

Examining the Cost and Value of Documents



Dramatic changes in the ways that organizations define and use documents today have given rise to tremendous opportunities—as well as significant risks. The same documents that can have a negative impact on costs can have a positive effect on helping achieve an organization's goals. To ensure that documents are used to their best advantage, it is important to have a clear understanding of the kinds of costs they can incur, as well as a sense of the ways in which they can create value. It may not be possible to determine precisely the value of a document in the same way that one can identify the specific costs associated with it, but recognizing that cost and value coexist is vital to managing documents effectively.

Why cost and value matter more than ever

Predictions of a paperless workplace were widespread as recently as ten years ago, when new technologies were radically transforming the ways in which people communicated and connected with each other. In the wake of developments from e-mail to electronic data storage, who could blame anyone for expecting the piles and piles of paper in organizations to eventually go away—along with the high costs associated with printing, sharing and storing them? Reality, however, has proven far different. Networked access to the Internet and all the information available there has led to more printing, not less, and e-mail appears to have caused a large increase, rather than a decrease, in paper consumption.* Documents have become a kind of currency for today's far-from-paperless workplace, and the organization that hopes to realize the most value from them must build those hopes on a sound document strategy. Such a strategy starts by identifying some of the key sources of document cost and value.

Examining the cost of documents

Determining how much it costs to produce, share and store documents today is a more complex undertaking than ever before. Now that documents exist in two forms,

