CUSTOMER COMMUNICATIONS ARCHIVING: THE TIME IS RIGHT TO LEVERAGE NEXT-GENERATION SOLUTIONS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Organizations have an important opportunity to reduce costs and improve customer service by modernizing their customer communications archiving solutions. Next-generation solutions allow organizations to move away from expensive and inefficient legacy archives by deploying a modern approach that minimizes the use of paper through digital technologies, formats and standards.

Among many benefits, these digital solutions satisfy customer demands to access relevant information via mobile devices and applications. The right solutions also simplify compliance, enable cloud and premise-based models and support emerging big data analytics initiatives. This paper explores the advantages of moving to a next-generation customer communications archiving solution and provides guidelines as to the features and functions that will lead to a successful deployment.

TechTarget® Custom Media

Crawford Technologies

TABLE OF CONTENTS

THE BUSINESS CASE FOR NEW ARCHIVING SOLUTIONS

The unprecedented growth in business information is challenging companies that need to store, manage and leverage that information in order to operate their business. The amount of data being generated is doubling every two years and will grow by a factor of 10 in the period between 2013 and 2020.[1]

Much of that information is in the form of customer communications. It is estimated that 50 billion documents are delivered each year in the United States alone.[2] These include statements, invoices, policy documents, letters and many more document types that are needed to maintain relationships with customers.

Legacy customer communications archives were typically designed by print vendors for print formats. But the print model is fast becoming archaic and is no longer efficient for today's digital world. The average print budget for a modern organization is $5.8 million, not counting postage costs. Just a 20% reduction in paper and postage could have a huge positive financial impact on most organizations.

Beyond the cost ramifications involved in maintaining legacy systems there is also the reality that the demands of customers have changed. Simply put, most customers don't want paper—they want the flexibility and agility that digital technologies enable, including the ability to access account information in real-time from a range of devices, including smartphones and other mobile solutions.

However, many enterprises haven't yet made the move to next-generation digital solutions. According to one survey, only 32% of organizations provide digital online access to digital communications, and 53% provide no customer access to digital communications at all.[3] This is not a viable long-term strategy. Organizations need to move on from their legacy customer communications archives in order to:

- **Address unprecedented growth** in business information;
- **Reduce the huge costs** involved in paper-based communications;
- **Provide customers with instant, online, mobile-based access** to current account information;
- **Rein in mounting capital equipment costs,** including storage;
- **Ensure compliance by deploying faster and more responsive** solutions that address stricter and more fluid compliance requirements that vary from country to country and industry to industry;
- **Support big data analytics** by leveraging the vast amount of valuable information housed in customer communications archives;
- **Move on from expensive legacy systems** to better position the organization for the future.

Enterprise IT strategists and business decision makers who are slow to move to next-generation models for customer communications archiving are exposing their organizations to unnecessary risks that can negatively impact spending, customer satisfaction and regulatory compliance. They are also delaying a change that is both necessary and inevitable.

---

1 "The Digital Universe of Opportunity: Rich Data and the Increasing Value of the Internet of Things," IDC, April 2014
2 "First Class Mail Volume Since 1926," United States Postal Service, February 2014
3 "Trends in Customer Communication Archiving," Association for Information and Image Management, August 2014

CHARACTERISTICS OF NEXT-GENERATION ARCHIVES

There are several factors adding to the urgency of making this shift. One is the reality that the longer you wait, the more money you are wasting and the more records you will eventually have to migrate to the new formats. Also, while it is difficult to measure the potential cost impact of lost business opportunities, the possibilities are certainly there if competitors are ahead of you in addressing customer needs for mobility and real-time access.

In addition, the technologies and standards that are defining next-generation communications archiving solutions are now available and ready for deployment, so there is no reason to wait. In fact, these technologies and standards have evolved enormously in just the past few years, with higher-density storage, better search technologies and new archiving formats.

If your organization is still using legacy archiving practices, you may be asking what, specifically, are the characteristics that make a customer communications archiving system "next-generation?" Among the most important features and functions, a next-generation solution should:

- **Leverage and support the key digital standards,** in particular PDF, PDF/A, PDF/UA and XML;
- **Deploy an architecture designed for much greater capacity and scale**—providing access to potentially hundreds of billions of documents using the latest advances in storage technology, with a storage infrastructure that is common across archives;
- **Require a much lower initial capital investment** than legacy systems built around paper formats and models, while using pricing models that are more relevant to today's market than legacy paper-based solutions—i.e., prices based on storage capacity (per terabyte) as opposed to prices based on a per-user model;
- **Allow customers to have real-time access to relevant information,** including mobile applications and self-service portals;
- **Address cloud-based deployment models,** with the ability and agility to store information either on-premises or off-premises in the cloud;
- **Enable consistent management across the enterprise,** including establishing and enforcing policies for regulatory compliance;
- **Support digital formats and standards** so the organization can leverage big data analytics in ways that go beyond the physical capabilities of legacy print-based systems.

DEPLOYING A MODERN CUSTOM COMMUNICATIONS ARCHIVING SOLUTION

Traditional archival storage has relied on capital purchases of new hardware infrastructure, as well as the ongoing costs of maintaining, powering and managing that infrastructure (not to mention the cost of replacing it every four years or so). This is a multimillion-dollar expense.

Organizations can be reluctant to move from legacy environments because of the investment they have already buried in the existing infrastructure, and also because of the potential challenge of migrating archived content. But not moving forward is a much more costly and risky strategy.

In moving forward, it is important to deploy the right solution and to also carefully evaluate the best way to go about the migration process. Many organizations look at upgrading their customer communications archive as a two-step process.

The first step involves deploying the technology immediately for current and future activities, i.e., a "day forward" model that waits to address legacy archives. The second step would then involve migrating the existing archive. This two-step process helps to address current challenges without delaying the move to a new solution because of migration concerns.

The other key factor is making sure you choose a solution that delivers all of the key features and functions described in this paper. The move to next-generation storage strategies is best exemplified by EMC's InfoArchive product, which is built on open standards and is able to store information either on-premises or off-premises. InfoArchive leverages storage policies to allow content to be stored locally or remotely and move automatically over time as information ages.

With InfoArchive, structured and unstructured data from multiple applications is managed by a single application, which removes information silos and streamlines access control and compliance management. Adopting storage infrastructure that is common across archives is critical because it reduces the administration overhead of managing dedicated storage infrastructure for each application or archive silo.

EMC is further facilitating the move to next-generation archiving through the formation of the InfoArchive Consortium, which is an alliance of companies with a common interest in legacy application decommissioning, active data archiving, database archiving and customer communications archiving. In the area of customer communications archiving, the InfoArchive Consortium leverages the technology and expertise of Crawford Technologies.

Crawford Technologies is a market leader in customer communications archiving and e-presentment solutions integrated with enterprise content management and archiving platforms, such as InfoArchive. PRO Archiver for InfoArchive is Crawford Technologies' customer communications and report archiving solution specifically designed for next-generation customer communications archiving. PRO Archiver can be used to archive almost any kind of business document, including statements, policy documents, trade confirmations, patient records and reports, whether these documents come from packaged applications or custom business systems.

TAKING THE NEXT STEP

The important trends that are challenging the efficiency and efficacy of legacy customer communications archiving solutions are not going away—if anything they are accelerating rapidly. Companies must deal with rapid data growth, more stringent regulatory environments, changing customer needs, tighter IT budgets and the reality of a world that is increasingly based on digital solutions and technologies.

Moving to a next-generation solution for customer communications archiving provides a clear path to lower costs and improved customer satisfaction, while also equipping the organization with a solution that is vital for the future. With solutions such as EMC's InfoArchive and Crawford Technologies' PRO Archiver, enterprises can achieve the immediate benefits of a next-generation solution, while migrating legacy archives at their own pace. Now is the time to get started.

InfoArchive
CONSORTIUM

Crawford Technologies   FLATIRONS   fme   Revolution Data Systems