IS YOUR TECHNOLOGY WORKING FOR YOU – OR AGAINST YOU?

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The digital landscape is constantly evolving, and information is a critical asset that government agencies must properly manage to comply with requirements outlined in the Federal Information Security Modernization Act (FISMA). Commercial-off-the-shelf (COTS) solution providers often tout the cost savings or productivity improvements their products deliver — specifically in the area of content management. But have those promises lived up to your expectations?

Here we highlight 10 questions to ask to assess whether your technology is helping your teams work smarter and more productive — or if it's inhibiting progress by making it more difficult to complete daily tasks and workflows.

1. Does your team have a core technology platform to securely store and manage documents, email, and other work product you create?

An organized approach to content management should enable users to save and collaborate on documents, emails, and other work product in a secure centralized location that serves as a hub for all information resources. A secure collaboration cloud platform becomes your single system of record, helps reduce workflow disruptions, and enables your teams to work effectively and efficiently in a familiar application environment.

2. Are you able to organize your documents and email in a meaningful, efficient manner?

Organizing documents and emails in a hierarchy with hundreds, if not thousands, of folders and sub-folders is an inefficient and dated process. This makes it difficult and time-consuming to locate documents you need by means of manually expanding and collapsing folders. Flexible content management and collaboration platforms enable a range of personalized preferences to eliminate this common hassle.

3. Can you file email and attachments directly from Outlook to a central location?

Important email communications and associated attachments saved to a central location help improve security and encourage collaboration. This ensures that conversations, documents, and group tasks relayed through email can easily be accessed, not just by the author and recipients, but also by others who may be extended team members and/or participants with a need to know. In addition, assignments can be seamlessly transitioned to others when an employee leaves the department or organization. For example: What happens to the email inbox and all the data saved in Outlook when an individual leaves the agency.

4. Is your team able to securely collaborate and seamlessly share content with external parties outside your department or agency?

A solution designed with security features for external document and knowledge sharing will provide flexible, encrypted delivery methods, such as email or an integrated extranet. This enables controlled access to people outside the agency with options to apply passwords and expiration dates as needed.

5. Does your solution provide reliable features to effectively support document versioning?

Document versioning helps uphold the integrity of documents through effective version control. For documents that require revisions from multiple sources, this feature helps ensure changes are reflected in the latest version produced. Additionally, effective version control solutions save Microsoft Word and PDF content together. Solutions that provide these capabilities help agencies automate document lifecycle processes, govern content, streamline collaboration, and provide a comprehensive audit trail.

6. Can you find the exact information and all related content you need with one search?

Robust content management and collaboration platforms provide full-text search capabilities that enable users to quickly find the documents or information they need in a single search. These solutions also offer the ability to filter and narrow search results by metadata and other important taxonomies (e.g., dates, author, or application). Individuals spend less time looking for information through multiple searches, which results in more time to focus on the task at hand.

7. Are security controls available to protect sensitive materials from unauthorized users?

Content management and collaboration platforms should extend security capabilities beyond standard access controls. The solution should offer reliable and simple processes to secure content and reduce the risk of unintentional or malicious data breaches. Solutions equipped with security features such as encryption, data loss prevention, and multifactor authentication help preserve the integrity of business data, while also protecting your most sensitive content.

8. Does your current solution provide secure remote work capabilities for employees?

The hybrid work environment is commonplace among government agencies. Data projections from Ladders estimate 25% of all professional jobs in North America will move to remote access by the end of 2022, and remote work opportunities will continue to increase through 2023. Solutions designed to support secure remote access and team collaboration will make this transition much more seamless.

9 Are you able to securely access documents and email from a smartphone or other mobile device?

Mobile accessibility has become increasingly important as the hybrid work environment accelerates. It is a convenient and preferred method of communication for agency professionals when working on the go. Secure access to work files is imperative in today's world where people are increasingly relying on mobile devices to complete work.

10. Is your solution providing the productivity benefits you were promised?

Performance metrics and analytics can measure if technology is delivering efficient and consistent contributions through the elimination of manual, repetitive tasks. Content management solutions offering workflow automation and continuous product enhancements help increase productivity by allowing individuals to focus on their work and spend less time working against technology.

Technology can change and influence the way we work in many positive ways, but only if it's working for you and where you work. Use these 10 questions to take time and evaluate your technology solutions and ensure you are getting the maximum return on your investment and the experience you and your constituents expect — and deserve.

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