—whether temporary, ephemeral, no longer useful, questionable, work in progress, supporting, important, or critical—needs to be managed differently. Getting rid of the cat videos, music libraries, and screensavers is a useful task. Nuix can help identify content that:

- Has little or no business value, which should be removed from active storage
- Has been identified as out of date, superseded, duplicated, or versioned.

7. Migrating to a controlled environment: In order to be managed in place by their new software, records needed to be electronically “registered” into the controlling database and have appropriate retention categories assigned. This required creating a simple export of the file list with the

classifications identified earlier. This list was then processed by the new manage-in-place tool that began the retention and disposition process from that point forward. Nuix can answer questions like:

- How do I move files to a more collaborative environment like SharePoint, OpenText, Documentum, or other ECRM solutions?
- What do I do with the email in my archive which is large, old, and not functioning very well?

8. Measuring success: One of the most important elements of a records management framework is the ability to show continual improvement. Measuring success in this content starts with a good benchmark, such as:

- Using content analytics to measure the accuracy of manual classification, or visa versa
- Identifying parts of the business where content is not being captured to focus training and communication efforts.

9. Tackling other information governance tasks: The insurance company now knows that Nuix can address a number of records management issues. The records manager is eager to grow the value of his skills and tools to address other information governance issues. The company’s information governance program now has a firm starting point and appropriate representation within the organization. Next, it will be looking into:

- Where is private data stored? Are those areas secure?
- How can the company reorganize workgroups and bring their content along with them?
- How can the company increase accuracy and reduce the level of effort it puts into insurance investigation incidents?
- How can it improve the speed and accuracy, and therefore the costs of litigation response orders?

Learn more about how Nuix can drive your records and information management program. Visit nuix.com/demo to schedule a personalized demo today.

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