

How to Manage Your Document Life Cycle

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Documents, whether they are paper or digital, are vital to any business. They store information, help keep records, allow for business transactions, and much more. On average, an [office worker will go through 10,000 sheets of paper annually](#). All these documents have a purpose and ultimately have a life cycle they must go through for them to be properly used within a business process. Yes,

documents have a life cycle; and without proper management of that life cycle, your business productivity can suffer.

Before we get into the best way to manage your document life cycle we first must go through what exactly is a document life cycle. The document life cycle is the steps a document takes from creation to eventual archival or destruction. There are multiple ways to think about the life cycle of a document, the best way to break it down is within these five steps:

1. Creation
2. Storage
3. Use
4. Archive
5. Destruction

Not all documents need to go through each step of the full life cycle. However, each document will go through at least one of these steps at some point. What you can do to manage this life cycle correctly is optimize your business processes. [82% of employees believe poor information management hurts their productivity](#). So, in order to get your business to its highest efficiency possible, you need to understand how to manage your document's life cycle. Throughout this blog, we will be talking about some of the ways you can best manage your document's life cycle.

Document Conversion

The first step of the document life cycle is creation. Once it is created you must then figure out how you want to format the document so that you can manage it properly. It doesn't matter if it is a paper or digital document, to properly manage the life cycle of your documents all

documents should be converted into the same format. The best way to go about this is by turning all your documents into digital documents to start the journey of becoming paperless. This can be done through appropriate technology like document scanning. Document scanning, also referred to as [document imaging](#), is the process of converting a paper document to a digital image format. This is ideal for long-term and archival storage. Once digitized you will be able to index your documents which allows for easy retrieval and flow of the life cycle of your documents. While document imaging is one process, many documents today can also be stored in native form such as MS Office.

Accurate Indexing

As you start to think about the best way to manage the life cycle of your documents, one of the first things you want to think through is how to categorize and store the documents. There are a couple of ways of doing this, one way is through [indexing your documents](#). Indexing is the process of classifying information that describes a document and allows you to easily search and find said document once it has been digitized. To store your documents properly, you must be able to categorize them. Indexing not only allows you to identify your documents based on keywords, fields, etc., you can also group similar documents based on the identifiers used. This will allow for seamless and easy access to your documents based on the information within them.

Access Permissions

As you move through the document life cycle you will realize that during the life cycle some documents do not and should not be accessed by everyone within the business. For example, a client may

have highly classified documents that only a select few who have done background checks can view, this is where access permission comes in. By only allowing certain users to access these documents you are protecting your document life cycle making the whole process more efficient. Without certain permission-based documents, you can run into an issue where documents are stalled within the life cycle due to the wrong people editing or moving the document.

Secure Storage

Storing a document is a vital part of the document life cycle. In the past, many companies would use filing structures such as a filing cabinet, but now that a lot of companies are moving toward becoming [paperless](#), having a system that allows for an online document repository is your best bet for managing the life cycle of your documents. It is one thing to make sure your documents are organized and streamlined while using them, but once the document is ready for storage, you want to ensure the same organization standards. That way, if needed, you can retrieve that document easily out of storage in case of audits or clients needing the document.

A well-rounded document management system, like [Optix](#), can help with this. Optix has features such as a retention policy for certain documents. This will allow you to apply retention schedules to documents in the repository upon indexing. Once a retention schedule is applied to a document, the system enforces retention rules for documents on a site-specific policy. Documents that are under retention cannot be arbitrarily deleted, are typically not modifiable, and optionally can have their metadata protected against modification. Once records have exceeded their retention date, and do not have a hold condition, system tools will delete the documents from the system, optionally preserving the document metadata. This is a great

feature for managing your documents through the archive and destruction stages. It allows you to automate these steps and allow for seamless archival and destruction when necessary.

How To Implement

You are probably asking yourself, “how can I do all of this on my own?” The answer is, you don’t have to. All these different steps to managing the life cycle of your documents can all be done with a well-rounded document management system, like Optix. From document capture to destruction, a document management system is one of the best ways to manage your documents life cycle. It allows you to use indexing, access permissions, secure storage, workflows, and more — all in one system. Our team of experts here at [Mindwrap](#) are always available to help you see how to move your business forward through our document management system.

Questions on the process? [Contact us](#) today and we’d be happy to discuss how a document management system can improve the life cycle of your documents. See in real-time how businesses can transform their document management with Optix.