**INFORMATION GOVERNANCE**

**Myths and Realities: It Costs Money**

**MYTH #1: It’s too expensive, we can’t afford it!**

**Reality:** You can’t afford NOT to have an information governance program for your agency, and you can’t afford NOT to have systems that deliver enterprise levels of managing records and information. Maintaining silos is more expensive than centralization and more expensive to manage and maintain both the records and the software/hardware necessary to keep multiple systems going.

While productivity is considered a soft cost, the reality is that wasted time is costly – if your users can’t locate what they are looking for and spend hours each month either searching or recreating records and information they need – it costs money! ECM systems support *operational effectiveness and efficiencies*, which saves money.

Let’s look at what the agency currently spends in disclosure and discovery costs:

* How many staff hours and resources are devoted to searching and production?
* How many billable hours in attorney’s fees are generated in reviewing and defense?
* How many lawsuits has the agency been involved in?
* How much money has been paid out in settlements or fines/penalties?

Just defending a lawsuit costs money! Savings in disclosure and discovery efforts alone will help pay for a system.

When you apply systematic management strategies to valuable informational assets, it naturally flows into improving business processes, which in turn reduces risks and costs.

It costs money to continue to store ROT – redundant, outdated/obsolete and trivial records, yet many agencies keep paying to store thousands if not millions of records and data that has met retention but there are no systems in place to disposition or get rid of these on a practical and systematic basis.

Investing in a system will offset costs of adding staff to manually manage records and information, and offset the other costs of waste and inefficiencies that come about from the lack of managing and dispositioning records.

How many other legal obligations that have been hard to comply with because things are disorganized and no one can find anything in order to complete certain functions or it takes longer (deadlines are passed) because things are such a mess?

**Myth #2: I can’t add anything more to our already stretched budget.**

**Reality:** Running an agency does cost money, absolutely. It takes money to run a business, and government is no exception. And everyone is in the same boat, suffering from cuts and restrictions, and things tighten more with each budget cycle.

Over and above the typical administrative and operational costs and overhead, the costs of technology (both hardware and software) has increased the cost of doing business right along with the increased volume of records and data being created.

You may not have to ADD anything to your existing budget. What an agency can do is look for ways to decommission obsolete systems (and stop spending money on them) that are a drain on resources, do an analysis to determine redundancies and identify where silos can be centralized and streamlined.

You may be pleasantly (or perhaps unpleasantly) surprised at what you can decommission or unplug and save money with by centralizing and managing records and information at an enterprise level. Existing technology budgets can be examined for ways to re-allocate and re-purpose some of the funds and existing resources dedicated to technology and improvements.

Most agencies have no trouble justifying additional technology, it’s just time to make better choices and decisions on what purchases really add benefits and using the principles of information governance to realize those benefits. The value and cost savings (return on investment) from these systems are real, and will improve your bottom line.

**Myth #3: We’ll just use some of the free or cheap solutions available instead.**

**Reality:** Remember that old adage “you get what you pay for”? The reality is that for public records and government agencies there are certain responsibilities and requirements that come with being a government. Over and above providing services and resources to the public, agencies must also be accountable and transparent. “Free” usually does not come with the appropriate levels of protection necessary for public records, and the costs associated with loss or a security breach can be huge.

Using a free service is akin to getting a free puppy. Yes, it was free. But puppies come loaded with responsibility and a responsible pet owner then pays for the care and feeding, licensing, and vet bills that make that “free” puppy not so “free” after all. Neglecting a puppy comes with consequences, as does neglecting the responsibilities that come with public records.

Public records not only come with responsibilities, they also come with compliance requirements and provide accountability and transparency. Our public records deserve the consideration and attention due them in providing the appropriate care and protection from damage and disorganization.