HOW TO START, MANAGE AND IMPLEMENT AN ECM PROJECT
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## INTRODUCTION

More than an IT Project

## INTELLIGENT INFORMATION MANAGEMENT VS. ECM

## BEFORE THE PROJECT: TOP 3 QUESTIONS TO ASK

What are the planned key use cases for the new system?

Do we really have the necessary drive and resources to manage and run the project?

How easily can end-users arrange information assets so that that value is added to their daily work?

## DURING THE PROJECT

Collaboration with the vendor

How to build and manage the system

## AFTER IMPLEMENTATION

How to avoid making the same old mistakes or just copying current ways of working?

## SPECIFIC FOR M-FILES IMPLEMENTATIONS

## CLOSING NOTES

## ABOUT M-FILES
This guide works as a practical tool to remind you of topics and steps to consider when planning to implement an Enterprise Content Management solution like M-Files. The guide is divided in three main sections: before, during, and after a technical implementation project.

With an Enterprise Content Management (ECM) implementation project — like any other project — it is important to establish basic expectations and understand what the organization is attempting to do.

According to Gartner¹, an enterprise content management solution rarely works “out of the box.” In all but the simplest of implementations, it requires tailoring via configuration or customization to deliver the required capability.

Setting clear objectives is key in ensuring that the project is planned and managed in a way that (1) supports the business and its key processes, and (2) helps develop organizational operations to increase efficiency.

The three, vital steps to start project planning are:

1. **Clear business objective**
2. **Understanding the change**
3. **Understanding the risk**

¹ Gartner. 3 Steps Before Issuing an RFP to Get ECM Implementation Right.
An ECM implementation project is more than an IT project

More than an IT project

Understanding the change is critical. An ECM implementation project should never be seen as just an IT project, rather as a project that will change business processes and workflows, as well as employee behavior. The human aspect of the implementation is key to success.

“A thorough risk analysis works as a basis for planning and resourcing”
Due to its widespread familiarity, in this guide, we refer to ECM rather than Intelligent Information Management (IIM). But what is intelligent information management all about and how does it differ from traditional ECM?

From a project implementation point of view, there’s not much difference. All the points given in this guide apply to both IIM and ECM implementations.

Gartner has defined the next stage of ECM, representing a shift from self-contained systems and repositories to open services or so-called Content Services Platforms (CSPs).² These platforms provide content-centric capabilities that enable organizations to transform digital operations that rely significantly on business content.³

We use the term Intelligent Information Management for services available through CSPs. IIM offers all the basic capabilities of an ECM system, but it also offers the freedom to manage content across different systems and repositories through a single user interface, with any device.

A cornerstone of IIM at M-Files is that IIM is metadata-driven to make sure content is found based on what it is rather than where it is stored. This allows employees to find, access and manage content in a context relevant to them. And finally, IIM adds artificial intelligence into the mix to automate manual document handling tasks, and to distinguish business critical content from clutter. AI unites content, workflows, and business processes so that you can digitalize your business.

“The fundamental difference between ECM and IIM is that with IIM, you can manage all content across different systems and repositories.”

² Gartner. Magic Quadrant for Content Services Platforms.
³ Gartner. Critical Capabilities for Content Services Platforms 2018.
BECOME THE PROJECT:
TOP 3 QUESTIONS TO ASK

To maximize results, it’s important to answer some key questions before starting an ECM project.

1. What are the planned key use cases for the new system?
2. Do we have the necessary drive and resources to manage and run the project?
3. How easily can end users arrange information assets so that value is added to their daily work?

WHAT ARE THE PLANNED KEY USE CASES FOR THE NEW SYSTEM?

The use case analysis should include two main elements: (1) an analysis of the current situation, and (2) a definition of the desired objective.

An analysis of the current situation is critical to planning the project.

- What documents do we have?
- How are these documents used?
- How should they be used?
- Where are these documents stored?
- How are documents created and when—in Office 365, Google, in business tools, CAD?
- What other systems are in use?
- What are these systems used for?
- What are the necessary integrations?
- What have we tried to do before, and what pitfalls prevented success?
- What type of workflows are necessary to manage the documents efficiently?
- Who needs access to the documents, both in-house and externally?
- What is the role of the ECM system and other connected systems in the organization?
- What documents need to be migrated, or is it enough to establish access?
- What should happen with old documents that are not in active use?
- How critical are documents to the business?
- Where is the master data related to the documents?

Additionally, to define the objective and targets, the following key questions remain:

- What are we going to use the system for?
- What are the business challenges we are trying to solve?
- What benefits do we seek?
- What are the key success criteria?
• How do we measure success and what are the KPIs?
• What is the system good for? What should be done with other systems?
• Do we run the project as one roll-out, or do we split the project into phases by unit, function or geography? In larger projects, it is recommended to roll-out in phases. Running large projects in phases lets the supplier learn more about your use cases and business.
• Should the system run on-premises, in the cloud or as a hybrid solution?
• Where are the end users, who are they, and what roles do they play?

DO WE REALLY HAVE THE NECESSARY DRIVE AND RESOURCES TO MANAGE AND RUN THE PROJECT?

An ECM implementation project takes a lot of planning and resources from the organization even if the system and system implementation are outsourced.

An ECM implementation project is much more than an IT renewal. Communication and change management are two key success elements.

While personnel will surely be assigned to technical updates and change management, depending on the size of the organization and project, there should be personnel assigned to other facets of the implementation — communication, user support, training, and other critical responsibilities. These can of course be done by one person, but enough time and resources need to be dedicated to drive the change.

Before starting the project, answer the following resource questions:

• What kind of roles and responsibilities do we need to define to successfully plan, manage and implement the project?
• Who is responsible for driving change within the organization?
• Who is responsible for internal communication before, during and after the project?
• Who is responsible for user training?
• What kind of training has previously been efficient in your organization?
• Who are the internal sponsors supporting and driving change?
• Who are the key personnel that end users can turn to for questions and answers?
Key roles in a successful ECM project — one person can fill several roles, but it is important to identify the roles and dedicate time for the tasks involved:

- **Sponsor**: typically, someone from the leadership or management of the organization.
- **Project manager**: overall responsibility for actions, time schedules, and budget.
- **Project team**: representation from all functions that will use the system, or a selected core team.
- **Pilot group**: in a larger organization / big bang launch project, where all teams cannot be included in the project team.
- **IT**: alignment with IT infrastructure, integrations and maintenance planning.
- **Key users**: provide support to all end users.
- **Advocates**: advocates “walk the talk” and keep the change top of mind for everyone involved.
- **Architect**: looks at the information and metadata structure across the organization and across vaults.
- **Communication and change management**: someone who takes responsibility for continuous discussion, communication, and change management so that when the system is implemented, the need for change and the reasons for a new system are clear to the whole company.

**NECESSARY ROLES**
Our experience shows that successful implementation projects dedicate a person for continuous discussion, communication and training. You need to have a high-level communication plan and a plan for communication actions.

Usually, it’s best for a high-ranking team member to champion change and make it meaningful for the end users.

**SUCCESS COMES ONLY WITH COMMUNICATION AND CLEAR ROLES**
Communicating and discussing the change early is vital for the success of the implementation. Employees need to be involved and have representation in the project team. They need to be able to give input and test the system while it is being developed. It is good practice to continuously perform agile testing during the process.

It is also vitally important to define who makes the final decision and who is the main person responsible for supplier collaboration to avoid contradicting instructions from different stakeholders within the organization. When there are integrations to third party solutions, it’s beneficial to appoint someone responsible for coordinating that third-party collaboration.
HOW EASILY CAN END-USERS ARRANGE INFORMATION ASSETS SO THAT VALUE IS ADDED TO THEIR DAILY WORK?

To reap the benefits from the system, users need to embrace it in their daily routines. Adding another system that is only used as an end storage is not going to deliver the business benefits originally planned and intended.

Before the project, think of the following:

How do we ask about and listen to the needs of end users?

What are the common use cases across the organization?

What special use cases are there in different units of the organization?

How do end users search for information? What type of metadata would they like to use?

User adoption is a key element of success
How you build the structure will **significantly affect** how the system can be used and how well it addresses your specific needs.

**DURING THE PROJECT**

Good planning and preparation before the project will significantly benefit the actual delivery phase. During the project, it’s important to continue monitoring details — like ways of collaborating with the supplier, defining the exact build of the system, and fine-tuning the approach of predefined elements.

**COLLABORATION WITH THE VENDOR**

Collaboration with the system vendor is an important success factor and, as mentioned, it is useful to have someone in the organization as the main contact for the vendor team to settle any potential conflicts of interest within the company. It is also important to have a common understanding of the scope of the project and to stick to that as the basis for implementation. Additional requests might be easier to handle as separate add-on projects later.

For successful co-operation, consider the following:

1. **Are our exact objectives clear in our minds, with a defined result and benefits?** Or do we just have a vague understanding that something needs to be changed in order to be more efficient?

2. **Do we have a common understanding with the supplier, and do we have common language and terminology to reach that understanding?**

3. **How aligned are the organization’s way of working vs. the supplier’s way of working — speed of decision making, for example?**

4. **How can we learn from past mistakes?**

**HOW TO BUILD AND MANAGE THE SYSTEM?**

Plan and define the recommended, necessary metadata usage. As a best practice, we suggest a minimum of three metadata fields, with a maximum of 5-7 metadata fields for users to fill in in the typical document management use cases. Any more than that should be automated. It is easy enough to add and widen the scope later, but it is better to start small. For other more complex use cases, the amount of metadata fields can easily be higher.

Also create a plan to analyze the real usage post-implementation, which allows you to fix any initial errors or issues that could not be identified before real use.
The questions to answer:

- How do we build the vault structure? Do we need just one or several for different use cases and user groups?
- What are the processes that absolutely need to be automated to realize time savings and other benefits?
- What processes could be managed with the out-of-the-box functionality to maintain the system in the future?
- Which functionalities are “must have” as opposed to “nice to have”?
- How can work be split into smaller, agile development pieces for immediate testing?
- How can a balance be struck between the needs of the business and the end users, when defining metadata fields?
- How can you keep it simple?
- Do you have a policy of storing, archiving and deleting content?
- When can information be deleted?
- How and where is information no longer in use archived?
- How are document versions used? Explain the exact needs and use cases for version management.

Create a migration plan. Do you allow the usage of old systems post-implementation? In which situations? How long? For learning purposes, it's easier to have existing data rather than using empty vaults.

Don’t forget migration
As expressed before, user adoption is one of the most important aspects of the project. The keys to success lie in your ability to:

- Empower end users as an important part of the project from the beginning by listening to them and collecting feedback.
- Test early, and not just after the entire implementation.
- Collect and utilize feedback from user testing.
- Create an open forum for discussions and questions early in the process, providing meaning and enabling people to understand the benefits.
- Appoint key users who support end users by addressing concerns and answering questions.
- Make sure you “walk the talk” and promote the system in your own work.
- Actively communicate the project — through the life of the project — using internal communication channels like internal newsletters, events, and blogs.

Once you have laid the groundwork and employees feel positive about the change, the actual training and initial system usage are much easier. Yet, there are some good examples of how to structure effective training programs.

- Make sure key users are available for end users on and immediately after the launch.
- Plan to spend some training time creating culture and meaning around the change — addressing the why, how and when. This is critical so that you can empower end user adoption.
- Create change management and training assets in advance, using video and other means to explain:
  - What does this mean for the end users?
  - What is metadata and how to use it?
- Use all channels to communicate, both formal and informal.
- Set up a training session for end users.
- Create user adoption gamification — with giveaways and other rewards.
Reserve enough time for the definition of use cases, building, implementation, and testing. A proper definition of the key use cases is critical for success.

HOW TO AVOID MAKING THE SAME OLD MISTAKES OR JUST COPYING CURRENT WAYS OF WORKING

Paying attention to the questions above and planning your project thoroughly are critical to achieving real business benefits. As a summary:

- Start with the use case: Define goals rather than focusing on features and functionality.
- List all use cases, not just the overarching purpose.
- Use an external information management consultant, when necessary.
- Identify use cases before starting the project.
- Identify and analyze your current landscape and conduct a needs analysis.
The core strength of M-Files is management of all content, whether structured or unstructured, in one place. M-Files uses a metadata-driven approach to information management, which means that the location of content is irrelevant; instead, users only need to know what it is they're looking for. In addition, artificial intelligence provides tools for simplifying office work.

Any document-centric process can be easily managed with M-Files. However, M-Files strength is not in managing calculations or numeric line data.

Additionally, before the final implementation, it might be useful to familiarize yourself with M-Files terminology — like object, document, and view — and spread that knowledge across the whole user team.

**PRACTICAL VAULT-BUILDING GUIDELINES FOR M-FILES ENVIRONMENTS**

Customers often ask us whether they should use one vault for all information or have dedicated vaults. Thus, it's important to understand when to continue enhancing an old vault with new functionality and when it's appropriate to build a new vault:

- The lifecycle of the system influences how to build the structure. Often, in later phases, there is a need for separate vaults for dedicated purposes.

- If there is a totally separate use case for a selected user group, it might make sense to use separate vaults to avoid making vault structure too complex.

- On the other hand, too many vaults may create additional silos.

You should consider building a new vault if you have totally different user groups for different information, or if your old structure has grown too difficult to manage.

Some practical examples of when to build a new vault:

- Separate development, testing, and training environments.

- A separate vault for planning, resourcing and follow-up.

- A separate vault for general document management for a larger audience.

- A separate vault for collaborating on documents and projects with external partners. This use case normally features less functionality and content than the general internal vault. This helps with user and access management as external partners do not use the internal vault.

- Separate vaults for subsidiaries within an enterprise, and for the parent company when there are only a few common use cases.

- One separate vault to manage the common information structure. This structure is replicated to several vaults, while maintaining it separately to allow for centralized maintenance of the structure. Additionally, access can be limited to individuals who need to update the common information structure.
CLOSING NOTES

KNOW YOUR ORGANIZATION

The younger generation is typically more adjusted to change, and even expect it. It is important to identify users who are resistant, whatever the reason may be, and try to create meaning for them as well.

- Make sure you’re familiar with the benefits for both the organization and individuals so that you can answer questions without turning to the vendor.

- Evangelize the unique benefits for your organization — the benefits that make day-to-day work simpler for end users — mobile access to network folders, for example.

- Find the change agents within the organization and empower them to propagate the change.
ABOUT M-FILES

M-Files provides a next-generation intelligent information management platform that improves business performance by helping people find and use information more effectively. Unlike traditional enterprise content management (ECM) systems or content services platforms, M-Files unifies systems, data and content across the organization without disturbing existing systems and processes or requiring data migration. Using artificial intelligence (AI) technologies in its unique Intelligent Metadata Layer, M-Files breaks down silos by delivering an in-context experience for accessing and leveraging information that resides in any system and repository, including network folders, SharePoint, file sharing services, ECM systems, CRM, ERP and other business systems and repositories. Thousands of organizations in more than 100 countries use M-Files for managing their business information and processes, including NBC Universal, OMV, Rovio, SAS Institute and thyssenkrupp.

For more information, visit www.m-files.com.

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