

Consulting Services in Strategic Planning for Enterprise Records Management

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OVERVIEW

There is an old saying that if you don't know where you're going, any road will get you there! The first thing any organization needs when contemplating major initiatives in enterprise records management is a good long-range strategic plan. This plan should be the road map to guide the assimilation of a variety of new management initiatives and document technologies over a three- to five-year period.

First and foremost, the plan must articulate a clear vision for electronic records management in the context of the overall goals and objectives of the organization. Moreover, the plan must contain a clear delineation of short-, medium-, and long-term goals for managing the organization's records and delivering high quality services to customers or other client groups. The plan must also contain strategies for achieving these goals. The overall objective is to facilitate the transition from paper-based to electronic-based recordkeeping on an enterprise-wide scale and in accordance with well-conceived priorities that are systematically implemented over time.

At Zasio Enterprises, we specialize in developing these plans for our clients; in fact, strategic planning is a key component of our consulting practice. We've developed these plans for many years—for companies in virtually every area of business and for governments at all levels. Regardless of where your organization is with respect to your records/document management initiatives—or where you want to be during the next several years—we can formulate strategic planning recommendations to help you get there.



Plan Structure and Contents

Our strategic records management planning reports include an executive summary and a section discussing the organization's current recordkeeping situation, its strengths and deficiencies, and its problems and needs. This section is followed by detailed plans that typically address some or all the issues described below and on the following pages.

Achieving Enterprise Information Accessibility

Every large organization maintains literally millions of records, documents and files in all media forms and formats, housed in a bewildering variety of storage repositories. How exactly can any user locate any one of them "on demand?" To put the question another way: What does it take to enable anyone in the organization to find exactly the records they want and need, from any repository of stored documents, every time and all the time, in response to any query, within time frames consistent with their business needs?

The answer to these simple questions is, arguably, the most complex challenge in all of enterprise records management. In today's business environment, organizations are looking to implement single points of access—a standard enterprise portal through which documents and files can be accessed. We work with IT specialists and other information professionals throughout the organization to devise strategies for achieving these goals.



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Managing Legal Risks

In today's business environment, the legal risks associated with mismanaging organizational records are so onerous that they simply must be addressed and mitigated. This is one of the top enterprise records management priorities of nearly all our clients. And nearly all our clients want to implement one strategy above all others to mitigate these risks: retain only such records as are required to operate the business and comply with the law. All other records should be properly disposed of under established document retention policies that are as short as possible. Planning for legal risk reduction through enterprise records retention strategies constitutes a major portion of our consulting practice.

Applying Standards and Best Global Practices

What constitutes "best global practice" in records and information management? More importantly, who has best global practices already installed and how can our clients emulate such practices for maximum business benefit? Our strategic plans answer these key questions.

National and international efforts to develop technical standards and best practices in the area of records and information management are some of the most significant occurrences in this field today. Perhaps the most significant of these is ISO 15489, the world's first global standard for records management. Our strategic plans frequently include a multi-year plan for achieving compliance with this and other national and global standards.

Following submission of our strategic plans, we often accompany our clients on a series of "benchmarking" visits to enable them to obtain a first-hand look at top quality initiatives in enterprise records management and what would be required to emulate such implementations in their own organizations.

Transitioning to Electronic Records Retention

Records retention—the act of retaining organizational records for specified, predetermined periods of time commensurate with their value, with subsequent disposal or permanent preservation as a matter of official organizational policy—has been a mainstay of the records management discipline for many years. However, in most computing environments, formal data retention practices have been largely ignored. The vast majority of electronic recordkeeping systems in the U.S. have been implemented without a predefined methodology for eliminating data, text, and image files at a point in their life cycle at which their information content is of no further value.

Fortunately, this is changing. At most large organizations, the growth of electronic records is so great—and the costs and risks of their indefinite retention are so onerous—that electronic records retention is now considered a key element of overall data storage management.

Zasio Enterprises operates one of the nation's foremost consulting practices in electronic records retention. Because the implementation of enterprise initiatives for electronic records retention typically requires a multi-year

organizational commitment, we frequently include them in our long-range strategic plans. We devise separate strategies for “production applications” managed by IT departments, as well as for electronic records residing at the desktop level. We develop new policies and procedures for data retention in both environments, and we provide a variety of technical assistance in their enterprise implementation.

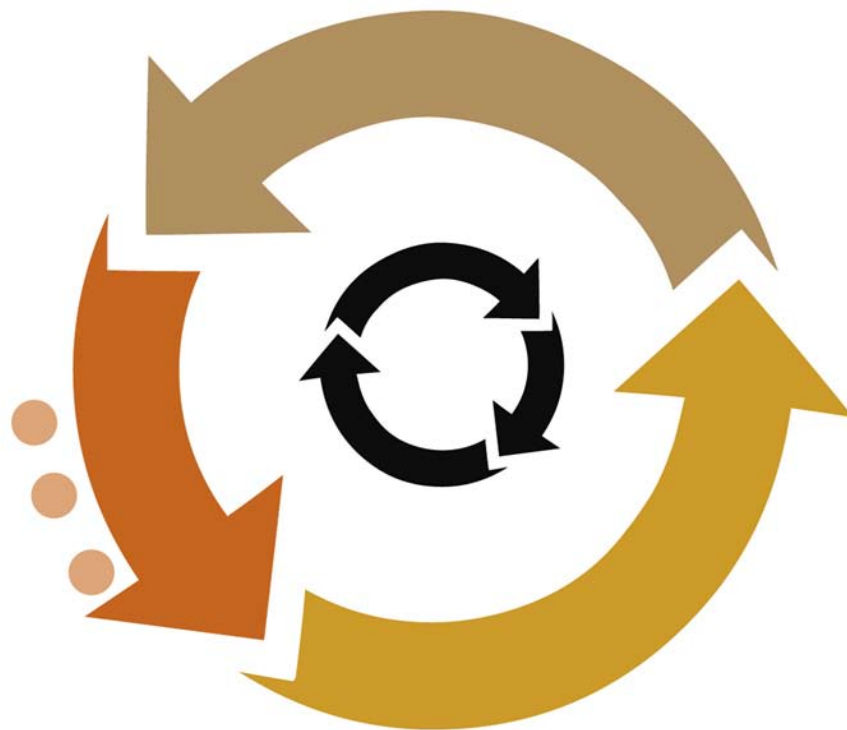
Assimilating New Technology Solutions

Twenty years ago, technology solutions for document management meant microfilm. Today, every organization faces a bewildering variety of technology solutions, all designed to improve some facet of managing records,

documents and information. These solutions include records management software, document management software, electronic imaging, workflow, full-text retrieval, etc.

When properly applied, each of these solutions can deliver outstanding business benefits. But none of them can simply be “dropped in place.” Successful deployment requires a high order of planning and execution, over a period of years. At Zasio Enterprises, we specialize in doing this. We diagnose problems with specific recordkeeping systems and determine what it would take to solve these problems. Also, we cost-justify these solutions and advise our clients how to assimilate them over the short-, medium-, and long-term. With this kind of advice, the organization has the best chance of success; without it, the probability of failure is high.

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Defining Investment Options

Every organization that wants to implement records management solutions faces choices of “good, better, best.” In other words, are the initiatives going to be basic, or state-of-the-art, or something in between? As strategic planners in enterprise records management, our job is to define these options and present them in a format that decision-makers can use in allocating resources.

Organizational and Staffing Issues

In our strategic plans, we frequently provide recommendations concerning the functional components of an enterprise-wide records management program, as well as its organizational placement. We also consider what type of staffing would be required in order to make enterprise records management a success. We define the various skill sets needed and recommend how they can best be deployed, and we define various options to traditional staffing methods, including outsourcing. Finally, we frequently assist our clients with staff recruitment services.

Client Review/Approval of Draft Plans

Every strategic plan for enterprise records management must be implemented in an organizational environment of scarce resources. Decisions concerning the allocation of those resources are sometimes “politically” sensitive. For these reasons, we work carefully with our clients to ensure that the recommendations in our strategic plans are expressed in an appropriate manner. This usually involves a very detailed client review/approval of our draft plans, with appropriate revisions until a final report is ready for submission.

Executive Briefings

After our strategic plans have been accepted by our clients, we frequently conduct executive briefings to various senior management staff. We typically present a succinct review of our most important findings and recommendations; then we discuss their priority for near- or extended- term implementation, along with the resources that must be allocated to ensure successful deployment.

Want to know more about how Zasio Enterprises can perform long-range strategic planning for enterprise records and information management at your organization?

Contact us at:

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