opentext™

SUCCESS STORY

Metro Vancouver

Industry
- Public Sector

Solutions
- OpenText™ Content Suite
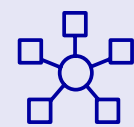- OpenText™ Records Management

Results

Improved productivity with faster and easier information retrieval

Reduced risk with retention schedules

Ensured accuracy with version control and audit trail functions

Improved cross-departmental collaboration with central repository

metrovancouver

Metro Vancouver establishes comprehensive lifecycle management of corporate records

OpenText ECM Suite ensures accessible documents, improved efficiencies and reduced risk

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Chris Plagnol
Director, Board and Information Services/
Corporate Officer
Metro Vancouver

Formed in 1967, Metro Vancouver is one of 29 regional districts that were created by the provincial government to ensure that all British Columbia residents had equal access to commonly needed services, including the provision of drinking water, sewerage and drainage and solid waste management. Regional parks, affordable housing, labor relations and regional urban planning are significant services provided directly to the public. The regional district has approximately 1,300 regular, full-time employees and serves a population of 2.1 million.

Managing information overload

As with most organizations, Metro Vancouver manages massive amounts of information. Most documents were stored on network drives, making sharing and collaborating on projects between departments a challenge. In addition, searching and retrieving information was very difficult. There were also security challenges due to the limitations of the network drive structure.

The region needed a central, secure repository for storing and distributing electronic records. It also needed a way to enforce retention periods and disposition rules based on preset periods to help control risks, reduce storage costs and ensure regulatory compliance.

In 2000, the region began using electronic document management and records management solutions from two different software vendors to manage and store content, such as permitting records; reports and engineering project documents; operational records, including regional planning records; and legal and compliance documents. The region had been satisfied with the combined applications for many years, but in 2009, when it began to look at its IT migration path, it was determined that it was not possible to keep the same platform without a great deal of effort to maintain, update and extend the products and it was not cost effective.

A more flexible document and records management solution was needed to help streamline administrative processes, improve employee productivity through faster and easier information retrieval and provide a single, authoritative repository for storing and organizing electronic and physical documents. The region also required a more sophisticated records management solution to manage the classifications and retention schedules of all types of business content to safeguard the organization against the risk and cost of content.

Flexible OpenText platform improves user experience

Metro Vancouver issued an RFP to several vendors, and three were shortlisted. Based on the vendor demos, the region evaluated each solution and, in the end, selected OpenText™ Content Suite to provide a secure repository for organizing and sharing documents, and OpenText™ Records Management to control the retention of enterprise content, including paper and electronic documents, in accordance with organizational policies.

"In considering our document and records management requirements, ease of use was really important for us. We also wanted a system that could automatically profile documents, because in our previous environment, a pop-up screen came up and people had to complete it every time they saved a document. We wanted to improve the profiling process to make it almost invisible for the end user. As part of that, we wanted to increase the accuracy of that profiling," says Chris Plagnol, director, Board and Information Services/ Corporate Officer at Metro Vancouver. *"One of the keys to our selection of OpenText was how easy it is to get a document in and back out. If I compare OpenText to our previous platform, it is a far more flexible product and the user experience is much better. We're very happy with our decision to switch to OpenText."*

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Having selected Records Management to automate the management of it electronic records, Metro Vancouver saw it was a perfect fit to install the OpenText™ Physical Objects module to enable the functionality for the lifecycle management of all of its physical and electronic records in one central repository.

The Physical Objects module allows for the tracking and management of physical items such as file folders, paper documents and boxes. Currently, the region is using the OpenText system to manage approximately 10,000 boxes kept in offsite storage.

"When someone opens a folder in Content Suite, they will see everything in context; they'll see the physical folders, and they'll see the electronic documents, which include scanned documents," says Plagnol.

Records classification system

Records Management maps record classifications to retention schedules, which fully automate the process of ensuring records are kept as long as legally required and then destroyed when the time elapses. At Metro Vancouver, all documents stored in Content Suite are classified as records. The system currently contains almost two million documents.

Folders are organized by department. Then, the next level is a business activity, and then a record series. *"Building the folder structure this way made sense to people. For example, Engineering Projects is a records series, and below that there are hundreds or thousands of folders, each one being its own engineering project: Project 1, Project 2, Project 3, etc. Whenever someone saves a document into one of those folders, it inherits that classification and, by default, inherits the Record Series Identifiers (RSIs) that go along with it. It is all automatic,"* says Plagnol.

RSIs define a disposition schedule for each record series. The RSIs are auto-assigned based on rules designated by the records management department at Metro Vancouver.

The automated OpenText system removes the complexities of electronic records management, making the process completely transparent to the end user. *"The user doesn't really need to know about the classifications. It's invisible to them. All they care about is writing their reports or permits or whatever they work on, and finding them again. We didn't want to burden them with corporate recordkeeping requirements and other corporate requirements for documents,"* states Plagnol.

Records liaisons in each department

With only two and a half people in corporate records, Plagnol needed to identify a records liaison or a records custodian within each department to ensure each area was in compliance with policies and procedures. *"Every department is responsible to comply. The corporate records team issued policies, best practice methods and procedures, and then each of the 14 departments are required to comply with those policies and procedures,"* says Plagnol.

Ease of use brings positive user experience

Metro Vancouver is employing various methods to train their 1,200 users on the OpenText system. *"It's a three-hour training. We have online as well as classroom training. Staff can also work on their own using a training module, so they can take the training at their own pace. We'll also do desk-side training if people require it, but everyone has to go through some form of training,"* says Plagnol. *"Then we have champions in each department who will help users who are struggling. Training is a huge component. We consider it to be a key success factor."*

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According to Plagnol, user feedback has been positive. *"Compared to the old interface, people find the OpenText environment more appealing and intuitive. We are giving them more functionality, which they are happy about."*

The users appreciate the different ways they can access their work. *"They can work where they feel most comfortable. They can work with their documents while in Microsoft® Outlook®; they can work in the web environment, which is where we encourage most people to go; or they can work in the Explorer view. OpenText gives people that flexibility, and they like that. Once people went through their training and got used to the system, the transition period was relatively short,"* says Plagnol.

Ensuring transparency and accountability through comprehensive auditing

All activities in the OpenText system are fully audited with detailed logs maintained, ensuring all operations are documented. *"The audit trail is really important,"* says Plagnol. *"It's essential to know who put the document in, where it went, what the permissions are and if it is the official document. We are putting a lot of energy into making sure that we can prove through the audits that the documents in the system are trustworthy records. This is a big challenge and that's why we're putting our energy here. We need it for legal compliance due to statutes and regulations, but we also need it for good business practice. If you can't trust your own records, what good are they?"*

By marking documents as official, it prevents users from modifying them in any way, ensuring the preservation of critical records. *"When someone saves a document in Content Suite, we mark it official if we can, and we have the retentions and dispositions running—so we are getting rid of documents we don't need any longer and reducing those risks,"* adds Plagnol.

Empowering employees

The OpenText solution brings several benefits to Metro Vancouver. Powerful search functionality allows users to easily find what they need, when they need it. Classifications and metadata identify content authors. Version control and audit trail functions ensure both accuracy and currency.

"The searching capabilities have really improved the timely retrieval of documents. People have access to documents they never knew existed before," says Plagnol.

Employees have a central repositry for housing shared documents, improving cross-departmental collaboration. *"If you put a document in, everyone can see that document—unless it's some type of confidential document that people lock down. This really opened up the ability to share work. For example, someone may need to write a status report on 'X', but they don't know how to do that. They can go into the system, search on status reports and find that someone in another department wrote what they need, so they can use the template as a framework. It really leveraged people's ability to use the system for new content,"* says Plagnol.

Collaboration among departments has increasingly become the norm at Metro Vancouver. *"It could be someone from our engineering department working with someone in our planning department who is working with a team in our parks department because they're working on a collaborative trail under which there will be a sewer. The properties department would also need to be involved to negotiate all the rights of way through a landowner's property. There's just a natural collaboration that has to occur. Having all content in one repository really makes sense to us,"* says Plagnol.

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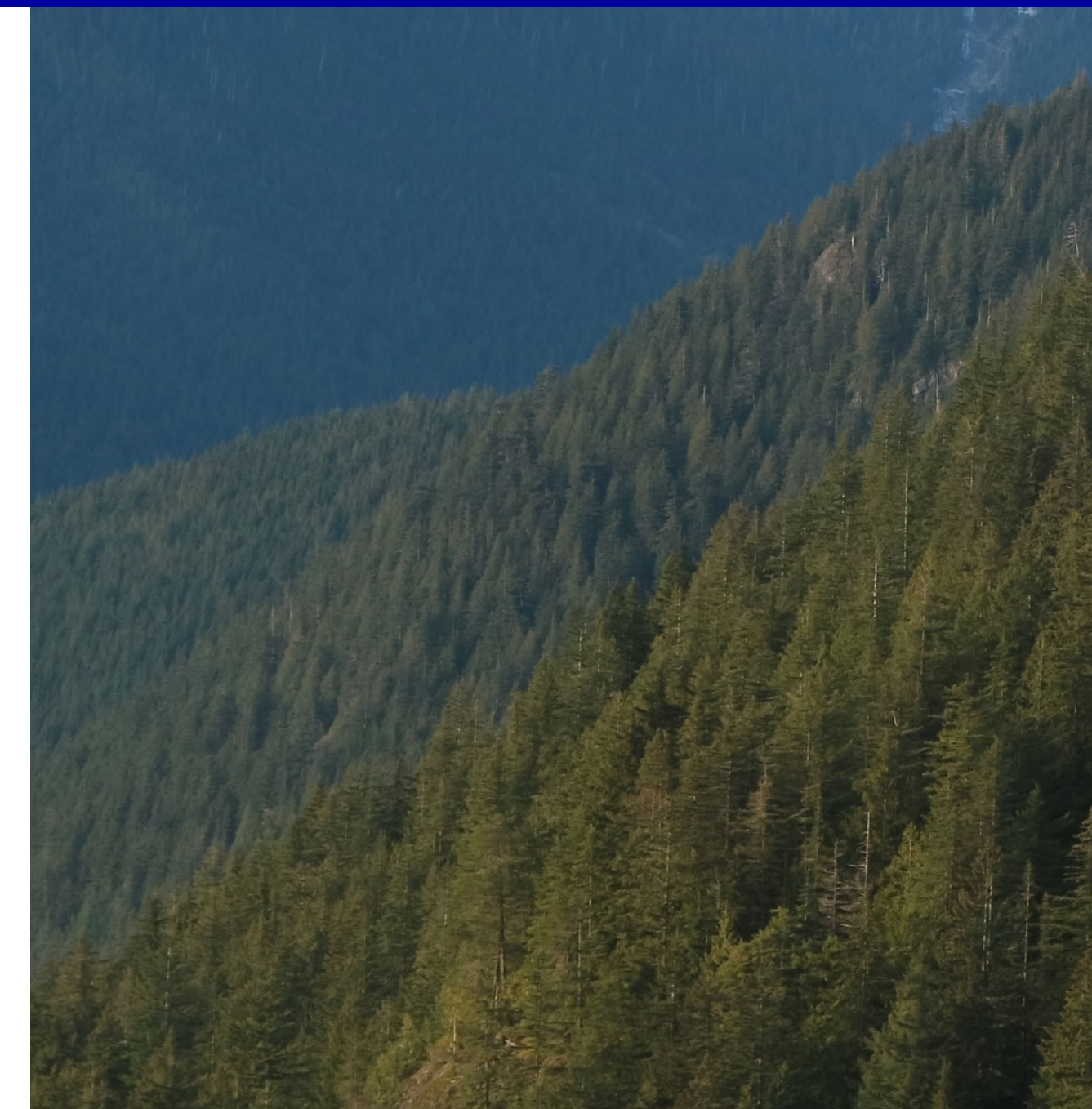
Lessons learned

Plagnol has some recommendations for other organizations planning to implement an enterprise-wide solution. *"Spend the time designing your folder structure based on a method or model. Don't let it become a free-for-all. Only designated people should create folders. That's my number one recommendation,"* he says.

"Number two is when you start configuring the search engine, think about how it works. Understand that it is biased towards full text, but that's not to say you can't search through metadata," Plagnol adds. *"Show users the different ways to search for a document so it will be very easy to find. We do a lot of training on using OpenText advanced search. We cover a lot of search techniques."*

Change management entails thoughtful planning

Plagnol concludes by noting that implementing a document management system is not simply a technology issue. He says, *"It's also a people issue. It's a change issue. You have to plan ahead; you have to communicate, communicate, communicate—before, during and after. You can never communicate enough. Anyone who embarks on a project like this shouldn't ever think of it purely as an IT project. Technology is just a small part of it, especially with OpenText because it's so flexible, which is great, but you want people to be successful, so you need to consider the change management aspects as well."*

About OpenText

OpenText, The Information Company, enables organizations to gain insight through market leading information management solutions, on-premises or in the cloud. For more information about OpenText (NASDAQ: OTEX, TSX: OTEX) visit **opentext.com.**

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