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GENERAL NETWORKS CORPORATIONS

TURNING CONTENT CHAOS INTO ORDER

DIANA CHEN,
VP OF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND
CONTENT STRATEGY





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Microsoft SharePoint, Teams, and OneDrive serve as the pillars for flexible collaborations within organizations today. Users wielding these tools gain the ability to create a workspace on the go, enabling seamless multitasking and enhancing operational efficiency. The Microsoft suite of collaboration tools can break down communication barriers and promote human synergy, but organizations can only reap these benefits at the bottom line when content is properly managed.

Content ubiquity is the primary challenge for businesses embracing collaboration tools. It is not an exaggeration to say that versatility without the guardrail for enterprise content management (ECM) only yields siloed data containerized and compartmentalized in different business units, defeating the very mission of collaboration solutions.

As Diana Chen, VP of business development and content strategy at General Networks Corporation says, “The lack of effective content management inadvertently opens the door to content duplication. This is especially true in a highly fluid environment such as M365 where silo-ed containers can be easily created without much consideration about where should content be managed post initial creation. This can further exacerbate the problem

of locating the right version of content; when efforts are in vain, employees end up reworking the content from scratch. In severe cases, the use of a wrong version of a critical document can also cast a shadow of hefty monetary compensations on organizations.”

A leading IT systems integrator delivering technology consulting and managed services, General Networks Corporations rises to these challenges with its bespoke service offering, Intelligent Information Management (IIM). It provides expert-crafted ECM strategies and best practices to effectively unwind the tangled content management structures, giving clarity and order to their business-critical information. Every proposed ECM strategy is purpose-built, specific to a client’s business type, model, organization size, and processes in place.

Its offerings aid organizations in highly regulated verticals like the utility sector to better handle their documents scattered across different platforms. The team excels at giving them an easier way to locate, identify, and supervise critical records needed for compliance requirements.

An instance that exemplifies its content management expertise involves an organization whose business-critical documents were in heavily nested sub-sites and folders.

They were an early adopter of SharePoint, and their document clutter snowballed with the addition of the Teams tool into their ecosystem. This resulted in the client grappling with a corpus of redundant data and security loopholes, especially during their organizational restructuring phase.

Team General Networks took the mantle to re-architect their information inventory for better content management. It conducted a detailed analysis and categorized their critical documents, making it easier for their leadership to access relevant records without undertaking a 'needle in a haystack' search. Implementing systemic workflows helped the client regularly evaluate the content based on its timeliness and usefulness. This minor tweak in their content management facilitated easier SharePoint migration during the restructuring and boosted productivity while preempting possibilities of future information clutter.

The success hinged on General Networks' ECM expertise and a commitment to maximizing the benefit of businesses' valuable investment in Microsoft platforms. Synonymous with numerous achievements, it has packaged all its ECM offerings into IIM.

A TIME-TESTED PROCESS TO MANAGE CONTENT MOUNTAINS

General Networks' IIM specializes in resolving all the challenges associated with collaboration, compliance, and content search/retrieval for improving organizational performance. It also addresses hurdles in managing SharePoint data sprawl and Teams rollout while improving user experience. The IIM service portfolio encompasses Redundant Obsolete Trivial (ROT) analysis & cleanup, content management strategy implementation, M365 governance, and data migration between SharePoint, Teams, and OneDrive. This comprehensive offering enables it to effectively re-architect the ECM practices, allowing the clients to differentiate between organizational and project-specific content.

The team takes time upfront to analyze the information before implementing an ECM strategy. During this discovery phase, it first scrutinizes existing content inventory and then checks its alignment with organizational objectives. A thorough ROT cleanup guarantees that the team will step away from moving obsolete data during SharePoint migration and modernization. The content is categorized and tagged based on privacy, client-attorney privilege, criticality, and compliance needs. Metadata is added to give accurate context to all documents. Identifying the same content under various combinations and permutations across different business units is easier than ever.

General Networks leverages Microsoft's Syntex for classifying content. This AI-powered Machine Learning tool is part of the latest Microsoft 365 service suite designed to provide organizations with an end-to-end intelligent document processing capability. Once the Syntex model is created, it can be trained to automatically organize content based on the document patterns and extract relevant information. The tool can determine the type of workflow modifications needed to implement for structured content creation.

To put things into perspective, let's consider a real-world scenario where a department wanted to categorize all the expenses made during



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a business trip. A properly trained Syntex model can accurately and automatically classify bills and extract crucial details, such as expense amounts, date of purchase, and vendor information, eliminating manual intervention for data entry. Users can also build or add automated workflows for expense report creation and subsequent document review or approval processes.

"The effective use of Syntex will give clients a deeper understanding of their overall content and information. A foundational level insight drawn from accurate and appropriately managed data will serve as a knowledge repository for the entire organization," says Chen.

When integrated directly into cross-functional processes, this data vault will play a decisive role in ensuring all stakeholders stay informed and updated regarding project development phases. An intelligent path to ECM goes beyond enhancing intra-company communication and extends to data security and governance.

THE COMPASS TO ECM

General Networks' focus on understanding the content and the interaction between SharePoint and Teams plays a decisive role in helping clients build better protective structures for safeguarding critical information. An accurate map of the content repository enriched with metadata will aid decision-makers in quickly ascertaining the damage and deciding on remediation measures for any data breach.

It takes measures to ensure no loopholes are present for bad actors to act upon during content migration, management, or modernization. This attention-to-detail mindset helps offer custom ECM solutions for meeting compliance needs pertaining to records retention and disposition. Team General Networks sets up the provisioning process for SharePoint sites, libraries, or Teams to assess pre-existing containers' presence while adding a decommissioning strategy to evaluate unused containers and effectively manage records retention and ROT cleanup.

They have infused ECM best practices honed over three decades into a proprietary three-step process for implementing correct workflows as a solution for effective document creation, handling, and disposition.

The initial step involves an assessment to identify the right strategies for bringing organization-wide ECM changes. The insights gleaned from the content inventory are used to determine the suitable add-on components available in the Microsoft environment for better maintaining data in the long haul. Once the right tools are identified, comprehensive training is provided to help stakeholders familiarize themselves with the new arrangement, addressing department-specific nuances.

Team General Networks then performs a proof of concept to ensure client needs and goals are met. This technology-focused step assures seamless integration of tools, such as Syntax for data tagging and Microsoft Compliance Center for record retention/disposition. The team carries out controlled pilot programs among a small group to test tool functionalities and user interactions, which collectively shape a framework guiding an organization's content management strategy.

Upon successful pilot completion, a gradual department-by-department rollout takes place. This tried-and-tested process has helped organizations of all sizes increase their efficiency and reduce overhead. General Networks' customized flat SharePoint structure and M365 governance eliminate the creation of overly complex nested arrangements.

USER-CENTRIC ECM FOR SEAMLESS KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

Since ECM restructuring substantially impacts organizations, General Networks strives to ensure that solution recommendations and workflow modifications are employee-centric.

"Organizations often stay fixated on the potential and capabilities of technology at hand, neglecting the crucial aspect of aligning it with users' needs and their interaction with information," says Chen. "We always architect ECM changes to empower users without overwhelming them with ever-changing technologies. This is the best way to boost productivity and supplement collaboration or teamwork within hybrid and remote work environments."



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General Networks' keen focus on user-centric ECM and in-depth understanding of the Microsoft suite ensures clients unearth and utilize the platform capabilities they (un)knowingly waste. An effective ECM guarantees maximum benefit from investments towards Microsoft collaboration platforms without adding more external solutions to their toolbox.

Microsoft's recent efforts to add AI capabilities to its solution will likely be an advantage for organizations. Beyond utilities, sectors like medical, pharmaceuticals, and insurance stand to benefit more. This investment also encourages General Networks to explore avenues for streamlining ECM process automation in the days ahead. 