



eDM & eWorkflow Process Automation Overview

Overview

An initial Assessment of Business Processes, Documents and Workflow needs is typically done by Point North Consulting to identify the areas where such business process improvements and automation could have the most impact as well as identify the types of improvements that would be most effective.

Fact-finding by these assessment interviews and staff disclosures allows the Point North consultant and the client to better understand the business and the priority of problems that are faced in the current environment. It can also reveal the degree of awareness the client staff currently has regarding electronic Document Management (eDM), electronic Content Management (eCM) and electronic document Workflow (eWorkflow) technology and how it might be applied to their business needs.

The Point North consultant uses the results of this assessment to summarize the current processes and problems as well as present a “vision” for the future that addresses these problem areas and the goals of the client.

During this process, Point North’s information transfer and recommendations are normally presented in a vendor-neutral form, unless a specific eDM/eWorkflow solution has already been selected.

Typically, there are many ways eDM imaging, electronic document capture, storage, processing, sharing, and workflow provide opportunities for improved efficiency, speed, reliability and cost/performance such as.

- Help minimize manpower expansion as transaction volumes increase
- Streamline transaction processing tasks for improved responsiveness and efficiency
- Allow distributed domestic & international work centers virtually anywhere via the Internet
- Eliminating paper-storage and paper-shuffling delays and inefficiencies.
- Able to locate, share and view documents instantly—when and where they are needed.

The key message for the client is that:

“eDM is not simply an electronic replacement for a filing cabinet – In order to obtain full benefits from eDM/eWorkflow technology, it must be designed and integrated into the Business Processes of your organization”.

Ideally, eDM and eWorkflow becomes an integral part of the way you work and share documents as well as used cooperatively with your computerized business software applications.

The eDM Initiative

The eDM/eWorkflow initiative begins with the following process steps:

1. **eDM Assessment** – Where are we on readiness for business process improvements? What are our primary needs? In what ways will eDM and eWorkflow best benefit our enterprise and meet our needs?

Point North Consulting recommends that an eDM steering committee be formed by the client to participate in interviews, reviews and approve requirements, selections, designs and acceptance of eDM solutions. The Point North consultant interviews key staff members and facilitates committee meetings to document and present findings that need to be approved in order to proceed to the next step.

Some Examples of Key Requirements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Must provide a unified and consistent method for storing, retrieving, sharing, processing and protecting documents independent of the type of document media: paper, eMail, Fax, Photos, Drawings, and digital documents in word-processor, spreadsheet, presentation, PDF and other electronic file formats under a common security system that controls and tracks: access, changes and manages company retention policies.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Must substantially Reduce Cost per Transaction to remain competitive.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Must provide efficient, accurate and reliable tracking of all documents and individual's actions involving a transaction.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Must improve control and efficiency in the processing, storage and retrieval of paper and electronic documents across the enterprise.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Must be able to provide real-time display for each eWorkflow step of its: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Work Pending ◦ Work In-Process ◦ Work Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Must be able to provide real-time eWorkflow control to designated supervisors and administrators allowing them to re-assign workflow loads and responsibilities dynamically: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ For a Temporary Period of Time ◦ Reassign Work Responsibilities and Workflows ◦ Workflow Business Rules and paths

2. **eDM Requirements Definition** – The Point North consultant conducts more in-depth interviews to formally document departmental and enterprise requirements that need to be met by the selected vendor and eDM Solution as well as improved functional business processes that are integrated with technology.

Typically many organizations utilize computerized applications and databases, but that is only part of the complete application process which also involves paper and electronic documents that are currently handled in ad hoc manual and semi-automated ways.

These ad hoc storage, retrieval and process methods currently produce much duplication of documents and extra work that creates long delays and inefficiencies. A good example of this is email that may also contain attached documents.

The email systems such as Microsoft Exchange were designed to communicate email messages, not to archive emails and attached documents forever. In order to find the documents you need across departments or the enterprise today, you often need to know whether they were originated as paper, emails, faxes, etc. and who may have filed them where – Then search the correct location silos, document media and utilize the correct toolset to find each piece of information you need.

Effective eDM solutions today can offer the convenience of finding any documents you are authorized to see with a click of your mouse from any web-based location. This is particularly useful when looking at one document of interest and you are able to find all desired documents that are related to it with a click; such as looking at a particular invoice from a supplier and click to find the associated contract document image for that supplier as well as click to see the payment check image for each related invoice.

The Point North eWorkflow consultant can assist your staff in identifying and prototyping different business process improvements so that they may experience and better understand how the technology help them work more effectively.

Our goal is to understand the client's business and problems as well as allow the client to understand the potential of eDM and eWorkflow technologies to positively improve their business processes and efficiency.

- 3. eDM Solution Selection** – Optionally, the Point North consultant can help you identify appropriate eDM/eWorkflow solutions and vendors or contact appropriate vendors to solicit information and general pricing information with a Request for Information (RFI) as well as assist the client in the preparation of an effective Request for Proposal (RFP) that insures that qualified vendors will respond and make quality proposals.

The Point North eDM/eWorkflow consultant can also assist the client during the selection process and in understanding the many business and technical tradeoffs presented by vendor finalists plus provide the client support during final negotiations with vendors. However, it is the client Executive Sponsor and eDM steering committee that makes the final informed vendor and eDM/eWorkflow product decisions.

- 4. eDM Solution Implementation Project** – Although the eDM-vendor may have their own team’s project manager, Point North can provide an experienced eDM/eWorkflow project manager on the client’s side to insure that the requirements were faithfully interpreted and represented in the solution as well as managing all approved changes.

The client IT and other staff typically have other committed duties and an independent PMI-trained Point North Project Manager familiar with the eDM requirements reduces the project’s impact on the busy client organization and is a key ingredient for success.

The major eDM Implementation Project tasks involve the following:

- **Project Kickoff** – Introduction of the vendor implementation team and the key staff members on the eDM committee so all will have a common understanding of the project and their roles.
- **Engineering and Design TOI** – The Point North Project Manager will spend time with the vendor engineering and installation staffs and arrange any client staff liaison required at the beginning of the project to adapt the vendor-neutral requirements and process design to features and capabilities provided by the eDM/eWorkflow solution vendor as well as any custom-integration points necessary to integrate with the existing client systems and processes.
- **Prototype and Review eWorkflow Business Process Designs** – The eDM and eWorkflow system is designed by Point North in concert with client functional area management and staff. Each automated process is demonstrated and tested with key department staff involved for their feedback and approval as well as by the eDM vendor lead and Point North.

- ***eDM Installation, Configuration, Custom Integration, Training & Acceptance*** – The vendor and IT staff participate jointly to install the eDM/eWorkflow solution and database for the eDM system as the beginning portion of the training and transfer of information to client IT administrators to insure that the IT-staff can support the eDM Systems.

In the case of eDM/eWorkflow Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) vendor-hosted solutions, the vendor will provide the initial and ongoing solution maintenance freeing the client from these tasks and concerns.

The vendor eDM lead and the Point North consultant work closely to insure that the eDM configuration matches the client’s requirements, application process needs and appropriate security permissions.

As with any project, the Point North Project Manager coordinates with vendor engineering staff and the installation lead as well as client IT and functional staffs to define and resolve problems and issues as they arise.

The client may elect to have all formal training supplied onsite or at a remote location.

In some cases, only key client staff are trained formally by Point North and/or the eDM-solution vendor so that the key-client staff may use a “Train the Trainer” approach to complete the eDM and eWorkflow training for the remaining users.

Having key-staff provide training prepares existing staff to handle future training needs for new hires or transferred employees. When handled properly, using in-house staff can improve employee acceptance of process change and new technology.

- ***eDM Production Deployment*** – After TOI training and acceptance testing on the improved operational processes and eDM/eWorkflow automation the production cutover plan is executed and may continue with support from Point North and/or the eDM-solution vendor for a short period of time to insure that the cutover is successful.

What Are the Results?

Each company has its own parameters, requirements and issues, so the time required to implement automated eDM and eWorkflow business process improvements can vary considerably with scope and complexity.

However, having experienced Point North consultants to facilitate, lead and prototype significant business process improvements can produce substantial results in a relative short time at key-milestones providing for management review and oversight. Each milestone allows the client to distribute the risk and cost allowing management to clearly understand the results to-date and the cost and opportunities going forward.

When a client has a lot of overlapping eDM needs across its organizational units plus a homogeneous modern computer system and network infrastructure in-place, it can make an initial enterprise-wide solution practical and be the most-effective approach because documents and their processing often cross organizational boundaries.

The most-significant impact of an eDM system is its potential for Enterprise-Wide Sharing and Electronic Access of essential documents in near real-time.

In other cases, a determination of priorities within an overall eDM/eWorkflow design approach can be done on an incremental or departmental level approach allowing time to resolve and integrate other technology and infrastructure issues.

The main caution with the incremental approach is: you need to be sure to establish a vision for the “big picture” of eDM/eWorkflow and business process directions so that the initial incremental approaches for the short-term are consistent and adaptable to your long-term goals for eDM and eWorkflow in your organization or enterprise.

Although this might seem to be an impossible and expensive task, efforts to understand both the long term and short term goals and requirements can pay significant dividends. Experienced Point North staff can help you establish the proper goals, vision and design directions for your improved business processes.

The following examples illustrate how some of the key requirements can be met by proper eDM product selection and integration with business and automated systems:

Example Requirements	Example Solution Results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Must provide a unified and consistent method for storing, retrieving, sharing, processing and protecting documents independent of the type of document media: paper, eMail, Fax, Photos, Drawings, and digital documents in word-processor, spreadsheet, presentation, PDF and other electronic file formats under a common security system that controls and tracks: access, changes and manages company retention policies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reduced paper-shuffling & eliminated paper-storage with digital-image storage at a fraction of the cost and negligible real-estate footprint. ○ Fast electronic search plus image display and attachment as output faxes and emails ○ Automatic Association and Retrieval of Related Documents by the eDM System ○ Able to Dynamically Link from an invoice to a Contract, to a payment check image so any/all of these document images can be viewed in a workstation window virtually anywhere. ○ Reduced search and handling time because “you are always only a click or two away from the document you need”.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Must substantially Reduce Cost per Transaction to remain competitive. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ eDM capture of all host-generated documents with bar-coded ID Numbers allows these documents to be turned around by the client’s customers with added information and automatically captured, indexed and associated with all other documents for the same transaction and other IDs. ○ Less handling of documents, since all documents for a transaction are associated and all be displayed with one click. ○ Agent handoffs during a transaction cycle due to shift changes or other reasons are easier since all emails, faxes, contracts, etc. are shared and available to the next operator and not buried in some agent’s personal email or fax folder.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Must provide efficient, accurate and reliable tracking of all documents and individual’s actions involving a transaction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Every eDM document is time stamped and has a recorded history of who did what/when as it is captured and optionally when annotated or signed. ○ This requirement is met despite whether eDM documents are handled independently using only the eDM system or cooperatively from the in-house business application. ○ Network access to the organization’s business database automatically obtains consistent information to index captured eDM documents without modifying computerized applications.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Must improve control and efficiency in the processing, storage and retrieval of paper and electronic documents across the enterprise. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ All documents are captured and stored with comprehensive security permissions access controls. ○ Powerful search and document viewing capabilities allow near real-time access to documents. ○ Many departments may need to quickly view a contract from time to time – Manually, this is typically a 24-hour turnaround that involves labor-intensive manual filing, xerox copying & re-filing. <p>With eDM. an electronic search and display is almost immediate while the customer is still on the phone so it can be discussed without a callback delay plus multiple users can look at the same document-image at the same time.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Must be able to provide real-time display for each eWorkflow step of its: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Work Pending ○ Work In-Process ○ Work Completed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ The eWorkflow solution chosen provides real-time dashboard capabilities displaying information and status regarding the actual process task or workflow path being viewed that indicates the amount of work pending, in-process, completed, average processing time, average time at task, number of resources (i.e., people assigned), etc.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Must be able to provide real-time eWorkflow control to designated supervisors and administrators allowing them to re-assign workflow loads and responsibilities dynamically: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ For a Temporary Period of Time ○ Reassign Work Responsibilities and Workflows ○ Workflow Business Rules and paths 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ The eWorkflow solution chosen provides real-time display and control capabilities for each eWorkflow worker, process task and workflow path allowing dynamic changes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Dynamically assign worker resources to a process task permanently or for a specified number of hours, days or weeks. ○ Dynamically make or apply pre-defined changes to workflow business rules, paths and add new processes.

Conclusion

Point North can improve your return on investment in an eDM/eCM or eWorkflow system by providing your organization with a vendor-neutral perspective on your requirements and opportunities. Our goal is to maximize the cost-effectiveness and benefits you are able to obtain from electronic Document Management and electronic Workflow Systems.

Properly assessing your eDM and eWorkflow opportunities and making the right eDM vendor/product choices initially will pay significant dividends on your investment in a Point North led eDM/eWorkflow initiative.

The companion Point North Consulting *Business Process Optimization Overview* white paper can provide you insight into some of the many ways Point North Consulting is able to help you do assessment, analysis and establish a vision for new business opportunities and solutions.

Likewise, the Point North Consulting *Information Management Overview* white paper identifies many of the ways Point North can help you with Business Intelligence reporting and electronic dashboards as well as migration and support for Enterprise Legacy, CRM, ERP and eCommerce systems.