Enterprise Content Management from the Ground Up

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by **Sandra Nunn,** *MA, RHIA, CHP*

How a project that began with 50 policies and procedures critical to Joint Commission standards is growing into a content management system encompassing thousands of documents from across an organization.

Optimally healthcare organizations should arrive at an enterprise content management (ECM) strategy as part of overall information management planning. In reality, most healthcare entities are just awakening to the enormous potential that content management systems can bring to the complex environment of unstructured healthcare information. Most are feeling their way toward a comprehensive program step by step.

Healthcare organizations, particularly nonprofit systems like Presbyterian Healthcare Services of New Mexico, have very small operating margins and must evaluate each and every dollar spent. Those dollars must first be allocated to patient care and those direct care functions that can be primarily enabled by the application of IT.

Just such a scenario at Presbyterian opened the door to the acquisition of the first two modules of a content management system: document and record management.

Forming the Team, Defining the Program

In 2005, with an impending Joint Commission survey on the horizon and a recent Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services survey just past, Presbyterian leadership decided to fund the beginnings of a small content management system, with the provision that there would be an effort to provide a documented return on investment.

The first initiative was to organize and migrate into the ECM system the 50 policies and procedures deemed critical by Joint Commission standards. Nursing leadership and the organization's compliance officer determined that these 50 items must become easily accessible by any caregiver anywhere in the system, which encompasses multiple hospitals across the state, numerous clinics, home care, hospice, a health plan, and ambulance services.

The compliance officer designated a compliance analyst and a senior IT systems analyst to initiate the ECM project. They were joined by Presbyterian's enterprise records manager, whose role has roots in a 2003 project to develop an enterprise records management strategy and operationalize records management.

That earlier work had produced an organizational retention schedule and an enterprise records management policy for all records in the Presbyterian system. The policy and strategy cover the management of electronic and paper records in content management systems as well as records residing in other systems (i.e., financial, human resources, and clinical information systems).

Presbyterian's senior vice president and chief nursing officer and the vice president of compliance served as project sponsors. Additional clinical representation came from Presbyterian's quality institute (responsible for Joint Commission compliance) and from home health services. The health plan also expressed interest from the start in hopes of migrating all health plan policies and procedures into the ECM system, as well as all process maps for the emerging business process management effort.

Months later the team had created the metadata set that would be used to tag each piece of content contributed to the system. Using the already developed retention schedule, the team mirrored the document and record categories on the schedule, including financial, clinical, human resources, facilities management, legal and compliance, and administrative.

Another developmental step included creating a map of unstructured content types eligible for present or future movement into the ECM system. These types included policies and procedures, protocols, guidelines, schedules, clinical order sets, standards of care, blueprints, and references.

At the project deadline, the basic metadata structure was in place, the primary contributors had been trained, and the final editing process, completed by the enterprise records manager, had been accomplished. The 50 policies went online and were available to all system clinicians in time for the Joint Commission visit.

Three Years Later

After a slow initial start, the population of Presbyterian's electronic library has jumped to 3,000 documents from all sectors of the organization. There are also thousands of blueprints and inspection documents ready for migration in a pilot mass scanning project. Work is under way to develop the first phase of an enterprise thesaurus or taxonomy that will facilitate more pinpointed searching by more precise metadata tagging.

By 2007 the informal nature of the project had reached a threshold requiring more structure and governance. An enormous parallel Web content management project and its extensive content incorporation into another sector of ECM—the Web content management system—has provided additional incentive to go to a true enterprise content management strategy and plan.

The success of the electronic library has prompted a rush from other sectors of the organization, each clamoring to get its content into the library. This push has required further governance. A new committee has started to prioritize requests, review resource needs (the initial team is having trouble keeping up with demand), seek funding for system expansions and upgrades, determine interoperability with other systems, and monitor return on investment. The acquisition of the original ECM system vendor by one of the largest database management vendors in the world added an additional wrinkle.

In the midst of all of this activity, the ECM team remains excited by the potential to make enormous volumes of multispectrum records accessible, manageable, versionable, retrievable, retainable, and destroyable in a completely quality controlled environment.

Sandra Nunn *(snunn@phs.org) is enterprise records manager at Presbyterian Healthcare Services in Albuquerque, NM.*

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