



WHY EXPEDITE IS DIFFERENT

Direct Access To Your Data

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The Number One Feature of Expedite

Every small to medium sized business (SMB) has the potential for utilizing a document management system. What small business doesn't have lots of documents? The promised benefits of better control, productivity improvements, reduced operational costs, etc., could seemingly justify such systems. However, the reality is that very few companies actually have such systems in place. Why? If the need is there and the benefits so great, why are there so few deployed?

Document management systems historically have been big, complex, expensive, and require dedicated, directed efforts to keep them working. While this can scare away many customers, we feel there are more fundamental reasons why there are so few in actual use.

The Expedite Business Process Management (BPM) system started with a much different design approach. By leveraging the way users are already interacting with their documents, then adding a layer of protection and control, Expedite avoids the issues that prevent these types of systems from reaching their full potential. Your employees will find it is easier to use the system than to work around it. Users begin to actually trust the data controlled by Expedite.

Many document management systems to fall out of favor after they are put to use. Why is that? Why do they eventually end up simply holding documents that are not used anymore? Why is the choice of user interface so crucial to realizing the promised return on investment? Why is it so important to make glancing at data absolutely simple? What does Expedite do to instill trust and compliance in your people?

Expedite, an Overview

A little background and definitions are in order before we begin to dive into the details. First, Expedite is a Business Process Automation system which takes document management to the next level. Think of traditional document management as a simple file cabinet. Files can be stored and protected in the cabinet. People can access or remove them later. Business Process Management, on the other hand, expands on the basic functionality of document management and adds a layer of best practices for the processes that are to be followed for the information. Business Process Management is like your own executive assistant controlling the contents of that cabinet. A good assistant does some of your work for you, keeps you out of trouble, protects the information, and stays out of your way.

The Expedite design focuses on the information being available from a shared network drive and accessed the same way users currently access their information. The Windows file manager (confusingly called Explorer, not to be confused with Internet Explorer, the Window's web browser) is the main interface to the data. However, a sophisticated rules

engine is constantly overseeing the use and processing of that information. To access the powerful BPM functions, such as routing a document for approval, a user simply right clicks on the file and selects the desired action. Yes, it is that simple.

Traditional Document Management Systems¹

Nearly all document management systems, independent of their interfaces, take your data and hide it away. When given a document, they assign some indecipherable number to it known only to them, and then hide it away in a database. They are the only ones who actually control it. You must go through them to get at any of your data. That fact alone has profound implications as to the usefulness of their systems which we will explore.

Here is what these systems are telling you as a user:

Please take everything you already know about working with files, a fundamental skill you learned very early when first exposed to computers, and throw it out the window. Here is a new way that you must follow because basically you can't be trusted, and because I said so. We've decided this is best for you. Give me your data and I'll hide it. Come through me if you want to get it back. No one else can get it but me. I'm in charge now.

Put this way, it is no wonder it's difficult to get people to accept these systems!

Note that this discussion applies to both the dedicated systems as well as the "modules" that other applications offer that attempt to add document management functions to their base technology. While it may be tempting to go that route, be aware of the hidden dangers and costs before making that seemingly appropriate investment. It may cost you more than you realize.

User Interface: The Key Difference

The interface to your information can make a world of difference in its use. As its definition suggests, the user interface has a large impact on how the actual users interact with, perceive, and control their information. What most people don't realize is that one of the most critical decisions you can make in dealing with your information is the choice of the interface to that information. The interface choice can make or break the ultimate acceptance of the solution by your employees.

Nearly all document management systems have either some custom application users have to run, or the more advanced ones use some type of web browser as their interface. With the advancement of technology, the difference between the two is beginning to blur so we will try to treat them the same.

¹ Some "document management systems" focus on replacing boxes of paper with scanned copies. These do an excellent job of solving the physical space problem but are of little value when applied to business process automation.

On the surface it would seem that right clicking on a file, clicking on a button, or following a link would be pretty much equivalent as far as “ease of use” is concerned. The people selling browser-based solutions will say that everyone knows how to use a browser. What could be wrong with that?

Document Management: A User’s Perspective

The cycle of how a document management system is first introduced and where it eventually evolves highlights the real problem with the wrong choice of user interface. Let’s follow a typical company as they attempt to gain more control over their file-based intellectual property.

Initial Exposure

The first real introduction to a traditional document management system is generally through a scheduled, group-oriented training class. Because so many people need to be involved, these are sometimes difficult to schedule at all much less synchronize with the roll out of the actual software. These classes may include both dedicated system users and those that need to only occasionally interact with the system. Because the companies that build these systems compete with each other on features, a huge number of capabilities are heralded as product differentiators. We all have used programs that have 10 times the number of features we ever need or use. What results is a dizzying array of functions wrapped around a complex user interface with an enormous number of menus, buttons, and pitfalls. From this complexity, confusion, complaints, and rejection often result.

First Use

Even with the best intentions, days, weeks, and even months can go by before the system is actually deployed and ready. Any educator will tell you such a delay results in very little information retention and often leads to frustration on the part of the user. Management expects, since they paid for everyone to attend the class, everyone should now be able to launch into their productivity improvements. Well, not quite. Any application takes a while to become operational within an organization. How long this takes is directly related to what the users have to go through in order to get far enough up the learning curve to take advantage of the system.

The very first thing we discovered that annoy users is that most of these systems require a separate user ID and a new password to remember. Those employees that frequent the system only periodically have to remember how to even get into it in the first place. A user that is hunting down the person who can get them a password is not being very productive.

Data Access

The dirty little secret with these systems is that in order to actually work with the information, (like editing a document for instance) you must first copy it onto your local file system. Once it is there, the system will essentially lose track of it. When you are done doing your work, you then have to go tell the system to do something with it. Why not simply leave it on the file system in the first place?

Eventually, an interesting effect takes place. When users are under stress, such as the end of the quarter, a customer crisis erupts, someone is on vacation, or management needs something done yesterday, people look for ways to get things done faster. Users soon discover that it is indeed easier to keep their own copies. It becomes a lot faster to find it in the first place, gain access to it, and have it in a form they can see it, print it, change it, etc. Note that these temporary copies of the files tend to never be deleted and can quickly pile up on just about everyone's machines. Another dangerous thing that happens is that people begin to share their copies with each other (The "Can you email your copy of the such-and-such document?" problem). Once that happens, any hope the document management system has at controlling this information has gone out the window.

Now that users have their own copies of key files, any other capabilities the system might support begin to fall into question. Users see the system as an additional set of steps they have to perform that just get in the way. Resentment results and any type of return on investment start to look questionable. One user put it this way: "This thing isn't doing me any favors." It may seem obvious but products that burden the user tend to fall into disuse without some sort of management enforcement. This is one of the reasons why "management support" is listed as a key criterion to successful deployment by many of these companies and industry experts. Management has to continuously "remind" users to actually use the system in the first place.

We have even witnessed some users resorting to maintaining large three-ring binders containing hard copies of their information. Keeping this much paper up-to-date is a never-ending job and the documents are almost always out of date. Isn't it amazing that working with a three ring binder can be more convenient than a computer? That tells us the computer system has some definite flaws.

Change Management

If people end up storing their own copies of important documents, an interesting thing happens to an organization when it comes time to make changes. What if the file being changed is the current price sheet, contract template, or product brochure? It is important to make sure the right people know that it has changed. An unfortunate chain of events begins with a person making a change. They need to notify the "right" people of the new version. Does this scenario sound familiar?

Who are the right people? I don't want to leave out anyone like I did last time. Let's just send a notice out to everyone. Oh, and I'd better actually include the file as an attachment so they will have it rather than assuming people are going to

update their private caches. I'll put it into the system later. So, you send it out and then someone notices there is a problem with it. OK, time to resend it to everyone. Then someone else notices a number is off by a factor of 10. Oops. Send it out again.

Look at what is happening. The effort that people had to do to work around the system just resulted in unnecessary emails to way too many people, and overflowing inboxes with multiple copies of the same file. This means that later when they attempt to find it and use it, they may locate one that is out of date, not to mention the IT guys always getting upset when people's inboxes get full. Any history of the changes to the file are also "lost" in that they are hiding somewhere in the chain of email messages that went back and forth. Should someone ask a question about a previous version, an email archeological dig has to be launched. How expensive is that going to be?

To attempt to mitigate these problems, many managers assign an individual to be the "go to" person that will try to ensure the process is followed. What actually happens is that everyone simply passes their work that needs to interact with the system onto that one individual. Things will then run smoothly for a while but look what happened. If only one person is actually running the system, where are all the promised company-wide productivity gains? How expensive is it to dedicate a resource just to run the system? What if that person goes on vacation or leaves the company?

Long term, many of these systems become relegated to document retirement. Since they get in the way while a document is born and maturing, only when the document has gone through its useful life does a document management system become involved. One user put it to us this way: "That's where information goes to die." The interesting thing about this stage is that everyone hopes they never have to access any of the data ever again. What has happened is the initiative with so much promise turned into what would be essentially a costly insurance policy rather than a way to improve your business.

While not every company goes through all these stages, the propensity to do so is real. Management needs to keep up the effort to make sure everyone follows the processes, uses the system, doesn't bypass it, or simply "forgets" to use it.

Other Hidden Side Effects

Having users keep their own copies of important documents because of the complexity and annoyance of using some system causes all sorts of problems beyond just those listed.

1. **Backup** – With lots of copies of the same files on many different machines, all but the most modern backup tools will actually store every copy in their entirety. This expands backup window, escalates media costs, and causes restore performance to suffer.
2. **Restore** – With many different copies to choose from, it can be difficult to tell just which one needs to be restored. Often times it is easier to recreate the data

than to sift through the list of options. When was it deleted? What was it called? Where was it located?

Negative Consequences

As you can see, these problems lead to many negative consequences:

1. **Complaints** – Users will complain if their job becomes more difficult and takes longer. Management complains when user productivity suffers. Complaining is an often overlooked cost that is rarely addressed by the vendor. When was the last time you saw the cost of user complaints included in a TCO or ROI calculation?
2. **Mistrust** – After a few incidents where the most recent version of a file is actually on someone's private disk or hidden in their email pile, people quickly begin to question the validity of the data actually being controlled by the system.
3. **System Bypass** – The reason the system was installed in the first place is to control the information and intellectual property of the company. Any time the system should be used but is not, the investment is wasted.
4. **Management Reminders** – In order to keep users focused on not skipping the system, management has to continue to “remind” users to be sure and use the system. Wouldn't management effort be best used elsewhere?
5. **Backup and Restore Costs** - The number of local copies of files can be surprisingly large in that they tend to grow over time. They can also end up in email systems, not just on local disks. Backing up all these files can mean longer backup times, extra media costs, need to upgrade users storage, need to upgrade backup system for more capacity or speed, etc. Restoring a file can quickly turn into a big problem. Which file was removed? Where did it go? Was it different than the one checked in?
6. **Single User** – As mentioned above, management can be cornered into assigning a single user to make sure the system is used. The initial promise of productivity improvements across the company just went out the window.
7. **Complete Removal** – The system never does accomplish the promised ROI.

As you can see, even with good intentions, these systems take continuous energy and effort to keep working. There is a built-in tendency for disuse which left unchecked, will ultimately lead to its removal.

EXPEDITE

Expedite has taken an entirely different design approach to managing information. Instead of taking documents and hiding them, Expedite uses the Windows file system to store the documents and make them available to users. A patented rules engine then monitors and directs all activity on those files to ensure the rules are followed and the integrity of the data is maintained. Higher level business process functions, such as requesting approval of a change by other members of the team, are done simply with a right click on the file.

After Expedite is deployed and people begin to use it, something rather powerful begins to occur. People actually start to use and trust the data. They find it easier to simply reference the information directly from the shared network drive than to make their own copies. One unique aspect of this behavior is that it comes not just from the people that work with Expedite on a daily basis, but those employees who may never actually run Expedite functions but simply need to reference the information.

Creating self sustaining behavior in your people is the ultimate goal of any software deployment. Compliance to business processes and information integrity is maintained with very little management intervention. So what is so unique about Expedite that it can instill this in your employees?

In contrast to traditional document management systems, here is what Expedite says to your people:

Don't worry. You still access all your information in the same way you always have. You already know how to work with files so I'm not going to change that. I'll do my best to not get in the way. However, I will look over your shoulder and walk you through the required process and I'll do as much of the work as I can to free you up so you can do the job you're being paid to do. I'll make sure everyone else follows the same steps so that you can trust the information there. I'll do everything I can to keep things as simple and streamlined as possible and keep you out of trouble.

Let's see how Expedite accomplishes this refreshing outlook towards its users.

A Typical Expedite Deployment Sequence

1. **Initial Reaction.** The first exposure to any system can, many times, make or break its ultimate success. Triggering the employee's immune system is not a good idea so early in the deployment of any system. Expedite has three critical features that reassure the user they shouldn't be worried. 1) The access to the data is through the existing file system interface. They bring up Windows Explorer like they always do and nothing looks any different. They can double click on a word document and they see the file. 2) They don't need another unique user ID

- or password to remember. They don't have to "log in" to expedite or do anything special. Expedite knows who they are because they are logged into Windows. 3) To run Expedite features, they simply right click on a file. That's it. While it can take less than 30 seconds to show them Expedite and how to run it, those are the most critical 30 seconds when trying to convince users to accept the software.
2. **First use training.** The system can be configured so that the very first time they try to do something in an Expedite controlled directory, a training document or even a video can be displayed to walk the user through the process. This shrinks the normal delay between the training class and first use to almost zero, making for a much more effective use of the user's time and significantly increasing retention. It allows individuals to learn when they have time, eliminating the typical scheduling conflicts associated with classroom-based training. There is also no need to tie up the user learning processes that do not involve that employee.
 3. **Easy enough to show others how to use it.** Your employees now have a way to break the chain of interruptions from people who are so used to bypassing such systems. If someone asks about something, the response they hear is, "Go here and right click." After a few times of hearing that, even the most difficult employees begin to see the light.
 4. **Searching.** Users can find things fast and with the tools they already know how to use. Expedite first and foremost allows access to all the search tools with which users are familiar with. Additionally, Expedite supports several other techniques and features to make searching for information as easy, fast and reliable as possible. (See the Search section below for more information on this crucial topic.)
 5. **Users realize the system will do some of their work for them.** One example is requesting approval for a document change. From a simple right click, the system will figure out who needs to approve it, tell them of the change, keep a copy of everything, remind these people if they forget, and log everything automatically. Isn't that what a good executive assistant would do?
 6. **They begin to reference the data directly from the system rather than making copies.** Making their own copies is now silly because they can already access them from the network drive. Copying them to their local machine would actually be a bother rather than a time saver. They also know others use the data as well so they begin to trust the data. Trust is an absolutely vital success criterion for any information management system.

Data Trust

Trusting the data controlled by a document management system is the ultimate goal. Without it, why spend the time and money on the system in the first place? Data trust means that, that is the one place and only place that has the most valid, protected, correct, up-to-date copy of the information at any time.

Why Do Users Trust Expedite?

So why do users develop trust in the Expedite system?

1. **People find it easier to use the system than to bypass it.** Why? Because the system actually does many of the steps for them, quietly and behind the scenes, and because once the data is there, it is absolutely easy to get access to it.
2. **The data is protected, rules are followed, and the integrity of the data is maintained.** This means that when they go and find the information they are looking for, they know that is the right data. They know someone didn't mess with it without telling anyone. They know that if they actually use the data, they are not going to get into trouble for using the wrong data. They know the directory is not polluted with other files that may not belong.
3. **They know that if there is a question about what happened to the data, they can quickly find out everything that anyone has done to it.**
4. They know that if they get rushed or make a mistake, the system will keep them **out of trouble.** The Expedite rules engine makes sure nothing bad happens.

Its kind of like working with a good executive assistant isn't it? It takes care of the information and maintains its integrity.

The Result Of Data Trust

Some very nice things happen when users begin to trust the data:

1. Your employees stop making local copies, sending copies via email, and keeping printed copies around.
2. They begin to realize they can find the information they are looking for much faster and more reliably.
3. The data that they do find is the data they want, most relevant, and most up to date.
4. Because they can find the data themselves, they don't impact other employee's productivity when looking for information.
5. They spend a lot less time complaining. (When was the last time you saw an ROI calculation include user complaining time?)
6. Users begin to realize the system can be used for many different aspects of their work lives and start to ask for and expect its expanded use.
7. The system has a much better chance of surviving long term when it is easier to use the system than to work around it.

There are many direct productivity improvements and cost reductions that result directly from trusting the data:

1. Users spend less time finding information.
2. They don't question the validity of the data once they do find it.

3. Employee satisfaction is improved. (Translated, your employees will complain less about it. Trust is inversely proportional to complaining. Keeping use up and complaining down is critical to acceptance.)
4. Should the particular business process involve customers, such as with contracts, customer satisfaction increases thus improving your brand image.

Locating Information

Simply locating information can be a significant portion of workers time. Most people think all that is required is some form of search button. Locating information is much more complex than giving set of criteria and returning a list of possible candidates. We will discuss content searching later but our definition of searching includes all the steps involved to actually locate and identify the information, which may include a search function. There are many things that Expedite does in order to streamline the locating of information:

1. **The information is stored in a consistent location.** This seems obvious but when files are spread on multiple servers, people's workstations, hidden as email attachments, etc. it can make locating data difficult and time consuming.
2. **Similar data is stored with it.** For example, all contracts stored in one location. If I know where all the contracts are stored, I should be able to find a specific contract quickly.
3. **The number of items shown is limited.** Expedite's containers show only the information in that container.
4. **A naming convention can be enforced.** The name of a file can convey a significant amount of information about its contents. Unfortunately with Windows, users are free to name them anything they want, meaningful or otherwise. Expedite can be configured to enforce a naming convention or to automatically assign a name based upon certain criteria such as customer name, serial number, etc. (We have found that no two people use the same naming convention. Sometimes the same person doesn't always follow their own naming convention!)
5. **Data is protected from misuse, modification, or accidental overwriting.** If users know the data is protected, they can begin to trust the data being stored. (See the Data Trust section for more details) In fact, if someone does manage to modify or delete a file they weren't supposed to, Expedite will, based upon the rules specified, automatically put back the original.
6. **Additional information can be applied to tag the files.** While file names can be useful to help identify the contents of the file, they are simply not enough in most cases. Additional data, called Metadata, about the file can be included and the entry of that data enforced. For example, a contract might have the name of the customer as a metadata field making it easy to find all contract files for that customer.
7. **That additional information is also consistent, enforced, and easily available.** Additional metadata is of limited use if it can't be trusted. Expedite can be set up

- to optionally enforce the inclusion of this additional information to ensure consistency.
8. **No additional steps are required to view the data making a glance a very low cost operation.** This is a vital but often overlooked complication in most document management systems. These “non-user” accesses are simply a double click on a file. They may not even know the data is actually protected by a sophisticated business process management system. They just know the data is there and they can access it like they do everything else. See the section below on the “Glance” problem.
 9. **Additional ways to find the data are also employed.** Expedite automatically maintains a set of directories based upon the metadata so users can see what files have what values for each metadata type. For example, a directory called **Customer Name\Company A** could contain links to all the contracts for Company A. No fancy queries or search tools are required.
 10. **Existing and familiar search tools all work.** See below under Content Searching.
 11. **Additional search tools will also function properly without modification.** Many of these tools are available for little or no charge.
 12. **Only show the most relevant information but make it very easy to find the additional data.** For example, Expedite holds previous revisions of a file in separate directories so the files that are shown are always the latest, most up to date versions.

Content Searching

Searching information based on the content of files is a powerful tool people have been accustomed to using thanks to Google and the other internet search engines. Type in a few key words and a list of documents appears that contain those words. Users are now demanding this same functionality with their document management and business process automation systems.

The problem with content searching is that most traditional systems store their files hidden in some database behind a web server or custom application out of sight of all the search technologies. They are the only ones that can even access the information. They have to give you a copy in order for you to even see it.

In reality most document management systems either don't have content search capability at all or they require the purchase of an additional “module” to supply that feature. They are the only one that can provide that capability so they can pretty much charge what they want to for it. These modules can become exceedingly expensive since there are simply no alternatives in many cases. One customer wouldn't tell us what they spend on their content search module but said it “approached 6 figures”!

Expedite, on the other hand, makes the data available to any search function the user might like to engage (assuming they have rights to view the information). Simple tools like the search button on the Windows File Manager, while not very efficient, work well

for many users. Much more advanced tools such as Google Desktop can be deployed without any changes to either Expedite or Google Desktop. If a user likes some other file search tool, they are free to use it. Should a better tool become available, that tool can also be easily set up to search the contents of the files under Expedite's control. As you can see, this emphasizes the power of Expedite's openness and the real convenience of direct access to your data.

The "Glance" Problem

Users sometimes simply want to "glance" at some information to make sure of something. This shouldn't be a big deal. With Expedite, these users can simply double click on the file and view the data. This is not necessarily the case with other systems.

One of the major benefits touted by these systems is the fact that if a user needs some information or just wants to verify it, the data is available. However, many times, human nature kicks in and causes all sorts of problems.

Most systems are really targeted towards employees that spend a large percentage of their time working with the system. But what about those people who only need to interact with the system every once in a while? Often this group can actually be quite a bit larger than the "power users". These are the people that actually need to use data and why the system was purchased in the first place. So why is it that so often these same people fail to use the system?

Because the data is hidden behind an application or stored out on a website, these products usually offer some form of access to those users who simply need to look at some information. Many of these systems provide some sort of free "viewer" or some read-only login that allows very limited access to the information stored. Beware of the free viewer because they have costs that go far beyond that of an additional license and can ultimately doom the system.

Many users resent these free viewers or read-only logins for several reasons. First is that another set of steps need to be performed beyond what they may be doing currently. Second is the simple fact that they are not considered important enough to be handed a full license. Third, even though they are not a "real" user, they still need to figure out the interface to the data. An additional login and password to remember just to get into the system in the first place is just one more bother they don't need. Fourth, because they are an infrequent user, each time they need to look at some information, they have to go back and try to figure out how to get to that information in the first place.

The result? The time where the system really needs to come through, where the data has been captured and controlled, after the pain and expense of deploying the system in the first place, is where the user finds it easier to simply ignore it. Instead, they tend to try alternative methods. They might dig around in their email system or local files for a copy. How much time is spent looking for a copy? What is the potential cost of using

incorrect or out of date information? The user might simply try to ask someone. What is the cost of interruption of someone else to see if they have it? What if that person doesn't know? Does that set off a chain reaction throughout the company halting the productivity of everyone? They might simply rely on their memory saying the data is surely correct. What are the costs and consequences of that?

Conclusion

When making an investment into a document management tool, management wants to be reassured of several things. It will do the job. People will use it. Management can know their data is protected and can be trusted by everyone. People are actually following the best practices for the information. They don't have to worry about it.

What better way than to give each user there own electronic executive assistant to make sure everything is fine? Management doesn't want to simply hope things are fine. They want a system that, because everyone finds it easier to use than to work around, perpetuates itself within the organization. If the data is worth creating, isn't it worth protecting?