



# The Future of SharePoint & ECM

A Neocol White Paper

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## The future of SharePoint and ECM

Microsoft's SharePoint is fast being installed by more and more organisations around the world. Over a staggering 100 million licences have already been issued with plenty more waiting to jump on board.

If you haven't yet come across SharePoint, it provides a centralised repository where everyone across an organisation can share documents and files. In theory it cuts down the need for emails flying back and forth and should make for easier and faster collaboration, increased productivity and better informed decision making.

SharePoint is a great product. It has a friendly, familiar Microsoft interface and single point of contact that is very easy to use, which saves on training costs and makes for ready acceptance and fast uptake across the largest of organisations. It also naturally integrates with MS Office applications. Microsoft markets SharePoint as not only great for collaboration but as a complete Enterprise Content Management (ECM) Platform.

If this were true it would be good news for business - having a well designed interface would make ECM more accessible to more people.

## ECM is great for business

Most successful businesses have robust Enterprise Content Management solutions in place that help them survive in an increasingly competitive environment. ECM enables them to manage all the unstructured content generated in billions of emails, instant messages, forms, invoices and all other kinds of digital and paper documents. It does this by storing documents and files of all sizes, shapes and types in a virtual centralised repository, much like SharePoint's. Here, users can share and access all the information they need – quickly, easily and securely – on demand.



But there is a big difference between SharePoint and a total ECM solution. ECM gives users control over the lifecycle of content so that automating workflows, distribution, audit trails and reporting is that much easier and quicker. It helps business make better informed decisions, achieve regulatory and QA compliance and ultimately saves a great deal of time and money, so it's great for business profitability and for the economy as a whole.

## How does SharePoint measure up as ECM?

Many have tried and just as many have failed to get SharePoint to do all that ECM can do – just imagine the frustration. Unfortunately, as great as SharePoint is, it doesn't have the functionality required for total Enterprise Content Management, as many organisations have discovered to their cost. In fact to date there is no single product on the market that can do it all.

So what's happening in the millions of businesses that have chosen SharePoint? Are they all getting what they expected?

Our experience suggests not. In fact in very many businesses right now – those without a proper ECM platform have no idea exactly what's stored in their SharePoint repository or what's happening to it while it's there. When it comes to e-discovery, there's not a lot of hope for anyone relying on SharePoint alone. And for organisations where regularity compliance is essential – like insurance, pharmaceutical and finance companies - relying on SharePoint for ECM is actually quite dangerous. Imagine using a magnet to find the proverbial needle in the haystack, only to discover the haystack is actually a huge pile of needles – you get the message.

All businesses need to have control over content – better document management means more efficiency, increased productivity, fuller compliance and significant cost and time savings. They also need an effective archive and back up system and clear rules about access. All encompassing ECM solutions can provide all of this but SharePoint's document management capability isn't robust enough – in fact it's decidedly too lightweight for most business users.



## SharePoint and scalability

Microsoft suggests limits for the size of files, databases and number of documents that can be stored per server but in reality the amounts of data that can be stored without affecting performance is in practice often far less. So, any business attempting to manage with SharePoint on its own could end up with a very unwieldy platform instead of the competitive edge they were hoping for.

## Flexibility and lifecycle management

SharePoint also fails to offer total support for non-MS Office file types so loading other kinds of large file types can be difficult even when they are within the limits suggested by Microsoft.

The capacity of SharePoint to handle document lifecycle management is also restricted because of its folder-centric nature, so it can't do justice to policy enforcement and records management either.

## Failing workflows ...

And SharePoint can't fully support structured workflows like full ECM solutions can. An effective ECM solution will trigger automated workflow processes that ensure a high standard of customer service as well as meeting compliance requirements. For example, when an insurance company receives a claim form, the ECM application will immediately trigger an automatic claim-processing workflow – something SharePoint isn't capable of doing.



## The Best of both: ECM + SharePoint

What we know so far is that:

- A total ECM solution cuts storage and costs, speeds up processes, enables compliance and improves customer service
- SharePoint has an interface that's easy to use, enables good collaboration and increases productivity – provided the system doesn't become overloaded and collapse into chaos

What if we put the two together? Now there's a thought...

When our clients asked us to help them make better use of SharePoint – we looked at the possibilities of doing just that. We needed to find an integrated ECM solution that could easily run in parallel with SharePoint and make up for its lack of functionality.

One solution that ticked all the boxes was integrating SharePoint with FileNet – an IBM ECM framework which has all the scalability, workflow processes, document management, disaster recovery and life cycle management that's needed. The FileNet framework enables all content and electronic messages to be stored as records so they can be easily managed now and well into the future as content grows.

Using the two in tandem makes the best of both products and has significant benefits for organisations that need an easy to use, all encompassing ECM solution. It's a bit like building a car; car manufacturers don't design every single part; instead they source best-in-class components such as tyres and brakes to bring together an optimum product for the market.



## FileNet and SharePoint – a perfect blend

It's an ideal combination. Integrating SharePoint's usable front end and collaborative functions with FileNet's efficient back end document management produces a wider, scalable ECM Platform that's quick and easy to use. Most businesses use MS products so this familiarity of use means it can be easily introduced and accepted by all staff in any business or organisation quickly and with minimal training.

FileNet is both flexible and extensible as well as offering robust ECM capabilities and it can easily be adapted to meet the specific needs of any business. FileNet has the scalability to help business better manage their documents well into the future. It can also help businesses with automated workflows, integrated lifecycle management, audit trails, security functions, reporting tools, full text searching, records management, compliance and Business Process Management (BPM).

Adding FileNet's intelligent document management to SharePoint's intuitive collaboration tools and familiar, easy to use portal creates an accessible, usable interface with FileNet working to improve efficiency, productivity and control in the background.

Finally you get the kind of integrated ECM Platform that boosts rather than hinders business success.

## About Neocol

Neocol is a highly innovative global systems integrator, dedicated to the design, delivery and support of Enterprise Content Management and Business Process Management solutions. As a leading IBM Premier-Level Business Partner, Neocol specialises in integrating key IBM technologies with those from our selected alliance partners to help our customers resolve business issues surrounding the management of unstructured content. As an IBM Premier Level IBM Business Partner, and a FileNet ValueNet Partner, Neocol is one of the most reputable advisors in the IBM ECM market. We boast one of the most capable, independent IBM ECM Services teams in the UK, and remain the only IBM Business Partner solely dedicated to the delivery of both heritage IBM and FileNet ECM services.



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