Sustainability and Change Management: Steps to Long-Term Adoption

By Melinda Stoker, director of global marketing communications, Xerox DocuShare

The promise of paperless has been a dream for decades with slow progress and many challenges. In recent years, however, industries that many said would never move to digital documents, like healthcare, have jumped hurdles and are making significant progress.

So there is hope for businesses trying to migrate to more of a paperless business model. Often, the first step is to identify and communicate the benefits to the organization as the beginning of a change management program to support employees.

Many organizations are embracing values related to sustainability and defining actions to support them, thus making sustainability goals and initiatives a priority rather than a "nice-to-have" option. The 2011 McKinsey Global Survey on The Business of Sustainability found that 57 percent of respondents say their companies have integrated sustainability into strategic planning; 67 percent say sustainability has been integrated into mission and values; and 60 percent say sustainability has been integrated into external communications.[1]

As organizations work toward reducing their carbon footprints, many look for technology solutions to drive and track their efforts. By adopting an enterprise content management (ECM) platform, for example, employees are able to store, manage, archive documents electronically in addition to automating business processes through workflows. ECM has enabled businesses to create a more sustainable office environment while enhancing, rather than sacrificing, the way they do business.

Rationalizing and socializing change by emphasizing business benefits

Change is often not easy to implement because employees have habits and processes built up over many years. As Roger McClendon, chief sustainability officer at YUM! Brands says, "You need to show the value added of sustainability and build a strategy around it, and then the organization will provide the resources."[2] In the case of ECM, a survey conducted by AIIM[3] among more than 450 information technology professionals and business managers found the following results:

- Productivity of professional staff can be improved by 30 percent if team members could find internal information and documents as quickly and easily as they find information on the Web.
- Customer service levels and response times can be improved by 33 percent if customer-facing staff could access and share all customer-related and case-related information, according to the survey, "Capitalizing on Content: A Compelling ROI for Change."
- The productivity of administrative staff can be increased by 33 percent through use of workflow, scanned forms and automated data capture.

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[1] McKinsey Global Survey Results: The Business of Sustainability:
http://download.mckinseyquarterly.com/the_business_of_sustainability.pdf
[2] Triple Pundit, "10 Green Lessons from the Sustainable Operations Summit"
[3] AIIM The Paper Free Office - dream or reality? 2012

- Electronic forms save both paper and the costs associated with processing paper forms, which cost anywhere from 20 cents to tens of dollars per form to process. The average* reported cost per form or document is $3.63 and the median is $2.00. (*excluding 12 over $20).

Beyond easier access to documents, incorporating an ECM solution means electronic filing and fewer physical filing cabinets – and this can mean savings in the form of energy bills, office or warehouse space, and courier costs. It also means that employees can work remotely with less hassle and reduced commuting in cars, which decreases greenhouse gasses.

No matter how narrow or broad a company defines its efforts; success will require activities to enable change within the company. Below are tips to transition to a paper-light environment, manage change, and demonstrate the business benefits of implementing a sustainability program.

Steps to Sustainability Success:

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. uses about 71 million tons of paper and paperboard per year.[4] The effort applied to transitioning to a "paper light" office has many benefits, and here are some tips for getting started:

1) **Educate employees:** The decision to move to an ECM solution should include discussions at various team levels about why the organization is making a change.
   o What effect will ECM have on the company's sustainability efforts?
   o How will it improve the bottom line?
   o How can it reduce customer service time and improve customer, employee, and partner satisfaction levels?
   o How can it support compliance and disaster recovery processes?
2) **Set attainable goals:** When adopting a large-scale change, employees may initially be overwhelmed by the magnitude of the shift. Set realistic, attainable goals, such as 15 percent reduction in paper use per quarter – or a goal that is reasonable for your business. This will help to maintain employee motivation and keep the project momentum on track for success.
3) **Recycle as much waste as possible:** This seems obvious; however there are still companies and building maintenance crews who do not recycle. Make requests to ensure that they recycle paper, plastic, and metal waste. In 2010, the amount of paper recovered for recycling averaged 334 pounds for each person living in the US, according to the American Forest & Paper Association.[5] Recycling one ton of paper saves almost 700 gallons of oil, 7,000 gallons of water, and 3.3 cubic yards of landfill space a year!

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[4] U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 2011: http://www.epa.gov/osw/conserve/materials/paper/faqs.htm#use
[5] American Forest & Paper Association, 2010: http://www.epa.gov/osw/nonhaz/municipal/msw99.htm

4) **Communicate.** Regular communication about how the changes are impacting the organization will help ensure success. When team members feel informed and supported, they tend to adopt changes more readily.

5) **Celebrate an "Earth Day"** even if your date isn't part of a nationally recognized event. Gather employees to discuss some of the actions they can take to continue their mindfulness about resource use and provide them with re-usable cups, totes or other company items that will advertise your company's green image while helping them use fewer resources.

6) **Discuss and promote how they've impacted the bottom line and achieved goals.** Encourage and reward employees for sharing their own experiences.
   o How are they using the new ECM platform?
   o What feedback have they heard from customers or partners who also benefit from the new ECM system?
   o What ideas do they have to help colleagues adapt quickly?

7) **Discuss the "beyond the business" implications**, including the company's green image and how that is attractive to their customers.

Xerox Corporation has been a pioneer in sustainability since 1969, when it introduced the two-sided copier and helped charter the Energy Star® program. Through the years, Xerox has developed equipment, inks, recycled papers, processes, and technologies that reduce energy consumption, waste, and toxins (such as PBTs) throughout the supply chain. Xerox DocuShare enterprise content management is a powerful solution that enables you to achieve your sustainability goals by automating paper-based processes and providing secure access to important content from anywhere in the world. For more information, visit http://docushare.xerox.com/sustainability/sustain.html.

About the author

Melinda Stoker is the Director of Global Marketing for DocuShare (www.docushare.com), Xerox's award-winning, web-based content management platform. She has authored various articles on achieving sustainability goals through a range of best practices including electronic document and business process management. Melinda has been an integrated marketing professional for over 20 years and has held management positions and senior consulting posts at Autodesk, Cisco Systems, PeopleSoft, as well as SaaS start-ups. She can be reached at: melinda.stoker@xerox.com.