

Our top 10 tips for EDRMS implementations

Electronic document and records management systems (EDRMS) are tools commonly used by organisations to manage business information. If you are implementing an EDRMS here are 10 things you should consider:

1. Secure ongoing management commitment and support

An EDRMS implementation is a major project. Successful EDRMS implementations typically have senior management sponsors who use their influence to guarantee support and sufficient resourcing. Your IT section will also need to be on board to provide sufficient technical infrastructure and technical support. Ideally business unit managers should also be supportive as they can bring about cultural change and promote ongoing use of the EDRMS.

2. Secure suitable resourcing

The costs of an EDRMS implementation do not just equate to the cost of the technology. There are many costs to be factored in, major ones being the cost of the project team, business process definition/reengineering and change management. There are ongoing post-implementation costs associated with both the technology and staff to support and manage it. For your implementation to be successful, you will need to conduct a realistic cost-benefit analysis. Funding should be secured through a business case.

3. Assemble a motivated, multi-disciplinary project team

EDRMS implementations are complex. They require a team of skilled and knowledgeable people with a variety of skills, including skills in records management, project management, business analysis, IT, training and communication. Carefully selected consultants may be needed if some of these skills cannot be provided in-house. All team members need to be motivated and act as champions for the project.

4. Ensure there is good governance of the project

The business case for the implementation should provide a vision for the project and realistically outline the benefits and risks, costs and return on investment expected along with implementation schedules. Detailed project plans will also be required, based on a sound project management methodology.

Project teams should ensure that plans remain relevant, implementation tasks are met, spending is controlled and risks are mitigated or reported on. System performance should be monitored throughout the project and reviewed after implementation. Implementation projects should plan for the transition to business as usual.

5. Articulate your requirements well

In NSW, EDRMS products on the IAMS contract have been assessed by a panel of experts and verified to meet most generic whole-of-government functional specifications and requirements for EDRMS systems. If you buy off this contract, you will not need to assess these.

However, you will need to understand your organisation's own particular business and technical requirements and constraints so you can choose the right EDRMS for your needs and configure it appropriately.

6. Select the right EDRMS and ensure your contract is sound

There are many EDRMS applications on the market. Your definition of business and technical requirements can help you select the right vendor for your particular needs. You should develop a sound tender evaluation methodology and assess options carefully. If you

have any issues, clarify them with vendors and consider arranging site visits with other organisations that use the EDRMS in the way you plan to use it. Contract negotiations should be carried out by experienced staff and include all products and services as well as service levels and the implementation methodology.

7. Put effort into configuring the system well and document what you have done

An off-the-shelf EDRMS will need to be configured to meet your business needs and it is essential to get the configuration right. Poor configuration (or a poor user interface) can reduce staff acceptance and use and can jeopardise metadata collection and future migration. If you have defined your business and technical requirements, this information will prove invaluable at configuration. You may also have business systems you need to integrate with the EDRMS and the way you configure can influence the success of the integration.

It is extremely important that any configuration of the EDRMS is well documented with functional and technical documentation. This will assist you with future upgrades, enhancements or migrations.

8. Ensure you have good supporting strategies and tools

Consider what supporting information management strategies and tools you already have in place (business classifications schemes, retention and disposal authorities, metadata schemas, system business rules etc.) and what you may need to develop or update so that the EDRMS can work effectively in your organisation. Ideally many of these tools should be automated and hidden from users.

You should not underestimate the need for experienced staff to produce these tools and the need for staff consultation and training. They require a significant investment of time to complete and to manage over time.

9. Focus on change management and user consultation and support

Ultimately, an EDRMS will only be successful if staff use it. Your implementation may mean changing or reengineering established business processes. More responsibility for recordkeeping tasks are likely to fall to action officers. Fear, mistrust and resentment can impact on usage of the system. Ideally your organisation should have change management, communication and training plans and practices to ensure that staff are involved in process design and ready for the EDRMS. Sufficient resources for these activities *must* be provided.

10. Test, test and test some more!

The implementation is likely to be irreparably damaged if staff are faced with bugs, slow response rates and downtime during a rollout. These problems must be fixed before implementation occurs. Set up a testing environment and do lots of it! After migrations, configurations or integrations test some more. Review and retest frequently and monitor system performance during implementation. Make sure you keep good records of system weaknesses so they can be addressed.

Further information

See State Records' Recordkeeping in Brief *Frequently asked questions about EDRMS* on our website.

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