How to Successfully Implement Records Management Software:

Eight Lessons from a Global 500 Automotive Company

Part 1 - Project Overview

The Journey Begins

Our journey into the implementation of records management software began innocently enough.

As part of a review and update of our physical filing practices, we became aware of an issue with the database software we were using to track physical legal records. The outdated software was not meeting our needs, and it would no longer be supported.

Our IT team made it clear that we needed to find a solution. So we put together our criteria and started looking for file tracking software that would be a like-for-like replacement for the old system.

Simple enough, right?

Enter TAB

Our internal IT team identified FusionRMS (Records Management Software) as one possible solution. We asked TAB for a demo of the software to learn more about how it tracked physical records – and to our surprise, TAB refused!

Before "talking software", TAB wanted to understand more about our records management plans for the legal department. Where were we headed? What were our goals? By asking these questions, TAB helped us see that records management software could be a lot more than a paper tracking tool. It could be the catalyst for a vastly improved records management program in our legal department.

The Vision

TAB's experience and big picture perspective was a huge help, making it possible for us to define a bold new vision for our records management program. Rather than just tackling physical file tracking within one legal group, we were now planning a combined physical and electronic records management system that would become the standard implementation across multiple legal groups at our organization.

To make the first steps toward that vision, we employed a pilot test prior to a large-scale roll-out. In a six-month project, we worked with TAB to plan, design and implement their FusionRMS solution at our North American corporate legal department.

The Results

Today, we are using FusionRMS to manage both physical and electronic records at what we call our "corporate" legal department, and are now in the process of rolling it out to other legal departments.

In other words, the vision is becoming reality, and we are very pleased with the overall solution.

Here are a few of the results so far:

1. We have eliminated major bottlenecks for staff in finding and accessing files. Users are now able to log on to the system from any location and search for, view and request delivery of files. This is a major win.

2. Compliance with our classification scheme has gone way up. With the old system, most files were labeled with the default file category. This made any meaningful analysis of the collection difficult. With the new solution, we now have a streamlined classification system and the software system to help enforce it.

About TAB

With unparalleled industry experience, TAB helps organizations save money, increase operational efficiency and reduce risk through business process optimization and expertly designed records and information management solutions. Our TAB FusionRMS software offers a single, secure solution to organize, manage and mobilize physical and electronic information.

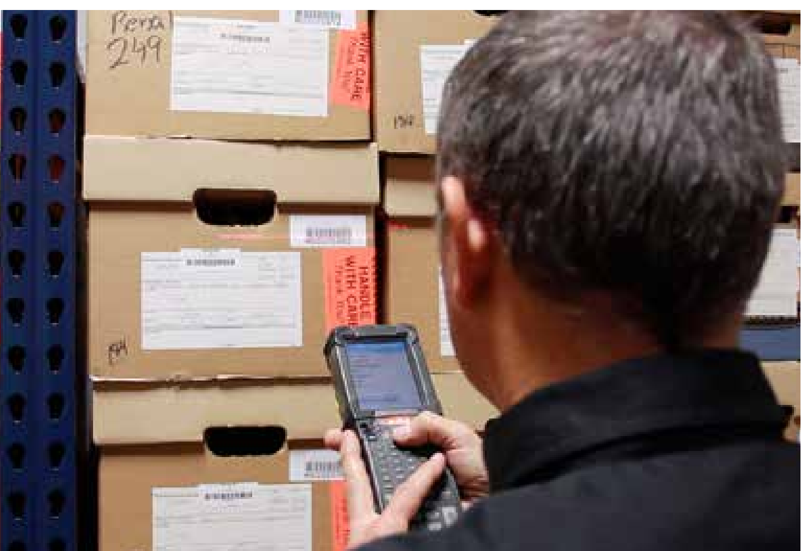
About The Client

The client is a global 500 automotive company with operations around the globe and multiple legal departments spanning several countries.

3. Security and compliance are vastly improved. Prior to implementing the new system, we were not able to apply security rules to individual documents. Today, the system is set up so that the document creator can determine who is allowed to view the document based on the corporate entity, the functional area, or a list of authorized users. These security features act like virtual secure file rooms within the overall shared repository. We also get a full audit trail of every document, which is a huge benefit. We can now see every single person who has viewed or signed out a document, adding to the security and integrity of our operations.

4. The new process of moving inactive files into offsite storage is incredibly efficient. An outbound storage box is scanned into the software and the individual files are then scanned as they are placed into the box. This process used to take up to a half hour to complete, and it can now be done in under a minute. One of our staff literally did a happy dance!

5. Our records management department look like stars. We started out seeking a basic software replacement, but what we have now is a flagship records management system that makes our department far more operationally efficient. With TAB's help, we have established a standard that the entire organization can leverage.



Part 2 - Eight Things We Learned When Implementing Records Management Software

Achieving these results and realizing our vision for a records management program didn't happen without hitting a few bumps in the road and learning some valuable lessons along the way.

We believe our experiences should prove valuable for just about any organization that is looking to realize the potential of records management software and make their implementation process run more smoothly.

The following lessons should also help you:

— **allocate internal resources to the project**
— **establish realistic timelines**
— **reduce risks and increase adoption rates.**

Lesson 1 - Keep the Scope Manageable

Our organization has multiple legal departments split across different operating divisions and geographic territories.

With so many groups involved, we thought it would be a good idea to focus first on a smaller pilot implementation to start the project. The pilot consisted of a roll-out in what we call the "corporate" legal department.

The decision to run a pilot helped us avoid a few common pitfalls. First, it kept the scope manageable, avoiding the dreaded "boiling the ocean" scenario. Second, we avoided the challenges of trying to build consensus about the new system with many different groups at once. We felt we would have much greater success with other groups once we had a established a functioning system via the pilot project.

Our pilot strategy proved to be a good one. The implementation process demanded a fair bit of time and attention to detail to get it right – even though we were focused on a single group. We were definitely glad we did not try to attempt an implementation across multiple legal groups at once. As it stands, we now have a well-oiled machine that we can more easily extend into other groups.

Lesson 2 - Workshop To Win

We also learned that records management software isn't the kind of thing you can pull off the shelf, plug in, and go. It will always require a certain amount of configuration to reflect the nature and needs of the business.

The driving force behind our configuration and implementation process was a series of regular team workshops. From the outset, we established a diverse project team and encouraged them to participate passionately in the process. Our team included representatives from the legal department, records management and IT, as well as the consultants and business analysts from TAB.

In the course of the workshops, we adopted a few informal policies that set the tone for the sessions and encouraged productive collaboration. The first policy was that everybody deserved a voice, especially those who weren't "techy", and those who didn't come from a records management background. We stuck to the adage that there are no "dumb questions", and this approach paid big dividends – it was amazing how often a key insight or breakthrough would come from an unexpected source. We also agreed to never move past any specific discussion until everyone was 100 percent clear on the situation and the rationale for the decision that was being agreed to. This ensured that no one on the workshop team got left behind and disassociated from the process.

Lesson 3 - Work With a Partner That Lives and Breathes Records Management

One of the biggest lessons we learned is that a records management software implementation is never just about the software. The software is just a tool that works within, and enables the records management program. Without a well-designed records management program surrounding it, the software could never deliver very much value.

Accordingly, our initial discussions focused a lot on records management, and very little on software. And so many of those conversations were driven by TAB. While we knew our own program inside and out, we did not have any experience setting up a records management program that would work in lock-step with a records management software tool.

To do that, we needed to look at the holistic process that surrounded the software, from the filing system and labeling standards to the records taxonomy. These items were all interlinked throughout our implementation process. For example, we developed our records taxonomy directly out of our work to set up the software. The new taxonomy in turn drove the design of our new labels, which in turn drove the file room sort order. Going forward, the software now acts as a tool to "enforce" filing standards and the organization of the file room as new files are created, stored and accessed.

As a software provider and a records management company, TAB was able to bridge the gaps in our understanding and guide the implementation and program redesign towards the optimal solution. We simply can not imagine how we would have succeeded with this process if we had worked with a software vendor that didn't live and breathe records management. TAB's bench strength and experience was vital.

Lesson 4 - You Will Need a Mature and Well-Tested Records Classification Scheme

We learned that you can not begin to implement RIM software until you have a carefully thought-out and agreed-upon records framework to build upon. The classification scheme is a major building block of the system, helping to organize the records, manage retention, and more.

It took time and effort to develop our framework, but the effort was worth it and it made the software roll-out much easier.

The efforts to establish a solid framework also paid off after we went live with the implementation. Because the framework had been thoroughly discussed and refined, we avoiding the time, expense and headaches of making major adjustments to the system after we rolled it out. The only changes we had to make after the launch were a few tweaks to the user workflows. In the realm of software implementations, that is a rare achievement.

Lesson 5 - You Can Manage Electronic and Paper As One

Prior to engaging in this process, we had two completely separate processes for managing physical and electronic records. When searching for a records management software solution, we weren't even initially thinking about managing electronic records in the same system.

However, TAB showed us that we could absolutely manage both kinds of records using the same system, in the same digital repository. In order to have a common approach for the creation of electronic and physical records, we had to rethink how we were doing things. The common approach we eventually adopted was easier and more streamlined than our previous creation process. This common approach also minimized the amount of change management required when rolling out the system. This was another big plus.

Lesson 6 - Take Full Advantage of the Initial Records Inventory

You will inevitably need to take an inventory of your current collection before migrating it to the new records management software.

This inventory provides the perfect opportunity to take care of some important tasks:

- **cleaning up files and ensuring their integrity**
- **purging non-records and out-of-date documents**
- **converting files to a new filing system and labeling standard**

By taking care of these items during the inventory, you will eliminate a lot of duplicate work later. It also turns the inventory into a bigger value-add.

In our case, because the RM software implementation was part of a larger overhaul of our records management program, we had a lot of things happening at the same time. In addition to the software implementation, we were updating our records taxonomy, adopting a massive new retention schedule that spanned multiple countries, and implementing best practices for physical file folders, labels and storage.

With a bit more foresight, we might have waited until our new taxonomy was ready before doing our initial file inventory. This would have allowed us to conduct the file folder and labeling conversion at the same time that we were inventorying the files for the software implementation.

Lesson 7 - Manage The Change

Change management is an important element of all big business initiatives, and records management software implementations certainly fall into this category.

Even with the pilot project approach that we adopted, we were still rolling out some pretty significant changes across the department, and we wanted to get it right. One of the biggest changes was the fact that we were moving from a centralized approach to the management of files, to a functional area approach, where legal staff would be taking a much more hands-on role in the records management process.

With input from TAB, we implemented several change management strategies that helped ensure a smooth roll-out:

— **Regular communication: We made sure to put the software roll-out as a regular agenda item on department meetings, and we went out to meet with different legal groups across functional areas. We also provided regular updates to all stakeholders on the status of the project.**

— **Rolling out the software in stages: Rather than go live with electronic and physical records management right away, we opted to go live with physical only at first. This allowed us to check for any issues before proceeding.**

— **Appointing super-users: Super-users are individual representatives in business units who act as champions and supporting resources for the roll-out. Super-users in our case were departmental admins that acted as our "feet on the ground", ensuring that the roll-out was proceeding as planned and that staff were encouraged and supported.**

— **Implement a well-designed training program: When researching software providers, we noted that many of them included training on the basic, out-of-the-box functionality of the software. While this is valuable, we also knew that our training program would have to reflect the specific setup of the software that we developed during the implementation phase.**

Lesson 8 - Take the Time to Do it Right

While you may want to move quickly on your RM software implementation, we found that the process necessarily takes time. There are a few reasons for this:

— **there are lot of things to figure out, such workflows, taxonomies, and user types**

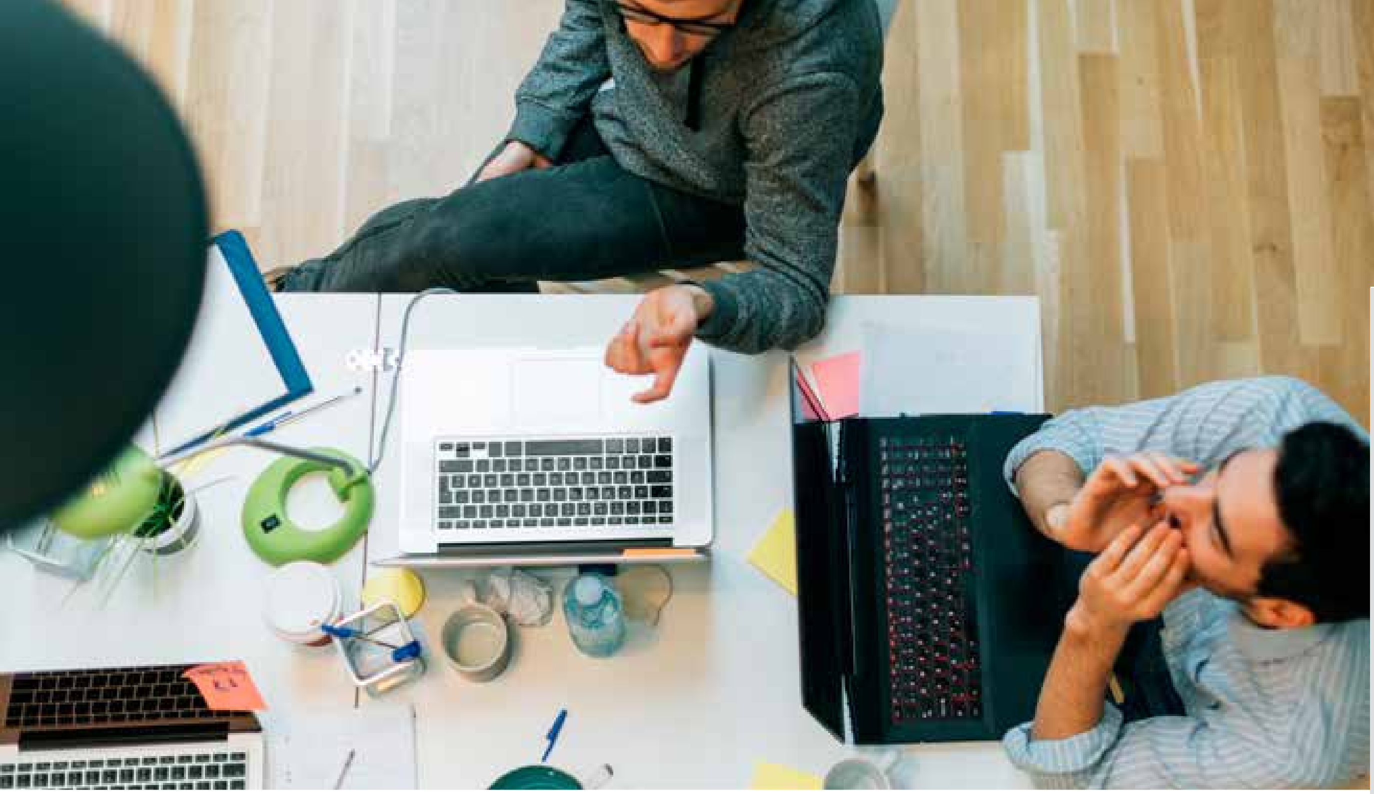
— **the workshop approach means that many people are involved in the process, and it takes time to solicit and process that input**

— **software configuration is iterative, taking place over many small planning cycles.**

We can give you a flavor of exactly what that iterative process is like. At one of our workshop sessions, for example, TAB would present to the group some mocked-up screen captures that represent a specific workflow, such as checking-in a set of documents for a new legal matter. As the whole team walked "virtually" through workflow together, step-by-step, we might notice that we needed an extra drop-down box in order to specify some attribute of the documents. TAB would then take this kind of feedback away, make adjustments and present them at our next workshop session, where the team could review again. Given the large number of workflows involved in records management system, you can easily see why the process takes a while.

However, whenever we thought about how much time this was taking, we reminded ourselves how much longer it would take – and how much grief we would face – trying to fix something after the launch!

In our case, we were very happy that we gave this process the time and resources it was due. The success of our roll-out is a testament to the wisdom of that decision.



Looking Ahead

After the successful roll-out of our pilot, we were able to look back with pride on the new records management system we put in place. We are also very pleased with the results, which include major operational efficiencies and reduced risk. We are now taking many of these lessons-learned and applying them as we prepare to roll-out the system to other groups within our organization.

Contact TAB for help planning and implementing records management software at your organization.

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