



An Introduction to Transparent Records Management

Learn More Inside:

- ▶ Meet the needs of both records managers and general users.
- ▶ Easily manage multiple departments' information requirements, multiple records series and retention schedules, and multiple software applications.
- ▶ Improve adherence to your records management plan.

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Transparent Records Management**

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Introduction

Integrating proper records management into employees' daily routines can be a challenge. Records managers strive to apply consistent policies to multimedia records, but it's difficult to manage records on a day-to-day basis without interfering with departments' line-of-business activities.

This paper introduces the concept of transparent records management and discusses how it meets the differing needs of both records managers and general users. It also provides an example of transparent records management in action through "HR onboarding," a process which covers multiple departments, multiple information requirements, multiple records series and retentions schedules, and multiple software applications.

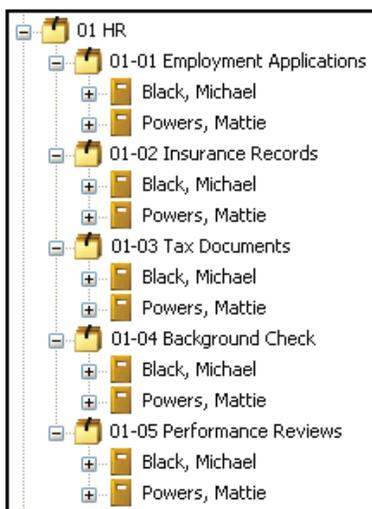
What is Transparent Records Management?

The fundamental concept behind records management is the idea that records have a definite life cycle that involves various stages. For example, when a record is created, it must be filed according to a well-defined file plan so that it will be easily accessible to authorized users. Similarly, once a record has been retained for a specified time period, it may need to be destroyed in order to comply with state and federal regulations.

Yet integrating records management into daily procedures is often difficult. Encouraging proper, standardized, consistent filing procedures without creating more work is difficult, because the information needs of records managers and general users are so different—even when they're using the same system. Because it's hard to make non-records management users think in terms of records, why make them structure their information that way?

Meeting the needs of records managers

The primary responsibility of a records manager is to manage records according to a formal file plan set forth by a governing body. Due to their job responsibilities, records managers are often forced to be more interested in the rules (i.e., published retention schedules) they must follow and less interested in the importance of records from a business perspective. They must also be less concerned with designing a repository layout that allows them to quickly find records and more concerned with designing a structure that logically satisfies the retention schedule.



Because records management solutions are designed to meet a formal set of rules, most systems require a great deal of structure. A records management solution is based around the concept of a record series that describes the way the records in that series must be handled. The sum of the record series and required metadata makes up the file plan of a records management system. Categorizing every piece of information within the bounds of the file plan is the key to following the rules.

In many cases, the layout of a formal records management file plan is related to the fact that different retention schedules apply to different types of documents (e.g., insurance records, tax documents, employment applications). For example, a records manager might be required to organize HR documents by type.

In this screenshot, the records manager has organized HR documents in a way that both satisfies the retention schedule and is easy to use from a records management standpoint.

Unfortunately, this type of layout is cumbersome for general users. For example, a user who wants to print all documents for a specific employee would have to open over a dozen different folders in different locations to search for that employee's documents.

Meeting the needs of general users

In virtually all organizations, the majority of users are not records managers. These users need quick and easy access to documents; they don't want to learn an unintuitive records management layout, and they don't want to be concerned with records management processes.

For this reason, most general users want to organize documents based on content. For example, a Human Resources representative might argue that employee documents should be organized inside folders whose names correspond to the employee in question.



In this screenshot, documents are organized by employee name, which keeps all of an employee's records in a single location.

This structure is easy to use from a general user's standpoint, but will not work for records managers.

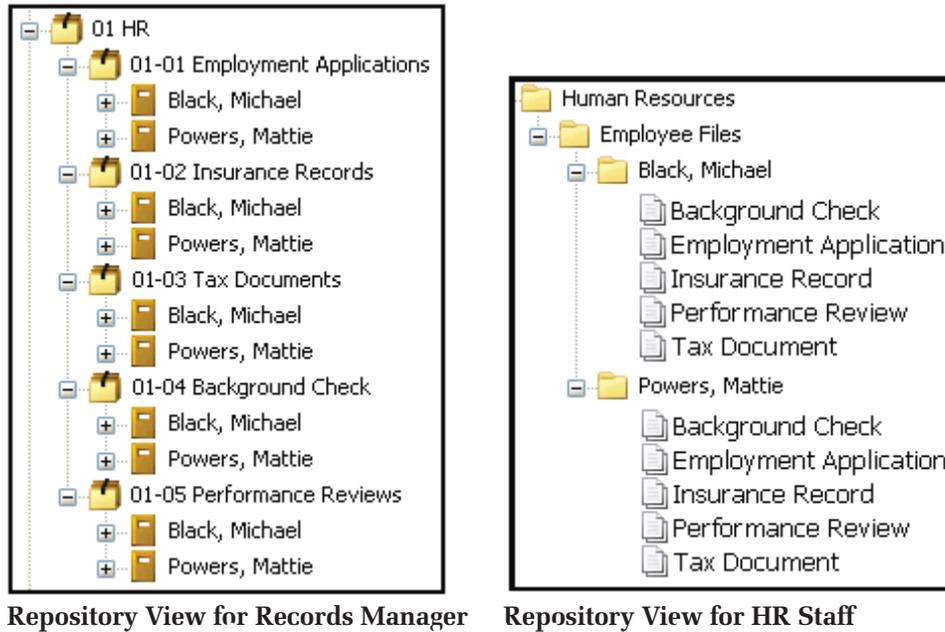
The solution: transparent records management

Using **transparent records management**, both records managers and general users are able to organize the same repository in the manner they each prefer, simultaneously. The process is "transparent" because it enables general users to see through the cumbersome records management layout to the layout of their choice.

With transparent records management, records management requirements do not interfere with your line of business. Transparent records management allows records managers to retain control over the way information is categorized and filed outside of the view of everyday users of the system. A well-designed system will handle records management transparently, meaning that once it is set up, users will not have to actively participate in the process, while records managers still have control over ultimate file indexing, archiving and disposition.

It is often difficult to integrate proper records management into employees' daily routines. If records management isn't a full-time job, it often falls to the wayside—leaving records managers to ensure staff compliance. One of the greatest strengths of transparent records management functionality lies in the way it enables records managers to create a file plan and manage retention schedules without interfering with any department's line of business. Furthermore, the system enables records managers to more easily apply consistent policies to records in a variety of media, from Web content to archived e-mail messages to audio and video files.

Multiple views of the repository can be configured to allow a records manager to monitor and act on records through one folder structure, while other users access a folder structure organized more logically for their needs.



Integrating records management with workflow technology

Every day, staff search for the information they need to collaborate more effectively. The manual processes of searching, faxing, photocopying and distributing documents are costly and time-consuming—and they keep staff from making productive use of the information they’ve found.

Workflow functionality automates business processes so staff spends time on productive activities, instead of labor-intensive document handling processes. With workflow, documents are automatically moved, copied or marked for deletion based on predetermined rules designed by users, while automatic notifications ensure prompt action and simplify supervision.

When combined with audit trail tracking, workflow functionality provides all the information needed to accurately assess business processes and identify bottlenecks, maintain performance comparisons and track document-related activity to improve quality, accountability and productivity.

Quality workflow functionality provides the ability to:

- Design simple or complex workflow routing rules on a graphical canvas, choosing from a broad palette of workflow actions.
- Write custom workflow rules in C# or VB.NET, so IT staff does not have to learn new ways of working or learn a new language to write workflow rules, and can write them to link the workflow application with other applications.
- Maintain integrity of routed documents, given that they never leave the repository.
- Assign field values or annotations and change security access to repository documents from a workflow.
- Specify search criteria for locating a repository document that should be processed by a workflow.
- Specify routing to groups, task and notification escalation, serial or parallel routing, and conditional loops.
- Use Windows Workflow Foundation activities to extend Workflow functionality to all line-of-business applications.

A best-in-class records management system will be built as part of a total enterprise content management system that provides a flexible, highly functional and fully integrated workflow module to automate, streamline and optimize the most paper-intensive business processes.

Separate folder structures



Workflow technology makes true transparent records management possible. Separate folder structures are created in the repository: one for records managers and one for general users.

Record series are created inside the records management folder structure. Using entry access rights, the records management layout will only be visible to records managers and the document management layout will only be visible to general users. Administrators will be allowed to see both.

Multiple views of the repository can be configured to allow a records manager to monitor and act on records through one folder structure, while other users access a folder structure organized more logically for their needs. Records managers work with actual records; other users of the system access shortcuts to them.

The Workflow module can be configured to automate the setup of these multiple views, including filing new records into the appropriate record series. The screenshot to the left shows the Workflow Designer, a graphical canvas for designing workflow tasks. This particular task is set up to automatically retrieve field values from the documents, move them into a record folder and move a shortcut to the document into the employee's folder.

Not only does this automate time-consuming records management tasks, this also helps ensure security, as general users are not working with actual records, only their shortcuts.

The workflow described above could be made even more functional by assigning entry access rights or security tags to documents. Records managers could use this functionality to define different rights for different types of documents.

Automatic classification and filing

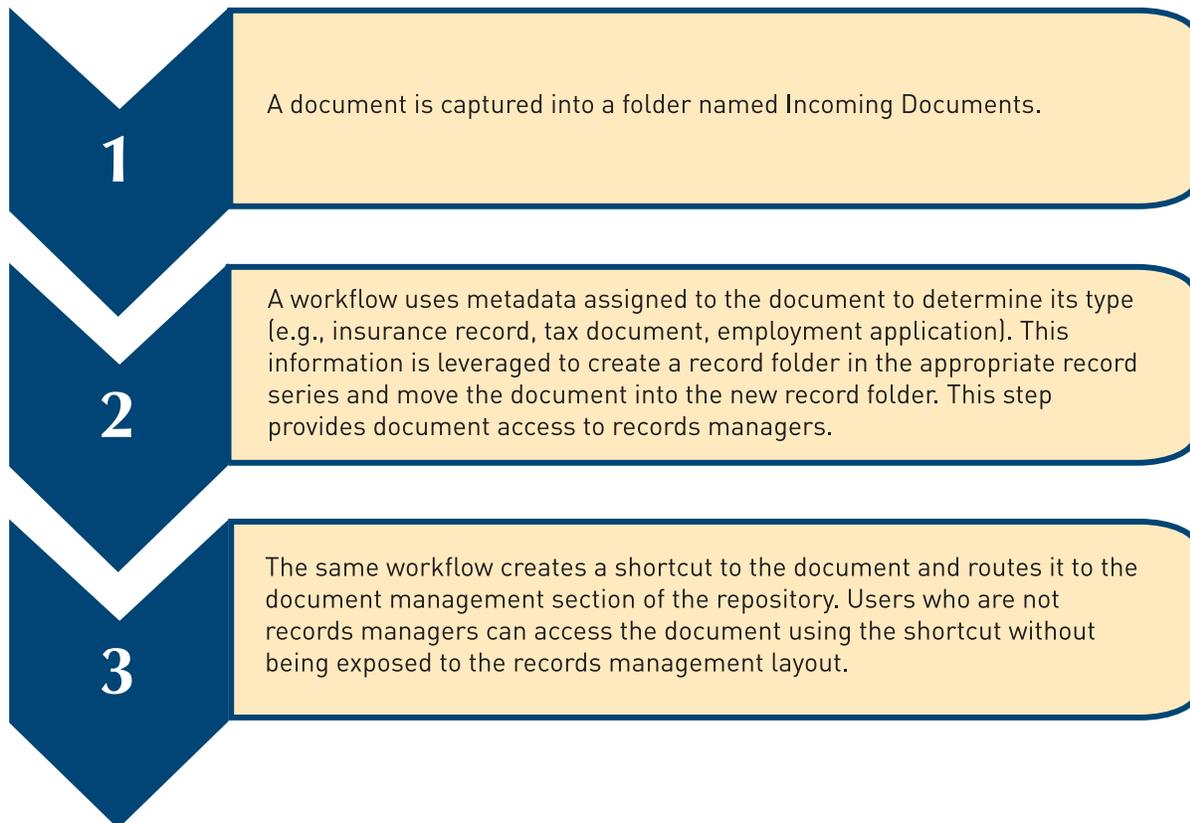
Due to the amount of time it takes, the process of classifying and filing records is typically the most expensive component of a records management solution. In many organizations, this issue stems from the following problems:

- The records management group is understaffed and unable to manually classify all of the content created by the organization.
- Users responsible for creating content aren't concerned with records retention policies and aren't interested in or able to learn a non-intuitive classification scheme.

Transparent records management solves this problem by automatically classifying documents as they are created. Users responsible for creating content define the document's type using a required field.

The workflow module uses this information to automatically classify the document (i.e., to determine what records management settings should apply) and move it to the appropriate record series/record folder. As a result, cutoff and disposition eligibility dates are automatically calculated and assigned.

The workflow module automates the process of classifying and filing records and providing document access to different types of users, as seen below:



It is the automation afforded by the workflow module that makes transparent records management truly transparent. And while transparent records management makes compliance with records management easier on an enterprise level, it also simplifies and automates record creation, classification and filing, so staff can spend their time on other tasks.

Adding records management capabilities to Web portals

For records managers, managing content created through collaborative Web portals can be extremely challenging.

From any document library in your Web portal, a user can bring up the document's context menu and have it sent directly to your ECM system—which, in turn, will subject it to your file plan. Your administrator can configure the integration between your Web portal and your ECM system to automatically pull metadata from the content library into the document's template when it's imported, without user intervention. Documents can be automatically named and filed in the ECM system according to this metadata.

The benefits to records managers are clear. Collaborative content generated through a Web portal is often difficult to control and apply proper retention schedules to. By automatically sending content into your records management application without user intervention, you maintain security and ensure that all records are managed according to your file plan.

Security benefits of transparent records management

Transparent records management enables records managers to automatically track and control records from creation to destruction, including transfers, storage and final disposition. These functions make it easier to comply with regulations on document disposal and to ensure that records are kept only as long as they're needed.

Because records management capabilities are part of the core functionality of transparent records management, the records management aspect of the system can be made transparent to most users. Records managers work with actual records; for security purposes, other users of the system access shortcuts to them. Workflow functionality can be configured to automate the setup of these multiple views, including filing new records into the appropriate record series.

Transparent Records Management in Action: HR “Onboarding”

Every company needs to hire new employees, and every company has to deal with the flow of documents including resumes, cover letters, job applications and other materials. If you're working with paper files and multiple people are involved in the interview and hiring process, you could end up with dozens of pieces of paper being physically transported around the office.

By digitizing and automating the business processes involved in bringing a new employee onboard, you don't just save paper, you also speed up the routing process, which makes individuals more efficient in dealing with their specific tasks.

The bottom line is that just as one size does not fit all, one configuration of your content management platform does not fit all. Individuals in different roles in your organization have different needs, and you need the flexibility required to meet them.

With transparent records management, you automate business processes including records management. While “front end” users see the information they need to complete their jobs most effectively, on the back end, records management processes are handled automatically.

This is the essence of transparent records management. Users see just what they need to know and only what they need to know to complete their daily tasks quickly and effectively, while records management processes are handled automatically and in compliance with DoD standard 5015.2.

In this example, “HR Onboarding,” the entire life cycle of a new hire is reviewed, from recruiting to interviewing to hiring. This process covers multiple departments, multiple information requirements, multiple records series and retentions schedules, and multiple software applications, yet all the records are managed seamlessly—and security is ensured throughout. “On the Front End” refers to what a general user will see, while “On the Back End” refers to the technology and records management components of the transparent records management system.

On the Front End

On the Back End

Step 1. Resume submitted online.

The recruiter works primarily with a Web portal that shows her everything and only what she needs to worry about. At the top is a task list for applications in process.

In the middle is a document list: all information the recruiter is collecting—including resumes, job applications and writing samples—for the interview and hiring process.

At the bottom are options for where the documents in her list might go—two queues she's in charge of:

- For Consideration, which is candidates she's sending to a hiring manager for review.
- Contact for Interview, which is candidates a hiring manager wants to meet with.

When the recruiter finds an applicant she wants to send to a hiring manager, she goes to the single file that contains all of the candidate's materials, right-clicks, and selects Send To Laserfiche.

A shortcut to the file remains in the recruiter's portal, in case she needs to access it, but she doesn't have to work with the file again unless she's directed to by the hiring manager via a task in her Web portal.

A SharePoint portal is set up for the recruiter with three Web parts: a SharePoint task list, a SharePoint document list, and Laserfiche Web Access. The Web Access Web part is configured to only display the two queues that the recruiter manages.

The recruiter puts the application package together in SharePoint and sends it to Laserfiche to initiate the interview/hiring process.

Laserfiche is used to manage the process for two reasons: the rules associated with the process and the need for other people to be involved in the process who don't use this portal. The bottom line: extensive automated routing, folder creation, and records management are required.

A file can be sent to Laserfiche directly from the list of documents in the SharePoint portal. At that point SharePoint's record center integration takes the document and metadata and sends it to a folder in Laserfiche.

Laserfiche Workflow monitors the Incoming Documents folder and moves and processes the document from there.

Step 2. Applicant file sent to the hiring manager.

Because hiring managers are so busy, they don't have time to learn another software program. Transparent records management makes it easy to access applicant files.

When a resume is sent to Laserfiche, it is automatically converted to TIFF images, tagged with metadata carried over from SharePoint, and filed in dynamically-created record folders in the proper record series to meet long-term records management retention requirements.

At the same time, a link to the file and the plain text of the file contents are sent in an e-mail to the hiring manager, which means he has two options: click on the link to view the full image pages in Laserfiche Web Access or read the text in the e-mail (e.g., from a mobile device).

When the hiring manager makes a decision on an applicant, he can simply select "rejected" or "contact for interview" in the applicant's file, and his role is done.

When Laserfiche Workflow sees a new file appear in the Incoming Docs folder in Laserfiche, it initiates a workflow process that performs a variety of operations, including:

- Normalizing the file type (e.g., converting it to the Laserfiche-standard TIFF group IV format).
- Performing optical character recognition (OCR) to extract text.
- Standardizing the naming convention, naming the new file in Laserfiche after the SharePoint document metadata value of the employee's name.
- Mapping SharePoint metadata to Laserfiche metadata (field) values with Laserfiche's records center integration for SharePoint.
- Creating a record folder for the applicant in a Laserfiche records series and standard folders in the recruiter's For Consideration area and the Sales department area.
- Filing the document in the record folder and creating shortcuts to the document in the For Consideration and Sales applicant folders.

The new records inherit their records management parameters from their new parent folders, saving the records manager from having to assign them by hand.

Workflow is also responsible for the notification sent to the hiring manager. It creates an e-mail with a link to the file in the Sales folder in Web Access, as well as the searchable text from the document's text file pasted into the body of the e-mail, and sends it to the hiring manager associated with the department field value in the document's metadata.

When the hiring manager makes a decision on an applicant, he changes a field in the document's metadata.

Step 3. Task sent to recruiter and files sent to record series.

The recruiter sees a task appear in her task list: contact an applicant for interview, as selected by the hiring manager. The applicant's files have also been moved to the Contact for Interview queue.

When the candidate comes in with his completed job application, the recruiter can scan it directly into the applicant's folder in the Contact for Interview area. The hiring manager—and any other staff who may be meeting with the applicant—can use the original link to the applicant's resume to access the job application, making it easy for him to find and access the new information.

The recruiter meets with the applicant before taking him to the hiring manager, which is just enough time for the hiring manager to review the applicant's materials. Because they're available in Laserfiche immediately upon scanning, the interview process is streamlined and the applicant doesn't spend time waiting around.

The rejected applicant's file has been removed from the recruiter's portal; she doesn't have to see or manage that file again, since the person is not a candidate of interest.

Based on the decision that the hiring manager made, Workflow either:

- Automatically sets the "Applicant Rejected" event date, calculates cutoff and destruction dates, and removes all document links from the recruiter's SharePoint portal with a custom Delete Link activity.
- Routes the document shortcut to the Contact for Interview folder (creating a new folder in the Contact for Interview folder and deleting the folder and shortcut from the For Consideration folder) for that applicant, and creates an interview task in the SharePoint task list of the recruiter who initiated the application.

When the applicant comes in with new application materials, the recruiter scans them through the SharePoint portal into the appropriate folder in the Contact for Interview area.

The hiring manager can click on the same link he used to view the resume and find brand-new shortcuts to the new materials in the same folder.

In the meantime, behind the scenes, both applicants' files are filed into appropriate record series, each with their own retention schedule and cutoff and disposition dates.

On the Front End	On the Back End
Step 4. Applicant hired and information moved to HR area.	
<p>When the applicant is hired—and the field in the applicant’s Laserfiche file is changed to “To Hire”—the hiring manager’s job is done.</p> <p>The recruiter’s job is also done, and all tasks and links to files relating to that candidate are removed from her portal.</p> <p>The new hire’s file is now moved to the HR section of the repository, and a new folder is automatically created for that new employee.</p>	<p>When the field value on an applicant’s document is changed to “To Hire” in Laserfiche Web Access, Laserfiche Workflow steps in again with a variety of tasks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It creates a new employee folder in the HR section of Laserfiche and moves shortcuts to all documents associated with the employee to that folder, so the HR clerk can access the new employee information. • In addition, it deletes all information about that new hire from the recruiter’s SharePoint portal with custom Delete Link and Delete SharePoint Task activities. <p>Laserfiche Workflow also handles the change to the records under records management: it initiates an alternate retention schedule that governs hired employees by setting an alternate event date.</p>

On the Front End	On the Back End
Step 5. New hire paperwork completed and filed correctly.	
<p>When the new hire arrives, he completes even more paperwork, which the HR clerk scans into Laserfiche.</p> <p>Those forms need to be in two places at once, because the records manager needs them in specific records folders by type of document—to comply with different retention schedules for different materials—and the HR clerk needs them organized by employee.</p> <p>Laserfiche automatically files the documents in the appropriate records folders and creates shortcuts to the documents in employee folders.</p>	<p>The HR clerk scans the new hire’s paperwork (such as insurance information and tax forms) into the same Incoming Documents folder.</p> <p>At that point, Laserfiche Workflow sorts documents by type (e.g., insurance, tax info) into appropriate employee folders in different record series, where they inherit retention schedule information.</p> <p>Shortcuts to the documents are created in the HR clerk’s employee folder.</p>

Conclusion

Using transparent records management, both records managers and general users are able to organize the same repository in the manner they each prefer, simultaneously.

The key to true transparent records management is taking a few simple steps:

- **Automate life cycle management**, tracking and controlling records from creation to destruction, including transfers, storage and final disposition. These functions make it easier to comply with regulations on document disposal and to ensure records are kept only as long as they're needed.
- **Configure multiple views of the repository**, enabling the records manager to monitor and act on records through one folder structure, while other end users access a folder structure organized more logically for their needs. To further ensure security, records managers work with actual records, while other users of the system access shortcuts to them.
- **Automatically send content generated through collaborative Web portals into your records management application** without user intervention, maintaining security and ensuring that all records are managed according to your file plan.
- **Flexibly configure your ECM system to meet multiple departmental needs**, while still retaining control over your enterprise records management plan. Regardless of the business process, your ECM system should be flexible enough to adjust to it.

Combined with a structured enterprise records management plan, an ECM system ultimately provides the functionality to create true transparent records management—as easy to use for general users as it is for records managers—which encourages adoption and ultimately improves adherence to your records management plan.



The Laserfiche Institute teaches staff, resellers, and current and prospective clients how to use Laserfiche most effectively. As part of this mission, the Institute conducts more than 500 Webinars each year, covering a variety of topics. The Institute also hosts an annual conference where members of the Laserfiche community attend presentations and network to share ideas and learn best practices. Additionally, the Institute conducts a number of regional training sessions and provides resellers with content for more than 100 user conferences each year.

The Institute also develops and distributes educational material through the Laserfiche Support Site. On this Website, clients can access training videos, participate in online forums and download technical papers and presentations that help them become savvier ECM users.

For more information, contact:

info@laserfiche.com

Laserfiche
3545 Long Beach Blvd.
Long Beach, CA 90807
United States

Phone: 562-988-1688
Toll-free: 800-985-8533 (within the U.S.)
Fax: 562-988-1886
Web: www.laserfiche.com

Laserfiche

3545 Long Beach Blvd.
Long Beach, CA 90807 USA
www.laserfiche.com

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