

Insight: Asia RM and its Changing Trends

Background

In the past, records management was often viewed as unnecessary or low in business priorities. Increasing demands for effective management of records, protection of vital information and rising compliance issues have confirmed the need for better systems. Companies in Indonesia, Singapore and China, have adapted to changes in records management trends.

Hong Kong/China: From Box to File Management

by Sammy Fong

The style and form of records management is constantly changing with business growth and storage efficiency. In the past, Hong Kong and China businesses used a box management (BM) system. This system comprised a number of files packed into the same box for storage. As needs grow and business requirements continue to evolve, companies move their records management style to a file management (FM) system. The change in style in the region since the early 2000s has been led by clients in banking, insurance and finance industries.

The FM system improves on its predecessor in six ways; file retrieval, space occupation, document conversion, document transportation, confidentiality and company profit.

In the past, retrieving a record file using the BM system took a long time. Boxes were searched to locate the one specific file. With the FM system, file retrieval speed is enhanced since the system breaks files down into their appropriate functional units. Companies now can sort and store records using this systematic and detailed sorting and storing principle and quickly retrieve what they need.

In terms of space occupation, storing and managing business information unit by unit, as in the principle of file management, allows for more space for other uses. With the BM system, a certain standard file size is required for use with each box even though it is not fully packed. Due to such inefficiency, Hong Kong's space limitation and elevated rental costs, outsourcing file management is one of the most viable solutions for companies in the region.

Going digital

Records management is not restricted to only hard copy storage. Many companies also require electronic copies for their records to convert documents from paper to electronic format. If data is managed file by file, the conversion process is more effective than by box. Companies can convert data bit by bit and don't need to manage a large amount at the same time. With the BM

system, the amount of data stored in one box is much larger than what is stored in a file unit. In other words, companies need to manage more data at one time.

The FM system speeds up time required to pass a "needed file" to a customer instead of sending a whole box. From a service provider's perspective, transportation cost can also be minimized and carbon footprint can be reduced.

As one of the most important criteria for selecting a records management company, a FM system must be used to enhance the level of confidentiality and data protection. Given the fact that documents and files can easily fall into the wrong hands, society now demands higher standards for accuracy and availability of content. Disastrous and costly consequences can be the result of improper handling of data.

By using file management services, the amount of data being unpacked each time can be reduced. Since less data is being exposed, higher confidentiality levels can be ensured for the clients.

Records management in Hong Kong and China is changing. From managing everything in boxes in-house, the region's growing economy and increasing resource limitations demand a change in the ways in which records are managed. Companies are finding more cost efficient and operationally effective ways to manage information. These include outsourcing to companies specialized in records management such as Crown, moving from box to file management and increasingly using off-site digital backup media.

Indonesia: Historical and Contemporary Needs for Records Management

by Rike Rivanny

Indonesia's awareness of records management can be dated back to Dutch colonial rule in 1892 when a land archive was built to store important documents.

Upon gaining independence after World War I, the Indonesian government took over the land. The original copy of an important historical document called, "Supersemar", the Indonesian abbreviation for Surat Perintah Sebelas Maret (Order of March the Eleventh), signed in 1966 by Soekarno, the first president of Indonesia, went missing and was never found. Learning from past experience, Indonesia continues to develop a better system to protect and store information today and for the future.

Indonesia has had an impressive record of economic and industrial growth in the past two decades. Companies realised that implementing an effective records management system, including outsourcing to companies such as Crown, is crucial to their success in the following ways:

Records preservation is important to business operations and is required to comply with Indonesia's record retention law.

Monitoring and updating a record keeping system will ensure that their record keeping, financial and operational needs are continuously evaluated and monitored, which will allow for improvements.

Rental and operating costs can be reduced by outsourcing. There is no need to rent additional space for record keeping.

Efficiency and productivity will be enhanced from less time spent searching for files.

Vital information is better safeguarded via state-of-the-art facilities that specialized records management companies can provide.

Crown Records Management has helped shape, and significantly impacted, the growth of records management in Indonesia for the past 25 years and will continue to be a major player in the Indonesian records management industry.

Singapore's Growing Trends of 'Off-site Vaulting'

by Wyman Tan

Singapore has a strong market for records management services, better known as, 'off-site vaulting' or 'off-site storage of information'. Most IT professionals understand the importance of using records storage in the form of backup tapes. The main reasons are to fulfill and comply with certain audit and legislative requirements, e.g., Internal audit, Sarbarnes-Oxley Act (SOX), etc., and to prevent a total loss of IT information due to disasters.

Singapore is a mature market for media management and has a high barrier of entry due to strong competition from existing records management companies that are often seen as rigid, inflexible and expensive.

In selecting off-site information storage vendors, common questions should be asked:

Environmental questions: Is the site safe from environmental disasters? For example, if you are located in an earthquake zone, will your off-site provider be able to remain in operation after an earthquake? Other environmental issues to consider include: controlled humidity, proper fire protection capabilities, and other areas related to keeping your backup tapes safe and viable.

Security questions: Will the tapes be secured? Have the employees handling the tapes been screened via an acceptable background check system? Can the tapes be tracked at all times?

Service offering questions: Does the provider offer a variety of schedules for picking up and returning the tapes?

Crown Records Management meets the needs of organisations in several important ways::

- Controlled storage management, 24/7 operation, with efficient and technologically advanced barcode tape tracking system,
- GPS-equipped fleet to maintain tracking ability and accountability even during transit,
- Ability to manage the entire life cycle of a media tape, from providing a new tape, its periodic health check and upgrades of technology, to final destruction,
- Tightly managed schedules of collection and return dates of every tape in advance for one year,
- Competitive pricing due to a different pricing method than the prominent competitors. Their charges can be costly.

Future trends and possible effects on the records management industry

The technological trend of cloud computing, which allows companies to store their data over the internet, is not likely to change the face of records management in the short term. Large corporations or financial institutions will unlikely opt to store their critical data over the internet at this stage. Backing up data into tape media, although appearing almost primitive, is still the most reliable and trustworthy method preferred by corporations and institutions.