

5 Reasons Why the SaaS Revolution Needs a Unified Content Strategy



Many organizations now risk an explosion of content silos

One can hardly tell the history of enterprise content management without quickly encountering “content silos.” Much of this is a byproduct of the way in which ECM solutions were introduced into organizations during the 1990s and 2000s. Individual departments within an organization built process solutions upon a *specific ECM platform* to solve a *particular point of process pain*. As a result, even organizations that were committed to some form of a content strategy ultimately found that they had multiple (and often inconsistent and incompatible) content repositories in their organization.

The introduction of SaaS process solutions like Salesforce (for sales automation), Workday (for HR), Hubspot (for marketing) and a host of others opened up sophisticated enterprise solutions to many organizations that could not previously afford them and changed the way many large organizations looked at the cost and flexibility of these processes.

The availability of SaaS solutions – implemented often with a minimum of IT support (or supervision!) – is changing how enterprise software is procured and implemented and is accelerating the shift of technology buying power from IT to the business. SaaS solutions have spread like kudzu in organizations – the 2017 Netskope Cloud Report notes that enterprises have an average of 1,031 cloud services in use.

But there is a price to pay for all of this flexibility. According to the Gigaom’s Derrick Harris, organizations are realizing that “doing away with long, often restrictive, contracts associated with legacy software **is only a benefit if the numerous specialized SaaS applications a company uses can work together like their old software suites did**. Otherwise, it’s just a lot of services to manage, and even more work to keep data consistent among them.”

On top of this application integration challenge, the explosion of SaaS process solutions, often each with their own content platform, is creating a brand-new content silo problem – *on steroids*.

So how do you 1) take advantage of the flexibility and agility represented by SaaS solutions AND 2) solve the content silo problem? I’m convinced that cloud content management and a unified content strategy are critical to solving this equation. **Here are 5 reasons why the SaaS revolution needs a unified content strategy:**



The content critical to a SaaS application does not exist in isolation.

Many content assets are critical to multiple business processes. Think about a contract. Clearly, the Contracts Administrator needs a process and solution to manage critical business contracts, and a single purpose SaaS solution is a good solution

for this executive. But this same content asset is needed by Finance and HR and Sales and Legal and a host of others, each of whom operate within their own process environment. Will this contract then be replicated in multiple places and systems? How will you keep track of which is the “official” version and keep all of the various versions in sync?

2

The content used by a SaaS application STILL has legal, compliance, and retention requirements attached to it.

The content used within a particular business process has retention and compliance requirements that are often unique to that process, and often (but not always!) a SaaS solution can help manage these. But what about compliance and legal requirements that cut across departments? What about compliance requirements like the new European General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) that carry significant penalties for non-compliance (up to 4% of annual revenues!) and that transcend borders? On a practical level, how do you impose consistent controls on something like a contract if it exists in multiple places and versions?

3

Not every content creator or contributor in a process needs an individual license to that SaaS application.

SaaS solutions are typically priced on a per user basis. Taking the above contracts example, typically a wide variety of departments are involved in the creation of a contract. Much of the basic collaboration associated with development of a contract does not need to occur within the SaaS application. If the collaboration process occurs outside of the application, there is no need for everyone associated with the process to have a user license to the application. In large organizations, abstracting the content creation, development and storage layer in this fashion can represent significant savings across multiple SaaS applications.

4

Change management challenges increase with varied, chaotic, and inconsistent approaches to employee collaboration.

Most knowledge work typically occurs within a primary business process. But knowledge workers also have a wide variety of secondary processes in which they must collaborate. Organizations can minimize some of the change management challenges created by rapid technology changes by standardizing on the basic collaborative tools with which knowledge workers interact with each other.

5

A unified content strategy is a critical element in optimizing performance across SaaS solutions.

If organizations must get their specialized SaaS applications to work together like their old software suites did, the openness of each application’s APIs and how well pre-configured these APIs are with all of the other SaaS applications in use is critical. The complexity of this integration task increases geometrically with the number of solutions that must interconnect. One way of simplifying this task is to commit to a unified content strategy *across* SaaS applications, and to only select products that are easy to integrate *with each other* and easily integrate with the how your knowledge workers create, collaborate upon, and use content.



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