

YOUR ONE STOP GUIDE TO PROCURING A DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

10 Page PDF Guide to Make
An Informed Purchasing Decision



The Definitive Buyers' Guide to Procuring a Document Management System

Document Management System also known as DMS have revolutionized the corporate industry yet still many Business Leaders are not aware of the importance of such systems. Selecting the most suitable Document Management System according to your preferences and business needs could be a little tricky especially if you don't even know how they work, how such systems can boost up your business operations, how DMS can increase your productivity and what factors you should know beforehand to select the right system for your business.

Here in this guide, we are going to cover all of these concerns so you can decide which kind of DMS system offers more benefits to your business. Let's start from the basics.

What is a Document Management System?

Document Management System is a digital version of a physical record room filled with thousands of documents. Now it is pretty obvious that finding a specific file or document in a physical record room is no easy cake. Not to mention the security flaws and reliability concerns where documents could be stolen without people knowing or destroyed because of something like fire or earth quake.

DMS provides the necessary framework where organizations can convert all of their paper documents into digital versions, create backups and integrate those documents with powerful search features for quick access. Almost all modern DMS provide integration with scanners that make it easier for corporate culture to scan documents and digitalize them.

What does a Document Management System accomplish?

Some general features in a Document Management System consist of but not limited to:

- Storing different types of documents like text, presentations, spreadsheets, PDFs and images of different formats either locally or in cloud (we'll discuss both of these types later in this article)
- Being compatible with BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) culture by providing secure access to documents on mobile devices like phones and tablets
- Provide powerful search feature so users can find required documents by using a full or even partial search term. This is very important because we want to be able to retrieve our documents effortlessly and on the go
- Define users' privileges to allow and deny access to certain documents and categories to certain users
- Provide full monitoring and logging system so administrators can see who is accessing/reading which documents
- Tracking edits/changes in documents so previous versions could be retrieved when needed
- Update documents to their latest versions and delete files which are not needed

What Are The Different Types of Document Management System?

Some Document Management Systems only support electronic files where you cannot convert paper documents in to digital format but almost all modern DMS support imaging and digital processes. We can categorize DMS into two categories; Self-Hosted DMS and Cloud Based DMS. Let's talk about both, their features, pros and cons.

Self-Hosted Document Management System

Self-Hosted Document Management System refers to the software installed on your servers or systems and it has no connection with the outside world. Generally, such systems allow businesses to store as many documents as needed and when there is no sufficient space left, more space could be added. Self-Hosted DMS come with higher up-front deployment cost depends on the size of the organization and number of users.

The deployment and operational costs vary from software to software as some vendors charge one time installation fee regardless of number of users while some vendors charge license fee on per user basis. Some self-hosted DMS come with yearly fee for upgrades.

Pros

- The biggest advantage offered by Self-Hosted Document Management Systems is their overall control over the data and the system itself. With such system, you would be independent without relying on someone else to provide security and maintenance to the system.
- Self-Hosted DMS generally work offline that means you are not dependent on the internet and your system is not vulnerable to online attacks. However the intranet within your organization has to be working.
- One-time deployment cost could be higher than the alternative but with little or no operational cost, Self-Hosted DMS are considered more cost efficient in the long term.

Cons

- As you are in total control over the system, you are also responsible for its maintenance. You might need IT department with specialized personnel to keep the software running on all the required systems.

- The deployment could be very expensive especially for small size businesses and the yearly upgrade for such systems could be costly too.
- You need to create backups manually and regularly to avoid catastrophe.
- Although it is not always the case but sometimes software support only one platform like Windows or Mac that could be a problem if you have different platforms being used in your organization.

Cloud Based Document Management System

Cloud Based Document Management Systems refer to SaaS (Software as a Service) based platform where the host provides the functionality of a Document Management System online. Cloud Based DMS have been getting popularity for quite some time because of their advantages over traditional Self Hosted DMS. Such systems are popular within BYOD cultures and employees can use their own devices to use these platforms.

Cloud Based DMS come with monthly, quarterly or yearly subscription fee and they offers a different business structure from Self Hosted DMS. In Cloud Based DMS case, you are renting the platform.

Pros

- The biggest advantage of Cloud Based DMS is there is no deployment cost. This particular trait makes such systems ideal choice for business of any size. Even small businesses can use Cloud Based DMS without worrying about their budget.
- There are no maintenance costs; as you are not independent and the platform is being hosted by someone else, you are not responsible for its maintenance.
- There is virtually zero-downtime; hosts use advanced backup technologies to keep things running for their clients all the time.
- Portability and mobility are some advantages too as you can use these systems anywhere you want. All you need is your credentials to log in to the online platform.

- Cloud Based DMS come with advanced security measures and some platforms use powerful encryption to secure all documents.
- Peace Of Mind. You don't need specialized IT team to deploy or maintain the Cloud Based DMS.

Cons

- You are not independent but you rely on the host of that platform.
- You need internet connection all the time to access files and run the online system. If your internet connection fails, the platform would be useless until it goes online.
- Although Cloud Based DMS offer scalability but storage expansion could be expensive based on your organization size and number of users accessing those files.
- The operational cost could be a turn off for some organizations which prefer one-time cost.

How To Make A Document Management System Work For You?

DMS offers tons of advantages that directly affect the overall productivity of the employees and make day to day operations seamless. Let's see how modern DMS can help you in your business.

- **Ready Information At Finger Tips:** The biggest advantage of DMS is its accessibility; because retrieving digitally stored files is way easier than retrieving physical documents. Users can retrieve documents via different devices and on the move. What you have is a team with ready information at their finger tips to perform at their optimum.
- **Effortless Search Feature:** Digitally stored files and documents are easy to search. Even if you don't know the name of a particular document, you may still be

able to recall some of its contents e.g. company names, dates, products, topics etc and search via these keywords.

- **Security Through Privileged Users Settings:** Of course you can restrict access to the record room so only certain people can access it; but digitally it is way easier and way more secure. Access to critical documents are controlled and each read access leaves a trail.
- **Storage Space:** We are talking about physical storage space. You can digitalize an entire library with thousands of books into a fingernail size memory card. Its time for the cabinets to make room for the pool tables.
- **Backup and Recovery:** Creating backups and recover lost documents is almost impossible when it comes to the physical documents. However, it takes few minutes to recover accidentally destroyed documents or you can even revert to previous version.

What Factors Make A Document Management System Good?

Of course every business has different needs and preferences; however there are some general factors that can help you choose the most suitable DMS for your organization.

- **Security:** First and foremost, the Document Management System has to be secure. It must be able to protect the data you have uploaded. Look for reliable brand names with a strong portfolio of clients.
- **Search Feature:** Make sure the DMS you are going to use has different search options like search by file name, search by date and search by contents. That would make it easy for your employees to find certain documents even if they don't know their file names.
- **Easy To Use:** Regardless of how many features a particular DMS has, or how powerful search functionality it possesses, if a system is not easy to use, it is almost useless for you and it would not increase your productivity. Make sure your employees find your DMS effective and efficient.

- **Mobile Devices Support:** BYOD is a popular corporate culture and if you want to use the benefits of DMS at its peak, make sure your system is compatible with mobile devices like phones and tablets.
- **Scanning Feature:** This is a must-have feature and without scanning function, a DMS could not benefit your business at all. Make sure the DMS you are going to use is compatible with the scanner your company has or intend to buy.
- **Access Policies:** Accessibility and security work side by side; the DMS should have security policies so administrators can block access to certain files and folders. Users can ask for permissions to access files which are not readily available to them.
- **Logging:** DMS must have logging feature so administrators can see all the processes in real time as well as via records.

Frequently Asked Questions

Following are some FAQs about DMS to provide you clarity about their structure and working.

Are Document Management Systems designed for large organizations specifically?

Actually No; DMS are beneficial for businesses and organizations of all sizes because even small businesses could have thousands of paper documents each month. Properly organized and easily accessible documents increase operational performance of the company.

Cloud storage and cloud based Document Management Systems are the same thing, right?

No, cloud storage refers to saving your files and documents online and cloud based DMS refers to a specialized platform designed for document management; although both use online storage for saving documents.

Can I recover accidentally deleted or modified documents?

Yes you can.

Can I restrict some users to access certain documents?

Yes you can.

Do I need a scanner for DMS?

If you want to digitize paper documents then you definitely need a scanner. Make sure the scanner is compatible with the DMS you are using. Some DMS only deal with electronic documents and if you do not want imaging then you don't need a scanner.



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