

The Road to Best Practices
in
Email
Management

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Coordinating Council



Good Morning!

My name is TJ Wasden and I've been asked to update you today on the wonderful work and tremendous research regarding Email management that has been done by a great group of people.

I am excited to be here again this year and appreciate the opportunity to present, in accordance with our theme, some practical solutions for managing electronic records.

Thank you to Arann Sheperd of TSLAC for the invitation to be here today. And a very special thank you to Dan McGowan, Program Specialist on my team, that really helped with this presentation.

This morning, I invite you to join me on a virtual journey on the road toward best practices in email management. There is a lot of information out there and I've done my best to condense and organize it for our time together today. I hope you will find it both meaningful now and, more importantly, helpful in the work you do day in and day out for the people of Texas.

What's the Plan?

Just like any trip, there are questions that have to be answered. The plan for this journey is to try and answer these four questions:

Who's coming with us?

What's the starting point?

Where are we going?

And how we are getting there?

Alright, let's go!



Who's Coming With Us?

Who's coming with us on our virtual journey? Well, in reality, we have an entire team of professionals that today's work represents. It is my pleasure to serve as the co-chair of the Best Practices for Managing Digital Information Committee of the Records Management Interagency Coordinating Council. That's a mouthful – so generally we say RMICC when referring to the Council.

RMICC plays a significant role in the management of state government records. The council's membership and role is established in statute. They are charged with studying records management issues that are relevant to our State Agencies, and then reporting on them along with recommendations to the Governor and Legislature.



Who's Coming With Us? #2



In 2008, RMICC commissioned the Best Practices for Managing Digital Information Committee and asked Martha Richardson to chair it and to develop information for the Council's 2009-2010 Biennial Report to the Texas Legislature.

Leadership of the Best Practices for Managing Digital Information Committee, which we call BPC for short, transitioned earlier this year, to Jan Ferrari and me, serving as co-chairs. Jan?

We meet every other month and have three working groups, that in turn meet once a month. These are:

1. Social Media Records Management WG
2. e-Records Management WG
3. e-Mail Management WG

The BPC approved goals and objectives toward which we are working:

1. To identify best practices in **standards and information architecture** for managing digital information at Texas' agencies, educational institutions and other entities.
2. To specifically examine and report on the areas of I) **e-mail management**, II) **e-records management** and III) **social media records management**.
3. To **recommend actions** that encourage access, choice, interoperability, cost-effectiveness and appropriate government control.

Really, the bottom line is that those of us that are on this journey with you are fellow Records Managers, Attorneys, IT Professionals, and the like. We are all government employees doing our best to fulfill our responsibilities to the people of Texas. [CLICK]

What is Our Starting Point?

You know, if you are anything like me and other members of the workgroup, anytime you start down that road of thinking about the exchange between records management and e-mail, this is probably the image that comes to mind!

[Graphic of extremely complex highway interchange]

And if we add statistics into the mix, which I'm going to give you just a very few, it just doesn't take long for exasperation to set in.



How many emails are sent each day?



Does anyone know how many emails are sent each day?

According to a study by the Radicati Group in April 2010, it's at 294...billion every day. Which translates to 2.8 M every second. It is staggering.



What's Good, Bad and Ugly?



In 2009, more than 800 organizations were surveyed by AIIM - the Associating for Information and Image Management.

They published the results in a document entitled "Email Management – The good, the bad and the ugly." Among other things, here's what was found:

- 1) The average employee spends more than 1 ½ hours a day processing e-mail
- 2) 84% of organizations don't have policies to justify the deletion of non-critical e-mail
- 3) 90% of organizations have NOT completed an enterprise-wide initiative to deal with e-mail



So, Where Do I Start?



"A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." – Lao Tzu, Chinese philosopher (604-531 BCE)

So, if you weren't feeling like this before you may be now after hearing some of these statistics. To put a Texas spin on it, one of the workgroup members said in a meeting - "It's like the Wild West out there!"

So, I hope you can see why the BPC decided that this issue had to be addressed by one of the workgroups and why

TSLAC and DIR wanted this to be on today's agenda. [CLICK to fade picture out and reveal Lao-tzu quote]

And to answer the question...we start by taking a step! We start by knowing that imperfect action is better than perfect inaction. And we start by realizing that, whether they know it or not, the people we serve are counting on us to help them take care of the records of this great State.

Where Are We Going?



"Problems cannot be solved by the same level of thinking that created them." – Albert Einstein

The first thing I'd like you to think about when I ask, "Where are we going" is YOU. Let me say that again...

This quote from Albert Einstein reminds us that we need to recognize that we have to think at a different level if we hope to find solutions to problems that were created at our current level of thinking.

So, I'm asking you to think about yourself for a moment...most folks don't usually have a problem thinking about themselves! But you might here, because I am encouraging you to ask yourselves some tough questions:

What do I bring to the table at meetings? Am I seen as a problem solver or do I focus on all that's wrong?

Do I try to get people to do what I want or do I seek to help through my service?

Do I let the perfect be the enemy of the good?

Where Are We Going? #2



When you have had a little time to step back and think about yourself - you may find that a destination such as this is actually possible:

A place where management is not only interested, but excited about Email Records Management.

Somewhere that compliance is simply routine.

A place where your input is sought out as decisions are made.

Wow! Wouldn't that be nice! Now, I assure you I'm not making this up, I'm not suffering from too much caffeine today...I have actually seen glimpses of this records management promise land from time to time!

And the point that I hope you will take away is simply that you are the person that has a tremendous impact on how records management is viewed in your organization - which, in turn, helps determine where it goes.



What Baggage Do We Want to Leave Behind?



Going on this journey means you've got to pack your bags carefully. And I bet you can appreciate that you might be able to pack light because our BPC email workgroup has discovered a number of things that you will no longer need!

Leave behind Legal Exposure for the Agency:

I'm betting most of you would agree that most managers and executives at our agencies see it as part of their job to protect the Agency from risk.

Studies from both AIIM and ARMA remind us that electronic messages are generally subject to discovery, governmental investigations, public information requests, and audits. Email messages are subject to the same tests as paper documents in determining record status. Lack of control over e-mail can result in a sensitive document being sent to a third party, invalidating even the attorney/client privilege. This reality does not protect the agency.

When you add in the costs of not protecting our information, you start to get a real sense of how vulnerable we might be. A legal study published this year estimated that the cost of electronic discovery may approach \$30k per gigabyte. This works out to about 50 cents per e-mail - and from there you can do the math for your own organization.

What Baggage Do We Want to Leave Behind? #2



Leave behind a Negative Impact on Business Productivity:

We are all public servants - they pay our salary. We do a lot less of that when we are bouncing back and forth in Emails what a phone call could solve or, sometimes, we may even find ourselves locked in Email jail and not be able to see what our customers are asking of us.

Remember what I said earlier? That the average employee spends more than 1 ½ hours a day processing email.

IT Business Edge estimates e-mail overhead costs organizations more than \$5K per user every year. They also indicate that you can actually boost productivity by 3.5% by educating staff on limiting the use of "reply all" and another 3.5% if they know how to write clearly and concisely. Can you imagine a 7% increase in productivity with just those two steps?

Additionally, a publication by Redgrave Daley Ragan & Wagner, entitled "*Building an ROI Business Case for Email Archiving*" found, among other things:

Today's knowledge workers, which pretty much all of us are classified as in this room, spend more than 4 weeks (182 hours) per year searching for lost e-messages. I'd much rather be on vacation!

What Baggage Do We Want to Leave Behind? #3



Leave behind the Risks – and costs – of poorly managed electronic records

When you have a clear policy and process in place for dealing with electronic mail, much of the worry and potential costs can also be left behind.

You don't keep paying for hard drive storage for messages you don't need. And you don't have to pay someone to look for ones you can't find. And you are confident that all know how to keep the ones they need to.

The workgroup found a report about one company that analyzed all of its discovery requests over a three year period. It turned out that about half of the documents kept were passed their retention at a cost of over \$12M.

Another company could have saved over 2 ½ M if they had managed their Email better. That was the fine after it came to light that 11 of its senior employees had failed to preserve e-mails that were subject to a legal hold.

This is baggage all of us can do without, not only as government workers, but as taxpayers!

How Do We Get There?

"Great things are not done by impulse, but by a series of small things brought together."

– Vincent van Gogh

Probably one of the most beloved artists worldwide is Vincent van Gogh, who reminds us that...

Great things are not done by impulse, but by a series of small things brought together.

So what follows are some "small things"...actually some small and some large that the workgroup has found so far. They are all doable, practical actions that you can take to help you get to the desired destination of Email management.



How Do We Get There? #2



Simplify your retention schedule:

The workgroup has found several examples of different organizations' successful endeavor to simplify their retention schedule. The reality on the ground is that busy employees just don't take the time to learn and use an overly complex classification system, so you need to keep it simple.

One way of simplifying is what is commonly known as classifying your records into "big buckets."

One example they found is this one from our very own Texas State Library & Archives Commission

They use a traditional, yet simplified Records Series broken into sections of:

- 1) Correspondence
- 2) Personnel (performance appraisals, leave requests, etc.)
- 3) Agency- or job-specific
(Transitory records are weeded out beforehand.)

How Do We Get There? #3

Another example is from Dallas County, where two years ago they created their own rules around e-mail. This system included standard folders (or buckets) and made each end-user responsible for correctly archiving (or deleting) their electronic messages.

In essence, I'm pretty sure that is where most of our agencies fall - it is the end-user's responsibility to deal - OR NOT deal as the case may be - with their Email. But I'm equally sure that we could learn a lot from how Dallas County implemented their program with clear instructions and thorough training.



How Do We Get There? #4

The workgroup also found that the state of Kentucky uses a functional buckets approach and classified records as:

Non-business related (destroy at any time)

Reference/informational (retain as long as useful)

Short-term retention (subfolders such as correspondence and activity reports)

Permanent retention (not defined)

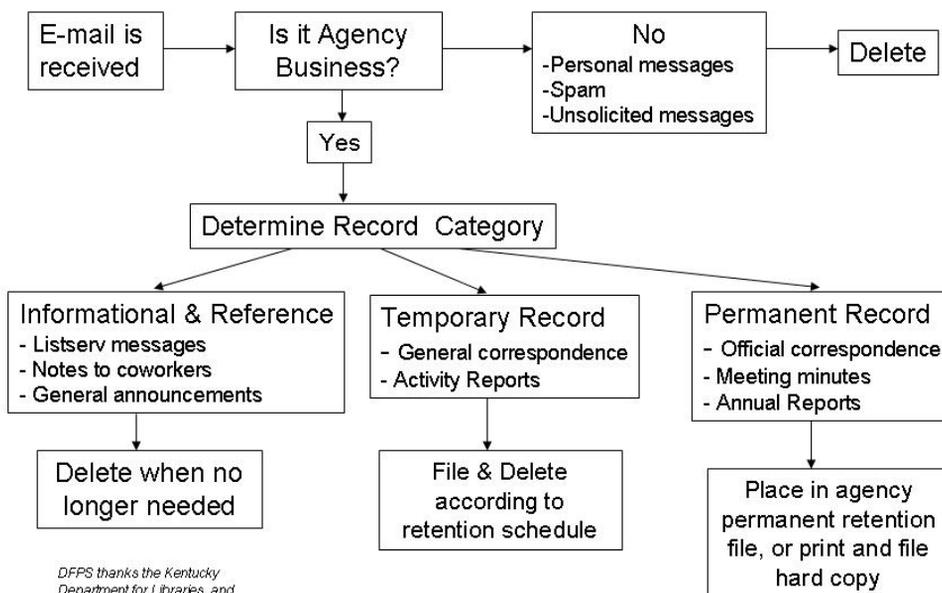


How Do We Get There? #5

And they even provided a decision tree for filing e-mails to their staff as a job aid.

This diagram uses the traditional flowchart symbols to guide their staff down the correct classification path, based on how they answer the questions posed.

Kentucky's Decision Sequence for e-Mails



DFPS thanks the Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives for this information.

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How Do We Get There? #6



Another idea is to create standing categories at the beginning of subject lines for email - and if possible, why not have it as a drop down option?



How Do We Get There? #7



Another way to get there is by creating a policy on email use. This is one of the larger tasks I was mentioning. Luckily, a lot of the leg work has already been done on this one!

When it comes to standards, we have a list of recommendations for policy standards from ARMA - which many of you here are members, that includes:

Clarification that all contents of the Email system belong to the organization

Employees may not use third-party messaging systems

Content of Emails qualifies as recorded information

And special retention requirements apply during litigation, and for public information requests and audits

Regarding the training, TSLAC has an upcoming class on email that you can take that would be very helpful.

And they can also share with you ideas on Governance and how the policy is maintained.

That was 7 practical ideas right there that, I'm betting, would make a huge difference in the life of your organization.

Where Do We Go From Here?



Alright...so where do we go from here? What are the next steps?

Well, I've actually been sharing that with you all along by answering the questions posed at the beginning.

Who's coming with us? I answered that by saying that you are not alone. That there are many of us on this road toward best practices in Email management. If the workgroup has found anything - they certainly have found that there is so much out there that we sure don't need to reinvent the wheel!

Where do we go from here? I encourage you to talk, go have a coffee, join the BPC, sign up for ARMA or AIIM. In other words, network!

What's the starting point? Well, remember the crazy traffic pattern? It sure will feel like that some days. And it may be tough, but I believe that everyone here has got at least one step in them! And that will make a difference, especially if we look at ourselves, ask the tough questions, and get started!

Where Do We Go From Here? #2



Where are we going? We are on a journey toward better records management! And that journey means we can advocate for changes that allow us to leave behind all kinds of baggage that increases costs and risk and work. By remembering that actions speak louder than words. By not letting the perfect be the enemy of the good!

And how we are getting there?

By taking practical steps, one after the other. Maybe you take a look at one of the examples the workgroup found, maybe you read some of the source material for this presentation. Maybe you draw up a few simple steps and start with a conversation with your boss.

This seems like the right place to say, that's exactly how we did it at DFPS. In 2007, with a small group of 4 of us, an idea was born to do better records management. Almost 5 years later, we have over 80 on our team in offices all across the state. And we are dedicated to serving our customers and meeting their needs.

No Question About It:



From my perspective, there is just no question about it:
"Alone we can do so little...together we can do so much"
[Helen Keller].

I hope you will continue to go down this journey in all
your days ahead!

Thank you very much!

