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Widening the 'collaboration zone'

How cloud-based enterprise file sharing tools make it easier to make your content work harder, right across the extended enterprise

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Secure, cloud-based enterprise file sharing tools complement traditional content management suites by providing enhanced capabilities to share and collaborate with partners, suppliers, etc. anywhere, and on any device. This brings huge opportunities to improve the quality of content-driven interactions across the business.

In this report, we look at why organizations need to deploy integrated enterprise file sharing services alongside their existing infrastructure in order to operate effectively across the semi-permeable boundaries of a modern extended enterprise – and how to get the most value from doing so.

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Executive summary

In an effective business enterprise, people interact and complete work by embracing digital technology platforms, processes and governance policies. People from across (and outside) the organization all swarm seamlessly around a multi-channel digital flow of content and data. New ways of working and expectations of high-quality experiences create new frontiers for collaboration and the coordination of work and resources.

To get the most value from your content, it needs to be supported by rich sharing and collaboration-enhancing capabilities and integrated within business process workflows that weave across your extended enterprise.

It's a changing world out there

Organizational structures and connections are being redefined

Why change the way you're working with content now (the way you share it, the way you collaborate on it, the way you use it to drive digital experiences)? Simply put, you need to configure your organization so that it's able to put content to work more effectively. This enables you to support collaborative workflows that straddle the semi-permeable boundaries of the modern enterprise; delivering a richer, more seamless experience for your employees in the field, partners, suppliers and customers.

Across every sector and territory, organizational structures and connections are being redefined. The value of IT is shifting. It used to be all about how you stored information; now, it's all about how that information is shared, how it's integrated… how it's 'put to work', and the value you can extract from it to help you deliver better, more personalized, more seamless experiences for your customers.

Where the old world was all about efficiency and scale (and the value of IT used to be about how you optimize individual or team productivity, internally), now it's about an end-to-end picture to match that new information landscape and customer-centric view. Organizations that get it right – that deliver those high-quality digital experiences – are taking a holistic, organization-wide view of their workflows, their processes and how their content and data can be best put to use, internally and externally.

Also, old management control hierarchies which were often created decades ago are being overlaid with (and sometimes even completely replaced by) much more *cross-cutting, horizontal* information networks that form around communities of practice and communities of purpose (which may be completely globalized, dispersed, virtual and boundary-less). These bring with them *much* more complicated frameworks for how information flows, how people get messages and how people get motivated.

We're no longer just talking about "information at rest" and individual productivity; instead, we're talking about a system-wide view of how IT can leverage this content and data to drive efficiency and effectiveness, and the development of high-quality digital services; how it can power digital transformation; and how it can drive change (and your ability to be agile in the face of change).

You need to do more than simply *manage* your content, you need to *maximize* it… which means widening your 'collaboration zone' to encompass an extended enterprise view of your theatre of operations – thereby improving content sharing amongst partners, suppliers, customers and employees in the field. It's about what you *do* with your content beyond the realms of your content management solution; how you put it to work for you; how you get the most value from it in the context of your business needs, involving all the parties in your business network. Undoubtedly you need to align to your organization's data governance policies, too (especially if you're operating in a regulated industry).

You'll find it very challenging to do all this effectively and efficiently (or even *at all*) without incorporating a move to the cloud for at least some parts of your content management workloads. But that cloud platform needs to meet modern ease-of-use expectations as well as key enterprise IT requirements, as we'll explain below.

New frontiers for collaboration, new value from content

In an effective digital enterprise, people from across (and outside) the business all swarm seamlessly around a multi-channel digital flow of content and data – the ways that people interact and get work done embrace digital technologies, platforms, processes, and governance policies. For example, companies can expose contract documents to share with their suppliers; sales personnel in the field can access common sets of the latest brochures and marketing collateral whilst away from base; content approvals can be passed back and forth amongst partners; and so on – bringing smooth, seamless, secure content experiences to all aspects of the business.

These new expectations of high-quality digital experiences therefore create new frontiers for collaboration and the co-ordination of work and resources. They also present new opportunities to drive more value from content assets with new ways of working right across your extended enterprise.

Work that happens in your organization is ripe for re-invention, re-consideration and re-orientation because we now have the ability to think about how we work with content – how we collaborate to get work done – in quite different ways. What exactly is the work, who does it… when do they do it… where… why… how?

These things all used to be very tightly defined because of the technology, process, and organizational constraints of the past, but now these are being eroded. We have flexible workforces and partner networks that can all be pulled into workflow processes to engage in open collaboration. We have richly functional mobile tech that's interconnected with enterprise workflows, facilitating access to content anywhere, anytime – and supporting an array of uses cases that support knowledge workers 'in the field', operating outside the enterprise core.

Seamless and frictionless… easy-to-deploy and easy-to-use

One of the main characteristics of an enterprise that's successfully engaging with both its internal and external networks is its ability to extend the reach and capabilities of its resources from the operational core of the business, to the enterprise edge and beyond. There are now many parties involved in content collaboration workflows, and that requires a new approach to how content is managed and used. For instance: sharing documents on the cloud removes the need to purchase additional licenses and make VPN arrangements in order to grant select partners access to internal content management systems through a firewall.

The extended enterprise has a dynamic and semi-permeable boundary, drawn at a different radius from the enterprise core depending on the task at hand. At times it'll encompass various partners, suppliers and customers alongside employees (and even those employees aren't likely to all be solely resident at corporate HQ; an increasingly mobile workforce will often find itself needing to operate 'in the field', beyond the corporate firewall).

Organizations are looking to cloud-based services to help them extend 'the inside' of their business out to a range of parties across a range of channels – and these new content experiences need to be seamless, easy-to-configure, quick-to-deploy and easy-to-use. End-users will value the 'consumerized IT vibe,' and how they're able to engage with business content in similar ways to how they're used to interacting with their online bank, or favorite born-digital retailer.

This is significant because these new workflow participants have expectations of what a digital experience *should be* that's colored by interactions with a variety of cloud-native services in their personal lives. IT will value the security of a *bona fide* enterprise-friendly cloud-based file sharing service that supports access management and data governance policies and provides a manageable alternative to shadow IT workarounds which would otherwise risk the integrity of your organization's information architecture. To remain relevant and competitive, cloud-based content sharing and collaboration services therefore need to reflect modern usability expectations alongside enterprise-grade reliability, integration, security and robust governance.

Widening the 'collaboration zone'

People across all roles and all parties in extended enterprise relationships need to be able to create, share, comment, edit and act upon content. Content collaboration and management solutions need to be tightly integrated with your enterprise's business applications too, so that sophisticated workflows can be constructed that connect all elements of your information architecture – both on-premises and in the cloud. With the right platform in place, internal processes can be triggered and informed by content supplied securely by external parties; and content held in your organization's systems of record can be safely exposed and acted upon through systems of engagement, coordination, and insight.

It's therefore imperative that you work to widen the zone of secure content collaboration (i.e. enabling boundary-less/borderless collaboration for content in a consumer-savvy way but on enterprise IT's terms). It's also key to widen the 'theatre of operations' where your content can be put to work (as fuel for multiple business application interactions, across an extended enterprise of partners and suppliers, etc.).

However, you need to resist the urge to try to replace one operational paradigm and systems architecture wholesale with another. Cloud-based and on-premises applications will need to coexist, and you'll need to leverage existing investments whilst still reaping the benefits of new ways of working.

64% of CIOs say that cloud is now core to their strategy

Source: MWD Advisors CIO Survey, 2017

For most organizations, it's not a matter of "if" they will migrate to the cloud, it's "when". In MWD Advisors' recent survey of CIOs, 64% said that cloud was now core to their strategy. However, many stakeholders are still not fully aware of the changes that such a move will bring (such as how it will affect the way business processes work; how skillsets need to adapt to new ways of exploiting and integrating cloud-based services; and how to spot new opportunities, and threats from similarly-enabled new disruptive competitors).

What these changes mean for you and your business

Cloud-based content sharing tools can, for example, enable sales reps to have access to up-to-date marketing collateral anywhere, anytime on their mobile devices. Employees in the field can collaborate with colleagues dispersed across multiple locations. Companies can share documents, and extend content workflows, amongst partners and vendors in their supply chains – as in the *Universal Forest Products (UFP)* case study example callout. All of this can happen (as UFP was keen to exploit) without everyone needing their own expensive license to access an on-premises system, or risking sharing via unsecure and untracked email attachments. Such a strategy brings an element of the consumerized network vibe into the workplace, with access to easy sharing and collaboration features.

Ultimately, all of these changes are about embracing modern customers' needs and expectations. Improving the quality of the customer experience is key to surviving and thriving in a digital environment. But to do this, all parts of your business need to be connected, with content comfortably flowing back and forth.

When some of the players reside outside your enterprise core (maybe they're freelancers or mobile employees working out of the office, or you're working through a network of partners that each provide a key service component), it's challenging to deliver that end-to-end experience without the capabilities of cloud-based tools. Those tools can't operate in a vacuum either; they need to integrate with content management systems and other backend applications – which may be in the cloud or on-premises. You should deploy a solution that enables you to continue to effectively operate on-premises when you have to, but in the cloud when you'd like to (in order to exploit the new ways of working we've outlined earlier).

Conclusions

The changing external environment is changing how businesses run internally. Requirements are changing; technologies are changing to meet those requirements; and organizations are changing by re-shaping their structures and pioneering new processes that span enterprise boundaries.

Moving to the cloud for your content sharing and collaboration workloads will help IT deliver on new expectations for agility, scale, reach, ubiquity and more. It will also benefit your business users and the customers they serve by bringing an element of *consumerized IT* ease of use – enabling them to securely share content from within their application environment without resorting to shadow IT workarounds like unsanctioned cloud services, insecure email attachments, or opening ports for FTP access.

There are numerous stand-alone offerings on the market – many claiming integration routes into traditional content management products. However, if you already have a significant investment with a vendor whose content and process management capabilities you rely upon in other aspects of the business, then a pairing where you can deploy their own cloud-based content sharing component will bring significant advantages in terms of ease of integration, familiarity of design and understanding of wider workload considerations.

Case study example

Universal Forest Products

A long-time OnBase customer, Universal Forest Products deployed Hyland's *ShareBase* cloud-based file sharing and collaboration product in 2017 to enable it to safely and securely extend content-driven processes externally. The company leverages the SaaS file sharing product to expose content from the OnBase enterprise information platform to partners and suppliers and also ingest content back into workflows to be indexed and stored in the OnBase repository (e.g. collecting required legal agreements from vendors, prompted by accounts payable invoice workflow rules).

ShareBase is an example of an EFSS product that's tightly integrated with a wider content management offering (in this case, OnBase by Hyland), enabling its customers to use it as a 'sharing module' for content without further integration issues to contend with.

Whilst ShareBase is also able to support common EFSS use cases around file sharing for remote collaboration, etc., Universal Forest Products has so far chosen not to exploit those aspects of its functionality - focusing instead on a specific need the business had to make external content workflows more efficient and effective. In that regard the company has built on early successes and is planning to automate more external content processes in the coming months.

ShareBase by Hyland

ShareBase is a robust solution that is an essential element of Hyland's Content Services portfolio. As a next-generation cloud application, it provides straightforward and secure document sharing and collaboration. Initially launched as an electronic file sync and share platform, it has grown to include additional lightweight document management capabilities.

ShareBase is offered as both a standalone solution and as a complement to OnBase, Hyland's enterprise information platform, and other Hyland solutions like Perceptive Content. Together with these products, it extends the reach of an enterprise into true digital transformation.

ShareBase is exclusively hosted in the Hyland Cloud – a privately-managed, reliable and secure architecture that hosts solely Hyland products, including OnBase, Perceptive Content and Brainware. Since 2004, Hyland has offered cloud-deployment of OnBase—and it continues to drive innovative cloud-based solutions, including ShareBase.

For more information on ShareBase, please visit www.sharebase.com.