

Managing Your Shared Drive

Our 8-Step Methodology for ensuring better access and compliance





Shared drives are a fact of life for most organizations:

They are an easy way to store the vast amount of electronic records generated in the course of business. If organized properly, they can be a major asset to any records management program. Unfortunately, not everyone has an organized approach to managing their drives. In fact, we regularly see shared drives that have morphed into chaotic public folders filled with confusing groups of unstructured documents. It's impossible to find and retrieve information and our clients are constantly asking us to help them get a handle on their drives.

When records management best practices are applied, your shared drive becomes a highly effective information management tool. When organized effectively, shared drives provide a central location where employees can access important business and operational documents. They can also be used to safely store and share sensitive information. Beyond core information management, effectively managing your shared drive has the following benefits:

- **Improved compliance and efficiency**
- **Preparing organizations for digitization and implementation of records management software**
- **Making it easier to manage risk**

In order to maximize these and the other benefits of a shared drive, you need to ensure it is structured in a logical and intuitive way. But getting there can be tricky. So how do you do it?

At TAB, we've developed a proven eight-step methodology for organizing and managing shared drives, and we're sharing some of these insights in this white paper.

You'll learn how to:

- **Design a framework and folder structure**
- **Set permissions and passwords**
- **Prepare for implementation**
- **Train staff**
- **Implement the new drive**
- **Migrate data**
- **Purge unnecessary and duplicate electronic records**

Getting the most out of your shared drive doesn't have to be difficult. By understanding some of the common problems with public drives and following a logical methodology to address them, staff can develop an efficient and systematic approach to sharing and storing information.



The Problem with Mismatched Shared Drives

The most common problem we see with shared drives is that they are often essentially one large public folder filled with mismanaged files: unstructured records such as documents relating to procedures, business functions and operations, or files pertaining to a certain project or task, are placed randomly on the drive. Even records from a merger or acquisition are sometimes stored on the drive without any thought given to who may see them. Beyond classification issues, shared drives often don't have a retention schedule, which further complicates document life cycle problems.

Because they aren't stored in an organized fashion, records often get lost in the abyss that is the public drive and staff don't know they exist. This is a result of records being constantly dumped onto the drive without a framework for how they should be ordered for access and use. Furthermore, there isn't any consistency across the organization—each business unit handles documents in their own way.

There are a variety of other issues arising from mismatched shared drives and these can have serious impacts on your day-to-day business functions. Some of the most common issues include:



Difficulty locating files

Mismatched shared drives are often black holes of information, and it gets more and more difficult for staff to find information as the drives continue to grow. This increases retrieval times, which in turn slows down other business processes such as decision making and planning.



Unnecessary duplication of documents

Because it is so difficult to locate information, staff are often forced to re-create documents that already exist. This wastes time and resources and the chaotic drive continues to grow as more unnecessary files and documents are added.



Compromised security and compliance risk

When sensitive and private documents, such as salary information and employee files, are being stored on the drive without any security measures in place, they can be seen and accessed by anyone. This can lead to serious compliance and regulatory issues.



Inconsistent access permissions

When it comes to mismatched shared drives, there are often no guidelines for setting user permissions. Folders and files are locked and restricted on an ad-hoc basis and staff members in the same department won't have access to the files they need or can see information they don't have authorization to view. These inconsistent permission settings also increase the workload of the IT staff, who are constantly having to accommodate ad-hoc access requests.

Because they aren't stored in an organized fashion, records often get lost in the abyss that is the public drive and staff don't know they exist.

The TAB Approach

Managing a disorganized shared drive is easy if you break the process down into logical steps. The TAB approach consists of eight distinct stages:

- Building the framework
- Designing folder structure
- Documenting user permissions
- Preparing for implementation
- Training and educating staff
- Migration to the shared drive
- Monitoring and assisting staff
- Completing the final details

Each step requires careful execution and attention to detail.

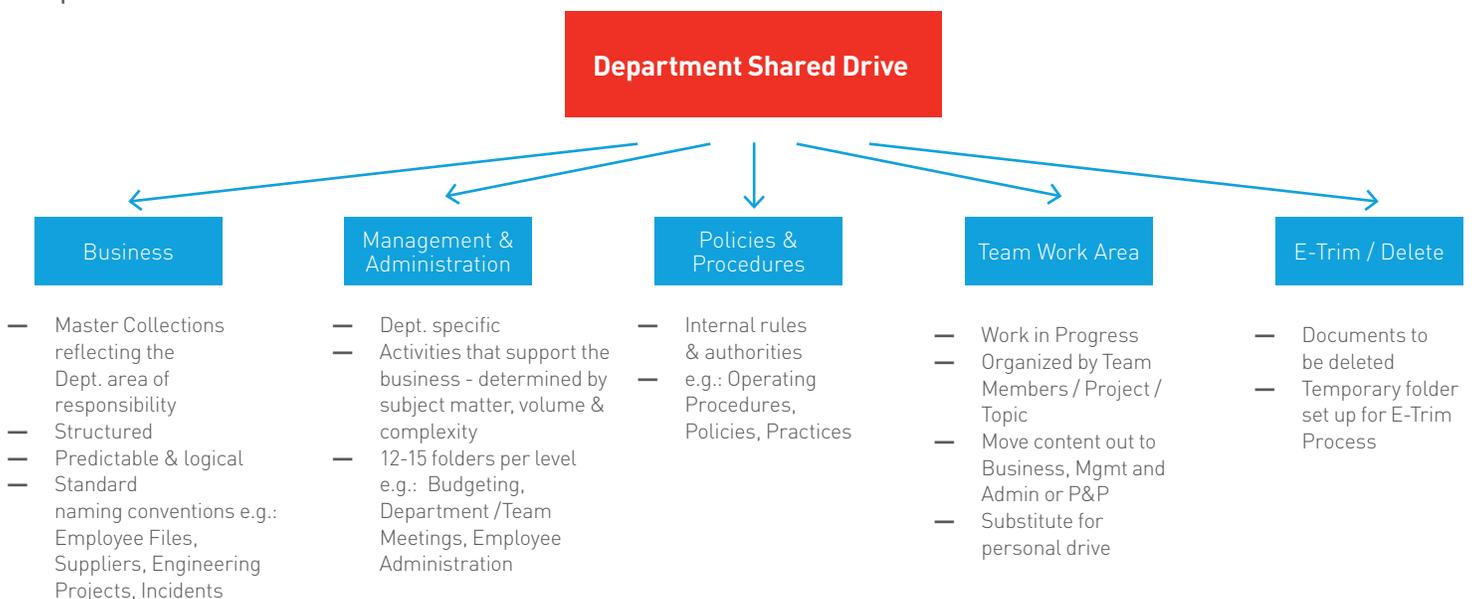
It's important to get the right framework in place, or else your drive will lack consistency and overall structure.

Building the Framework

Creating the right folder framework is critical for having an efficient shared drive. Each department will have its own folder on the drive. Therefore, the overall folder structure should be based on departments in your organization and each will have the same framework. The framework is the top folder level of this structure and it is universal across all departments. Subsequent folder levels will be derived from this top level, so it's important to get the right framework in place, or else your drive will lack consistency and overall structure. If it's done this right, you'll only have to do this step once.

The idea behind building the right framework is to reduce information to its most basic elements so that when you click through the drive, the top-level folders will be the same for all departments. It must also be simple, logical and intuitive, and divide each department into major functional areas. For example, the framework for Drive S: Marketing will be the same as Drive S: Human Resources. This allows staff, regardless of what business unit they are a part of, to navigate the drive easily and know where to file certain information.

Diagram A: Sample Framework



Designing the Folder Structure

Now that a framework has been created, the next step is to determine the lower-level folder structure. Unlike the top-level framework, these folders will be customized to each department.

It's important to get an understanding of each department's unique needs in order to create the right folder structure. To do this, you'll need to talk to staff and conduct a file and document analysis.

Interviewing employees from each business unit will give you an understanding of what their high level business requirements are, as well as the security settings and functionality they require. It's a good idea to start with high-priority groups that are responsible for maintaining critical information such as documents pertaining to compliance and risk management.

Along with talking to employees, conduct a document and file analysis to get an idea of what kinds of folders and files staff are using, what records they are creating, as well as to gain insights into their permissions needs. You'll need to get "read access" permissions from IT to complete this step, as you'll have to view all the files.

Once you've gathered this information, you can use it to create draft designs of the folder structure. Incorporate RM principles such as an existing functional classification scheme or retention schedules into the design. This ensures the drive is easy to use and takes the onus for following records management guidelines off the user. Creating these structures doesn't require expensive software—in fact it can be done in a word document or spreadsheet.

Now you are in a position to get feedback from staff on drafts of the structure and work with departments until everyone is happy the proposed drive.

Conduct a document and file analysis to get an idea of what kinds of folders and files staff are using, what records they are creating, as well as to gain insights into their permissions needs.

BUSINESS

- Attendance Tracking
 - Absenteeism
 - Corporate Calendar
 - Vacation Planning
- Awards & Recognition
 - Long Service Award
 - President's Award
 - Scholarships
- Benefits Administration
 - Extended Health & Dental Care
 - Flex Benefits
 - Health Care
- Compensation
 - Compensation Plans
 - Compensation Research
- Employee Administration
 - Code of Conduct
 - Discipline
 - Employment Agreements
 - Hours of Work Arrangements
 - Status Change / PAW

MGMT & ADMIN

- Budgeting
 - 2010
- Business Planning & Reporting
 - Annual Cycle
 - HR Objectives & Goals
 - Weekly Reports
- Dept & Team Meetings
 - Weekly Meetings
 - Team Building
- Forms & Templates
 - Contract Employment
 - LOA Forms
- Policy & Procedure Dev.
 - Benefit Booklet
 - Field Procedures
 - HR Directory
 - Handbook
- Reference & Research Materials
 - Acts & Regs - short cut
 - Dept. Contact Lists
 - Training Resources

Incorporate RM principles such as an existing functional classification scheme or retention schedules into the design. This ensures the drive is easy to use and takes the onus for following records management guidelines off the user.

Document User Permissions

Once the folder structure has been set, you can start determining and documenting user permissions for the various folders and levels. By creating user groups based on permission, security and access requirements, you'll be able to eliminate inconsistent access. It's important to train IT staff on concepts such as folder structures, hierarchies and permission modeling as they will be the ones who will be applying the permissions.

There are a couple benefits of user permissions. First, they ensure employees have access to the information they need and also protect confidential and sensitive information. Second, they decrease the on-going role of IT staff, who won't have to deal with ad-hoc access requests.

Prepare for Implementation

Once the draft design has been approved, you can start setting up the folders and infrastructure as well as applying user access permissions. You need to make sure that the new folders are distinguishable from the old ones and you can do this by adding prefixes to existing names. For example, "Human Resources" could be named "NEW Human Resources." These are just temporary names and the prefixes will be removed once the old folders are deleted at the end of the implementation process.

After you've set up the entire drive, IT can start applying passwords and access permissions to the various levels based on the permission groups that you created earlier.

Training and Educating Staff

Education is key to the success of any project and implementing a new shared drive is no exception. Hold interactive and informative training sessions to help get staff excited about the migration process. It's a good idea to prepare handouts or guides that staff can refer to later if they have any questions or need to review something.

It's crucial to be very thorough when training staff and not to skimp on the basics. You can't assume everyone has the same understanding of computers or records management principles. For example, something as simple as renaming a folder or creating a new one may not be common knowledge.

Make sure that the new folders are distinguishable from the old ones and you can do this by adding prefixes to existing names. For example, "Human Resources" could be named "NEW Human Resources."

Migration to the Shared Drive

Once staff are adequately trained, the migration process can begin. This step consists of two components: purging documents and moving records onto the new drive.

To start, employees will need to review existing records to determine what they need to retain and what they can get rid of. In order to do this, there are a few questions staff can ask themselves when determining what needs to be kept, such as:

- Is this document a record of the work I perform?
- Am I responsible for keeping this record on behalf of my employer?
- Will I need to refer to this document in the future?

Staff can move unnecessary or out-of-date records into a separate garbage folder and organize the information that must be retained.

It's important for staff to remember that at this stage what goes into the garbage folder isn't deleted forever—they can move files back to the new shared drive if they need to before the migration process is complete.

The second part of the migration process consists of actually moving files to the new drive. Each department is responsible for moving their data onto the shared drive and can go about it in the way that works best for them. This allows business groups to customize implementation to suit their respective environments.

It's important to set a completion date for the migration and staff should be well aware of this deadline. The time frame can range anywhere from a few weeks to a few months, depending on what works best for your organization.

There are various ways staff can go about moving records to the new drive. Some possible scenarios include:

- Staff meet once every few months to collectively transfer files to the shared drive
- Departments designate one person to handle the migration
- Individuals move records to the drive on their own time and meet once a month to give updates

It's important to set a completion date for the migration and staff should be well aware of this deadline. The time frame can range anywhere from a few weeks to a few months, depending on what works best for your organization.

Monitoring and Assisting Staff

The migration process will have to be monitored regularly by checking the shared drive to see if staff have been sticking to the schedule and adding files and records. If you're leading the project, you should be available to guide employees and answer questions. If you see that progress is slow or has stopped, contact the right department heads and ask them to check in with staff. The project needs to wrap up by the completion date in order to delete the old folders, so it is imperative files are actively being moved to the new drive.

Completing the Final Details

As the project's end date gets closer, start wrapping up the project. Your last steps include:

- Deleting old directories
- Purging the delete folder
- Finalizing folder names by removing the temporary prefixes you used earlier

Finally, obtain sign-offs and approvals from key stakeholders such as the of head RM, department managers and legal. Sign-off requirements will vary from organization to organization.

Developing Shared Drives that Works

Getting a handle on your mismanaged shared drive doesn't have to be a daunting task. Breaking the process down into logical steps will make it easier to tackle even the most chaotic drive.

Some key things to keep in mind are:

- Start with high priority groups that are responsible for maintaining critical documents
- Create a strong framework and folder structure
- Provide adequate training and be available to answer any questions
- Keep a close eye on the migration process

If you need further help creating an effective shared drive program, we can help.

Getting a handle on your mismanaged shared drive doesn't have to be a daunting task. Breaking the process down into logical steps will make it easier to tackle even the most chaotic drive.

TAB's E Trim: A Shared Drives Best Practice

An efficient shared drive is one that contains only the documents and files you need. But how do you know what to get rid of?

That's where TAB's E-Trim service comes in. Our consultants apply their deep records management experience to determine what records need stay and which ones can go.

We work with you to purge:

- Duplicate documents
- Unnecessary files
- Non-records

Learn more about how TAB can help you streamline your shared drive by contacting us today!



Talk to TAB

Are you interested in turning your shared drive into an information asset? At TAB, we have extensive experience in organizing shared drives for maximum efficiency and compliance. We've helped hundreds of clients manage their disorganized public drives and get the most out of their records collections. We pride ourselves on developing the perfect solutions to meet the needs of organizations from a variety of industries.

fusionrms.tab.com info@tabfusionrms.com

tab
FUSIONRMS