



MANAGING KNOWLEDGE WITHOUT REALLY TRYING

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INFORMATION, KNOWLEDGE AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

There is no doubt that information is the foundation of almost all business. Regardless of whether you're a lawyer, recruiter or boat builder, without information you have no case, no clients and no blueprint. But information itself is not knowledge.

HOW DOES INFORMATION BECOME KNOWLEDGE?

Information has little potential until you add a human to it. It can sit in filing cabinets and on computer disks forever. Unless there's someone around to 'know' the information, then it cannot be shared, leveraged and turned into value. Knowledge provides information with the potential for action.

HOW DO YOU MANAGE KNOWLEDGE?

Knowledge Management means different things to different people. Loosely defined, it means the effective use of a company's or industry's knowledge base. It can mean knowledge sharing, information storage, knowledge measurement, database maintenance or intranet access. Regardless of how it is defined, a company that manages its knowledge effectively gets the greatest value from the knowledge it has, whether that value is measured in sales, time-to-market, client retention or pieces of string.

WHY MANAGE KNOWLEDGE?

Many companies spend more time trying to find information than they spend using knowledge productively. Studies have shown that anywhere between 15 and 50 percent of an individual's time can be spent trying to find or reproduce important information. An effective Knowledge Management solution can reduce the time, and therefore the cost, of using information to create value.

THE CHALLENGE: MANAGING KNOWLEDGE EFFECTIVELY

Knowledge Management is not a new concept. Many companies adopted Knowledge Management practices long before the concept was defined. Hence, many companies have had the opportunity to identify problems and issues with the way they use and manage knowledge. What are some of those issues?

MAKING A MOUNTAIN OUT OF A MOLEHILL

Knowledge Management, whilst essential, can be overrated. It does not have to mean a huge, resource-draining project. Many companies, however, will hire a team of knowledge experts, devise a complex file system, outsource an intranet developer and issue regular internal communications to explain why the deadline for their Knowledge Management solution rollout has slipped again. It doesn't have to be that complicated.

OVERHAULING INFORMATION STORAGE

In order to manage knowledge effectively, it makes sense to look at the way information is currently stored by your staff – in individual computers, filing cabinets and archive boxes - and transform it into a common, accessible, structured system. Does it really make sense? Is it really necessary to overhaul your entire information storage system just to access company knowledge?

WHEN KNOWLEDGE SHARING IS DANGEROUS

Sharing access to company information is a good thing. But what if some of that information is sensitive or esoteric? Often it is necessary to limit staff's access to certain information. A company needs to be able to customize its knowledge sharing needs.

ACCESSING DIFFERENT TYPES OF FILES

Most offices work with a combination of paper-based and electronic documents. Within a company, different divisions or departments may use different software applications to create, store and manage files. On top of that, there may be files in storage that were created with an older version of current software applications, or applications that are no longer used. How can files be accessed from a single point, regardless of their format?

KEEPING INFORMATION UP TO DATE

Any Knowledge Management system needs to take into account new or updated information, and deleted or old information that is no longer relevant. With any number of staff adding, changing and deleting documents every day, it is difficult to keep a knowledge base up to date and purged of obsolete information.

THE MISSION: FINDING THE RIGHT SOFTWARE

There is a plethora of software available to help companies solve their Knowledge Management, document retrieval and searching issues. Some applications specialize in one technique while others attempt to provide a well-rounded solution. The following examples are by no means comprehensive; they provide sample of the different options available.

CONCEPTUAL INDEXING AND RETRIEVAL SYSTEMS

What they do...

Conceptual indexing and retrieval systems do away with the need to match search terms exactly with words or phrases in a document, commonly using lists of contextually related words and synonyms like a thesaurus. A user may receive results that include synonyms or similar concepts to their search terms, but do not match them exactly.

What they don't do...

Computer programs don't know what you're thinking, although some software companies would have you believe otherwise. For example, if you're trying to find a reference to a catering company called "Fish Out of Water" and you search for "fish", the software doesn't know if you mean the noun, the verb, "fishing", "fished", "fisherman", "fishnet", "goldfish" "babel fish", "shark",

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“eel”, “sushi”, the card game “fish” or Laurence Fishburne. Conceptual systems can sometimes complicate your search rather than simplify it.

DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

What they do...

Document management systems let you organise electronic and paper-based documents in a database and provide a search facility to find them again. References to documents are usually stored in a hierarchy, according to simple document profiles that users create when documents are saved. This makes it simple to retrieve documents according to items in the document profile.

What they don't do...

Document Management Systems provide structure to the way documents are stored, searched and retrieved. They don't take into account the way individual users or groups of users may choose to structure their own documents, if at all. Forcing a single set of un-bendable organizational rules upon a group of users often complicates the way they think about document storage, rather than promotes more efficient knowledge management.

DATABASES

What they do...

Databases provide highly structured but flexible information storage in the form of fields, records and files. One of the major advantages of storing company information in a database is the ability they provide to manipulate data and produce information specific to a given context.

What they don't do...

Like some document management systems, often you need to know something about where your search terms occur in the database structure before you search for them. Databases are not useful for managing unstructured information, or files that are not compatible with the database itself.

PORTALS

What they do...

Portals provide a single online access point to company information, software systems, search facilities and other users. They are a powerful knowledge management tool, and can often be customized to present features that are relevant to a specific company or user environment.

What they don't do...

Portals are rarely a “quick fix” solution. Building a portal that is relevant, useful and flexible enough to accommodate different users can be a massive drain on resources. Also, a portal is only as good as the information it provides access to. If it points to an ineffective document management system, uses ineffective search functionality or provides little or no customization, then your company cannot realize the potential benefit a portal can bring.

IMPORTANT FEATURES TO CONSIDER

File types

- What types of files does your company use?
- How many kinds of files do you need to access?
- Do you store files from applications that you no longer use?
- Can you currently search all the file types you want access to?

Customization

- Do your Knowledge applications meet your needs to the letter?
- Are you bending your business practices to match your software?
- Does your software fit seamlessly into other business systems?

Finding what you are looking for

- Do you consistently receive search results that are useless?
- Are you getting the most from your search results?
- Do you search through each document to find your query terms?
- How long do you spend searching for information each day? Each week?

Leveraging knowledge

- When you find information, what do you do with it?
- How often do you complete a project, only to find that the work already exists elsewhere in your company?
- Can you quickly turn search results into value?
- When you store information, how easily can you retrieve it?

Investment of resources

- How much do you want to spend on your Knowledge Management system?
- Can you spare staff to manage your knowledge and install and maintain the necessary software?
- Can you spare the time to train your staff in Knowledge Management practices?
- What is your expected Return on Investment?

THE SOLUTION: ISYS SEARCH SOFTWARE

ISYS products provide effective information management and searching tools to a wide range of industries for many different purposes. From medical portals to legal interrogation, resume management, corporate knowledge management and publication of council minutes, ISYS provides effective solutions to thousands of clients across the globe.

KEEP YOUR FILES WHERE THEY ARE

There is no need to overhaul your file storage system or move your files around in any way. ISYS will index, search and display your documents, leaving all your information exactly where you left it. Information does not have to be structured or categorized – users don't have to know where to look for what they need.

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MANAGE OVER 125 DIFFERENT KINDS OF INFORMATION

ISYS supports over 125 data formats, including all MS Office products, e-mail, PDF, HTML and native format spreadsheets. A single user can access information across a network, compiling references from global and personal e-mail folders, SQL databases, word processing documents, spreadsheets, PDFs, XML data, web pages, Lotus Notes and contact management systems.

LIMIT ACCESS TO SECURE DOCUMENTS

ISYS can be configured to take into account any documents that have security restrictions placed on them. If the security of your network will not allow a user to access a document, then that document will not appear in the user's result list.

OUTLINE BROWSE

Bandwidth issues can arise if you're trying to retrieve numerous large documents. ISYS overcomes these issues with Outline Browse, a feature that retrieves only those parts of the document that contain the search hits. Either the user or the administrator can define the size of selections to show in the viewer, and an expanded view of the document can be displayed if desired.

PDF SEARCHING

ISYS can index and search PDF files easily. PDFs can be viewed in either fast draft text-only format, or full WYSIWYG format complete with hit highlighting and navigation. A fast draft mode is particularly important for PDF, as some files tend to be quite large in size.

ANNOTATIONS

ISYS provides you with ability to attach notes to existing documents without modifying the document itself. You can also add graphics, embedded queries, hyperlinks to other relevant documents and hyper-applications, which allow you to open other applications whilst in ISYS.

FIVE KINDS OF QUERY

- **Menu-assisted query** - Enables the user to quickly build accurate queries with push button operators.
- **Plain English query** - Allows users to quickly search by making a statement or asking a question in plain English.
- **Command-Based query** - A sophisticated query that uses the full range of the ISYS Query Syntax..
- **Query-By-Concept** - This query uses a feature called Concept Trees to draw a conceptual map of your company's information and search it accordingly.
- **Saved query** - Enables the user to save queries and re-use them for automatically or manually running the same search over again.

MORE THAN A LIST OF RESULTS

ISYS lets you customize your result list to show the information you want to see, from a simple document title to a full outline including a relevance rating, number of words, date, author and

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summary. You can quickly view the contents of documents without opening any files or other applications or open documents in their native application with a single click

HIT-TO-HIT NAVIGATION

ISYS offers hit highlighting and hit-to-hit navigation within your retrieved documents. Every occurrence of your search terms is highlighted, and you can simply jump from one occurrence of your search word to the next, even if they are pages apart.

QUERY, QUERYING, QUERIED, SEARCH, FIND...

Searching isn't always black-and-white. If you know what you're looking for but not how it is worded, ISYS can expand your possible results using tense expansion, user-defined synonyms, a thesaurus and plain English queries. In addition, the Word Wheel feature lets you specify search terms that start with certain letters, or are phonetically similar to words you enter.

KEEP KNOWLEDGE UP-TO-THE-MINUTE

References to new or changed documents can be updated with a single click. ISYS scans your files to see which documents have been added, deleted or changed and then updates its records accordingly. Updates may be performed manually or set to occur at regular intervals.

INTELLIGENT AGENT

Acting just like a personal news service, the ISYS Intelligent Agent constantly monitors your corporate knowledge base or nominated sites on the Internet and reports back by e-mail every time something new appears that matches your search criteria.

CREATE A PORTAL THE WAY YOU WANT IT

An experienced developer can build a fully customisable portal with ISYS' search capability in a matter of hours. With minimal resources, you can personalize home pages with a huge range of information and functionality.

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THE ISYS SUITE OF PRODUCTS

ISYS:desktop

Desktop seamlessly integrates with all the ISYS products to create a complete knowledge management system, from a single PC through to networks with thousands of users.

ISYS:web

ISYS:web is for portal, e-commerce and Intranet or Internet site solutions, with dynamic html conversion and automated personalised information delivery.

ISYS:web.asp

ISYS:web.asp integrates with Microsoft's Internet Information Server (IIS). It offers many of the features of ISYS:web but with a greater level of control.

ISYS:email.search

ISYS:email.search offers Outlook, Outlook Express and Eudora users a fast, convenient method for searching emails in these programs.

ISYS:spider

ISYS:spider allows you to index information from websites, Lotus Domino and Unix files and incorporate them into an integrated, searchable resource.

ISYS:sdk

The Software Developers Kit (SDK) allows your company to develop other applications that incorporate the ISYS text retrieval component.

ISYS:publisher

ISYS:publisher allows you to publish your entire range of documents for electronic distribution (e.g. CD-ROM, floppy disks, or across a network). It will encrypt and compress both the documents and their ISYS index.

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ABOUT ISYS SEARCH SOFTWARE

HISTORY

ISYS Search Software is a software development house, specialising in Knowledge Management and Information Retrieval Software for either network or Internet based enterprise systems.

Established in 1988, ISYS Search Software manufactures and distributes the multi award winning ISYS software and has enjoyed substantial success in terms of sales and technological advancement, particularly in Australia and the USA.

ISYS Search Software has offices in Sydney Australia, Denver USA, and Chester UK, with distribution arrangements in New Zealand, England, India, Canada, Hong Kong, South Africa, Holland, Germany and many other countries around the world.