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# Key points for managing content

*By Tom Kuhr*

Everything is content!

All types of data, systems and applications are content and should be easily accessible through the Web. This includes Web pages, documents, databases, enterprise applications, Web services, files, images — anything digital.

Business efficiencies can only be improved when all content can be accessed and delivered to the right person at the right time. Following are some crucial points.

- Reduce complexity: Use one system to manage content. Connect to business content whenever possible, instead of building complex, integrated application stacks that are difficult to upgrade and are costly to maintain.

- Don't duplicate content: Moving content into a content management system's repository only increases system complexity, adds latency and leads to synchronization problems. You should only have one instance of any piece of content, and it should reside in its native source system.

- Focus on your business, not your applications: By unifying business content (the real essence of the business) rather than integrating applications (which are just tools used to manage content) you can focus on content, processes and knowledge, and easily upgrade or change applications as business needs evolve without affecting the underlying content.

- Take advantage of multi-channel publishing: Sales forces, supply chains, vendors, partners and customers are becoming more and more demanding that information be provided anywhere, anytime. Put your product catalog on your salesperson's PDA, and allow access to your intranet through a mobile phone — using the same content system. Even if this is not in within your focus today, ensure you build to the future.

- Visibility is important: Information is useless unless you can find it. Managing multiple sites throughout the world effectively requires the ability to see and search all of your content. Bring information from a Hong Kong subsidiary together with financial reports from Australia — right to your Web browser.

- Protect your brand: Make sure that your logo and look is represented according to corporate design standards on every Web property you operate. Your brand is invaluable, and your Web properties should look and feel the same anywhere in the world.

- Empower authors: Get better visibility into your business by allowing the talented people with specific knowledge of their domain to share it across the company. Distributed authoring of content

ensures knowledge is not lost, but recorded and available to anyone at anytime.

Authoring should be a non-technical endeavor that blends into an employee's everyday work, using their existing desktop tools.

- Workflow is process: Businesses depend on processes, but creating processes that engage multiple applications are costly and hard to build. If process is based on content, rather than applications, cross-application workflow is straightforward.

  Booking a sales order could touch three or five people, and two to three systems (or more). By enforcing a process through the Web (intranet, extranet, and/or Internet), the applications and people who need to work with that order can all be alerted immediately. Focus on content, and use workflow to manage transactions and processes, regardless of the underlying applications.

- Go global: Businesses today are expanding globally faster than ever. Make sure the systems you implement now can manage global content.

  Look for localized authoring tools, multi-character set and transcode support, and multi-currency support; and multi-cultural support. Allow corporate standards to be enforced globally, while allowing local adaptations. You will be ready to quickly build business anywhere in the world, as opportunities arise.

- Managing content is an infrastructure decision: Businesses spend enormous amounts of time and money building knowledge, developing documents, and investing in applications to improve operations.

By understanding that everything is content, you are ready to transform your business from an application-based infrastructure to a content-based infrastructure and leverage all of these assets across the enterprise.

Content infrastructure will you enable your enterprise to grow and expand without increasing complexity, and without system dependency. Content is the business, and delivering content through the web means you can deliver the right information into the right hands, in realtime.

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