

STARTING A DIGITAL RECORDS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

FOR YOUR SMALL BUSINESS



RECORDS MANAGEMENT IN THE 21ST CENTURY

As a small business owner, what matters most to you and your business? What do you believe stands between your company and success?

According to [a recent survey](#) conducted by Coleman Parkes Research and commissioned by Xerox, small businesses like yours rate the following factors as top priorities:

47%

Growing the business

47%

Increasing productivity through improved business practices

34%

Improving security and disaster recovery

Your business priorities probably look a lot like these — but much like your peers, you may not know the best way to solve for these challenges with the time and resources you have available.

Thankfully, there is a way to support all three of these business priorities: **Implementing a digital records management program.**

GROW YOUR BUSINESS BY...

Reducing storage costs

Slash overhead costs by simply reducing the need for paper record storage — and use that money to support other revenue-boosting projects.

\$11

per inch of paper document storage, [per year](#).

INCREASE PRODUCTIVITY BY...

Streamlining record accessibility

Less time spent searching for printed or poorly organized digital documents translates to more time to work on projects that make your business money.

10 minutes

are wasted [each time](#) documents must be retrieved and refiled.

IMPROVE DISASTER RECOVERY BY...

Enhancing record security

Transitioning to a digital records management program will safeguard your documents from real-world threats like floods, fire, and other natural disasters that could irreparably damage or destroy them.

60%

of small businesses would [shut down](#) within 6 months if they lost their data.



STARTING A RECORDS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM: THE 5-STEP SOLUTION

The world of business moves quickly, so the time to start a digital records management program is now.

IT ALL STARTS WITH THESE FIVE STEPS:

- 1** Determine your key stakeholders
- 2** Identify and consolidate your records with an organization-wide inventory
- 3** Create a program implementation plan
- 4** Identify external partners
- 5** Test, iterate, and improve

In this eBook, we'll explore how you can start a digital records management program in your small business —

plus tips on how to do it right the first time around.

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STEP 1: DETERMINE YOUR KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Before starting a records management program, you need to identify the people who will play a central role in its planning and execution. Make sure you consider:

Records Management Program Owner

The owner of the program is the most important role. You need to identify the single person ultimately responsible for making this work. It's fine to have numerous stakeholders, teams, and departments involved and responsible for portions of the program, but one person should be ultimately responsible for its success. If you have more than one person responsible, then no one is responsible.

The owner of the program will not be able to execute this by themselves; they'll need to designate, delegate, ask, persuade, direct, persuade, and assist others throughout the entire process. This person will be held accountable for the success of the entire program. Choose wisely!

Leadership

Identify who within your company ultimately holds the decision-making power. They'll play a crucial role in securing the resources and budget you need for project success. This person will help streamline the implementation of your records management program by providing the time and resources your team needs to be successful.



C-Suite Executives



Owners



Presidents

Administrative Personnel

Members of your administrative team can often spot inconsistencies or gaps that other specialists may not see, and will also help ensure your program is compliant with company or industry policies.



Legal



Human Resources



Finance

IT

Your IT team will identify which technology should be used for your records management program. These folks will lead decisions about system security and compliance requirements (.e.g. protecting sensitive data such as employee files or customer records).



Network engineers



Systems analysts



Software development programmers

Management

Your management team plays a crucial role in program success because they are at the front lines of implementation. These team members help train employees about new business processes, ensure compliance with new documentation standards, and identify key areas for improvement from the bottom up.



Team leaders



Department heads



Directors

End Users

End users are the people who will ultimately use and benefit from your records program. Their feedback should play a crucial role in your program's design and implementation. Since end users will interact with processes and procedures on a regular basis, they can also identify ways the program can be improved in future iterations.



Customers



Employees



Vendors



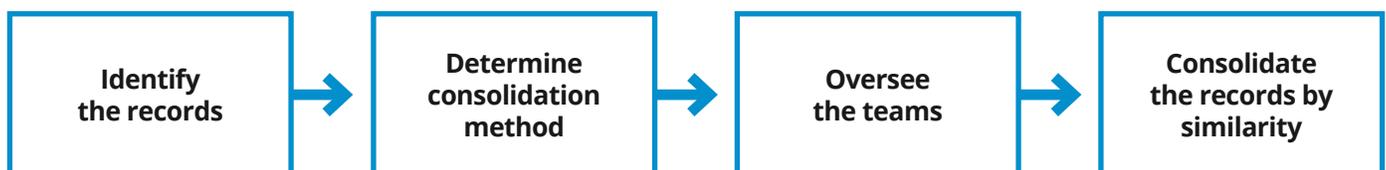
STEP 2: IDENTIFY AND CONSOLIDATE YOUR RECORDS

- 2** The next step in your program is to conduct an organization-wide inventory. By identifying and consolidating the relevant records for your electronic management program, you can better understand how to organize them for future access and storage.

Since you'll likely be dealing with a combination of digital records and physical records, make sure you have a secure location to store like records. Remember to account for any sensitive information you may have, and ensure this data is protected in a locked drawer or, in the case of digital files, by passwords, permissions, etc.

How to Conduct a Records Inventory

The first step of your inventory should be to have your teams (this could be by function, department, security level, etc.) identify the records they use and keep, and determine a method to consolidate them that would make sense for their use. Once each team has done this part, your next step is to take a high-level view of the various teams and see the similarities in record types for potential consolidation, and the differences to ensure there isn't any inappropriate mixing of data. This approach may take more time, but it also provides overlap and decreases the risk of missing information or having teams working at cross-purposes.



Regardless of how you approach your records inventory, make sure to account for the following:

GENERAL BUSINESS RECORDS

These are records you likely won't need in the event of an emergency.

MISSION-CRITICAL BUSINESS RECORDS

These play a crucial role in business continuity.

LEGALLY REQUIRED BUSINESS RECORDS

These are [records that are kept forever, or that have a specific lifespan](#). They aren't necessarily mission-critical, but you need to retain them for legal reasons.

SENSITIVE BUSINESS RECORDS

These contain confidential business information that should only be shared with certain people within your company.

CUSTOMER RECORDS

These contain sensitive information about your customers that your company has an obligation to protect, including any personally identifiable information like social security numbers, addresses or financial details.

ARCHIVED RECORDS

These records are outdated but provide context for a relevant business goal, or have intrinsic value because of their connection with your company's history.

OUTDATED OR DUPLICATE RECORDS

These records are redundant, don't appear to serve any business purpose, or both.

DOCUMENTING YOUR RECORDS INVENTORY

It's never too early to begin documenting your records. Though careful itemization of your records is more time-consuming than gathering your documentation into one place, it can help save time down the line. It's important to have an organized and accurate index of your records.

Record series title, type or category <i>(ex. general/business/customer records/etc.)</i>	Record Location	Record Use <i>(essential/non-essential)</i>	Description	Format <i>(hard copy or digital)</i>

Keep track of your records on a spreadsheet or similar document, making sure to capture:

- Record location
- Description
- Format (hard copy or digital)
- Record series title, type or category (such as general business, customer records, etc.)
- Record use (essential or non-essential)

Depending on your industry or business, you may choose to include other fields like date range (the date range within which the file is still valid) or file marker (if it's in a physical location like a file cabinet or drawer).



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STEP 3: CREATE A PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

An implementation plan serves as a roadmap for your organization, as well as a single source of truth for the program stakeholders. Your implementation plan will keep your team aligned and moving toward the same goal.

When creating your plan, be sure to include information about:

Why

Identify why you're implementing a records management program. Establishing your "why" early on can give you a clearer goal or set of expectations. There are a few ways you can do this:

- ▶ Use anecdotal and/or quantitative evidence from your company that highlights why a records management program is needed.

Example: *A surprise audit from a regulatory or governmental agency can be a nightmare without a comprehensive records management program.*

- ▶ Illustrate your vision of success, along with clear and achievable goals that your team can get behind.

Example: *Our goal is to reduce overhead costs by 20% by reducing the need for physical record storage.*

- ▶ Highlight how these changes will ultimately help people on each team perform better.

Example: *A records management program will allow our departments to share insights and knowledge quickly and easily.*

What

What do you want your records management program to look like, feel like, and operate like? Since this is your first program structure, it'll serve as the foundation for future iterations. Here's a way to create clarity:

- ▶ Define your vision, and then document it.
- ▶ Use this guide to spearhead the implementation process.
- ▶ Make this guide available so the program won't get caught up in the "doing" instead of stopping to ask, "What's the reason we're doing things this way?"



TIP:

Start small and keep things simple. The most successful programs are iterative, and you won't always see the small issues and opportunities for improvement until you've seen your processes and procedures in action. Mistakes and failure can be a good thing as long as you learn and improve.

When

Creating a timeline to implement your records management program will help keep stakeholders on track, and will help managers and other leadership members allocate resources accordingly. An easy way to do this is by attaching your biggest goals to specific deadlines, and then [working backward](#) for milestones.

You should also create a strategy for checking with stakeholders at specific milestones or major goals within your program implementation steps. Though every project is different, some possible milestones could be:

COMMUNICATION

Completion of a meeting such as a project kickoff event.

DECISIONS

Key moments, such as the selection of a new vendor or electronic document management system.

PROCESSES

The commencement or completion of new documentation processes.

TIMING

The end of a calendar year, quarter, month, or any other set timeframe.

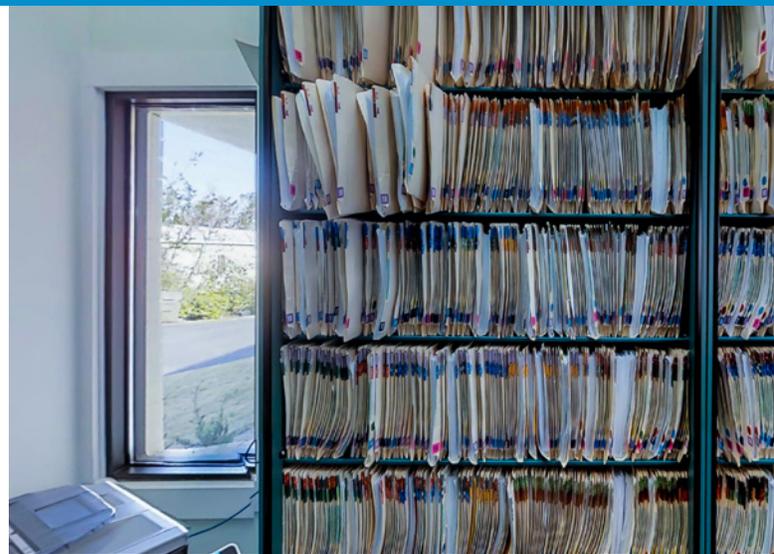
TRAINING

Following a knowledge transfer to another team or group.

Who

Identify the key people that will serve as points-of-contact for specific portions of the program implementation. Make sure you have a plan for when these individuals are out of town or unavailable.

- ▶ In smaller companies, everyone may play a role in planning and implementation. In mid-sized companies, select a committee or strategic team with individuals from each stakeholder category (executives, administration, etc.).
- ▶ Document this list of contacts in an easy-to-access place, like a digital spreadsheet.
- ▶ Make sure someone is responsible for keeping this contact list up to date.
- ▶ Identify smaller goals for each point of contact so they know how their actions impact the program.



How

You already know what your project goal is and who will be involved. Your next step is to identify the tactics, processes, and strategy you'll leverage to meet your goals. Organize and document these methods and processes in a single location, and make sure everyone knows which apply to them.

Document the following when crafting your implementation plan:

- 1 New methods, processes, and procedures you plan to use
- 2 Which goal or milestone it supports
- 3 Who is in charge of executing this item
- 4 When and how often they should execute the process
- 5 What deliverables are expected
- 6 When and how your team will track completion/success
- 7 When and how your team will make improvements



4 STEP 4: IDENTIFY EXTERNAL PARTNERS

Once your implementation plan is established, you'll probably spot gaps that can't be filled by your team — either because they don't have the knowledge required, or because they don't have the time, tools or resources to do it right.

Your next step will be **identifying external partners** to fill these gaps.

How to Identify Knowledge or Resource Gaps

Even in situations where your team is capable of performing a particular task or process themselves, it's not always time-effective to do so. Often, external partners can help streamline and expedite planning and execution because of their unique skillset, resources or experience in a particular area.

To determine if a critical gap in your project plan is important enough to warrant hiring an external partner, ask yourself the following:

- Would the time it takes a team member to do this work be better utilized in another area?
- Would it be cheaper to hire an external partner, considering the hourly breakdown of the task performed internally?
- Will you need to purchase additional equipment to perform this task? Could that equipment be used for other purposes or used regularly enough to warrant a purchase?
- Would undertaking a particular task damage or negatively influence team morale?

Look Out for These Common Gaps

Few small or medium-sized businesses have all the equipment necessary for a records management program. Common gaps that are usually filled by an external partner include:

- ▶ Responsible and secure record destruction
- ▶ Quick and efficient record scanning and digitization (external partners have experience and own the hardware and software)
- ▶ Robust record storage and security



How to Evaluate and Select Partners

Once you know which areas you'll need extra support from an external partner, you'll need to choose companies to support your records management program.

To determine whether they're up to the task, consider the following:

COMPANY STRENGTHS

What do they do well? Are their strengths broad or do they specialize in a few things exclusively?

COMPANY PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

Are you comfortable with how they handle their clients' physical and digital records as it relates to transparency and security?

COMPANY TENURE

Are they newcomers or veterans in the business?

COMPANY CASE STUDIES AND PREVIOUS CLIENTS

Can their previous clients vouch for their performance (and do they)?

COMPANY LEADERSHIP

Do they have leaders that know the industry and have the experience to help you?

COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE

Make sure you have a plan in place to keep communication with your new external partners clear and straightforward. Weigh these factors:

► HOW?

Identify and communicate how you will determine if an external partner is successful.

► WHO?

Determine primary points of contact for each external partner, as well as internally.

► WHEN?

Set up a regular schedule to check in on progress. The frequency of these check-ins can change as your project progresses.



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STEP 5: TEST, ITERATE, AND IMPROVE

A successful records management program is never truly finished. In reality, it's an ongoing process that will continue as long as you have documents to manage.

After you implement the first iteration of your program, you should have a plan for maintaining, testing, and improving it. Start by considering these factors:

1 COMPARE PROGRAM BENCHMARKS WITH YOUR GOALS

You set program success goals during your planning phase, and this is the time to check up on them.

2 DETERMINE HOW OFTEN YOU WILL REVIEW THESE BENCHMARKS

Establish a regular schedule that will guide how often you review performance. Factor in opportunities for program stakeholders and end users to contribute and provide feedback.

3 CREATE GOALS FOR EACH ITERATION OF YOUR PROGRAM

What are your goals now that you've finished the major part of the project? Make sure these are documented before making changes to your program.

With each iteration, consider what new types of records or data you need to consolidate as part of your program. This step may require the [support of external partners](#) on a continued basis.



TIP:

As technology continues to accelerate, fragmented data is inevitable. Your company might benefit from new techniques and new processes, but how will you integrate old and new technology?

CLOSING: AT A GLANCE CHECKLIST

Step 1:

Determine Your Key Stakeholders

Identify who will play a role in your records management program:

- Records Management Program Owner
- Executives
- Administration (Legal, HR, Finance)
- IT and Security
- Management
- End Users

Step 2:

Identify and Consolidate Your Records

Gather all your relevant documents in one place, including:

- General business records
- Mission-critical business records
- Legally required business records
- Sensitive business records
- Customer records with sensitive information
- Archived records
- Outdated or duplicate records

Step 3:

Create a Program Implementation Plan

Have answers to the following:

Why

- Identify why you're implementing a records management program.

What

- Define what you want your records management program to look like, feel like, and operate like.
- Document this vision and use it to guide the implementation process.

When

- Attach your biggest goals to specific deadlines, and then work backward for milestones.

Step 3 Continued

- Create a plan or strategy to check in on progress with key stakeholders at specific milestones or major goals.

Who

- Identify points of contact for specific portions of the project, with support for these points of contact if they're not available.

How

- Identify the methods, processes, and procedures you plan to use.
- Organize and document these items.

Step 4:

Identify External Partners

As you solidify your plan, take these next steps:

- Identify gaps
What parts of your plan do you lack the bandwidth, tools, or expertise to accomplish?
- Research and select partners
Determine if a partner agency or organization can streamline your program implementation.
- Create a communication plan with external partners
Decide how often you'll need to communicate with your external partners, and for how long.

Step 5:

Test, Iterate, and Improve

Now that your project is off the ground, it's time to test, iterate, and improve. Use these simple guidelines to do it right:

- Compare to program benchmarks to determine project success. The goals you set from your implementation plan are key here.
- Determine how often you will review these benchmarks and seek feedback from stakeholders.
- Create new goals for each iteration of your program.

MAKE YOUR RECORDS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM A SUCCESS

Your records management program will only be successful if you have the right approach. Thinking carefully about each step of your program before you make changes to your processes will keep your team members on the same page, and all stakeholders aligned behind a common goal.

Most importantly, don't set out to achieve perfection with your records management program — especially if this is the first time you've formalized a program within your company. Your goal should be to make small but meaningful changes with each program iteration.

Lastly, the quality of your records management consultants and partners will strongly influence the strength of your program. Leverage external expertise wherever possible, and don't be afraid to ask for help when you need it.

For guidance on how to start your records management program for your business, contact the team at BMI Imaging. With over six decades of experience in records management and imaging in a variety of industries, we're here to help your company start off on the right foot.

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