Access®

From Vendor to Partner

How the Right Records and Information Management Provider Can Transform Your Program

There was a time when the only question you had to ask potential records and information management (RIM) vendors was "How much would it be to haul away these boxes?" In today's era of intricate rules and the looming danger of litigation, this dated, transactional approach to records management falls short. Businesses now require innovative, transformative solutions to streamline their records and information management (RIM) programs. Partnering with the right provider can help you create and execute a holistic program and a set of policies that gives you complete control over your organization's information. Your partner should have the knowledge and expertise to help you govern physical and digital records in a legally defensible manner throughout the entire records' lifecycle.

As we explore the fundamental features and benefits of an expert RIM provider, you'll learn how to propel your organization toward a future where information becomes an asset rather than a liability. Whether you're a small enterprise seeking streamlined RIM solutions or a large corporation grappling with the complexities of enterprise-level information governance, this eBook will provide valuable insights to help you discover the essential criteria for choosing the perfect RIM provider. With these insights, you'll be able to harness your chosen provider's expertise and create a program that thrives in the face of ever-evolving data challenges. Welcome to a world where records and information management becomes a transformative force, propelling your organization towards a future of unparalleled efficiency and success.

To help you narrow the field of potential partners, we've outlined **eight critical topics** for discussion.

1 | Enforcing Proper Metadata Application and Information Governance

The key to an effective integrated information management program is in the design. Privacy and retention procedures should be integrated into everyday workflows, making it part of the core business processes enacted by everyone — not just another task for the records manager or administrator. The automation of document-level metadata is key to this integration. A best-in-class technology solution should automate the application of metadata by assigning a unique identifier to documents; applying the correct document type and classification based on a user's department or role; associating the correct retention term and tracking a document's lifecycle and eventual destruction or archiving; and tracking and releasing legal holds.

ASK POTENTIAL PARTNERS

✓ Can you help us establish an information taxonomy that addresses our document types, user roles/departments, and compliance-mandated retention schedules?

✓ Does your system automate the attachment of metadata to documents as they are created?

✓ Can your solution track records at the document level and mark them for destruction at the end of their retention term?

✓ Does your system allow the placement of multiple legal holds on individual documents to prevent indefensible destruction, and can those holds be automatically released upon their expiration?

What Is Metadata?

Metadata describes the context, content, and structure of records, and their management through time. Essentially, metadata is information that allows you to retrieve, use, and manage other information. Metadata will be unique to your organization's program and should be discussed with your records management partner.

2 | Bringing Past Records into Compliance

If your organization has not consistently implemented retention policies, there's a possibility that you possess a significant volume of records that no longer adhere to compliance regulations. Retaining documents beyond their designated retention periods can potentially weaken your organization's legal stance in litigation and unemployment claims. The process of sifting through your accumulated records to address legal requirements might result in avoidable expenditures, but the task is daunting for most businesses. However, engaging an appropriate vendor partner can assist you in transforming this state of disarray into a structured system.

ASK POTENTIAL PARTNERS

✓ Do you provide auditing or survey services to determine our current level of compliance with regulations such as GDPR[1], CPRA[2], HIPAA[3], FACTA[4], Sarbanes Oxley, and FERPA[5]?

✓ Do you have a full understanding of the specific regulations that apply to our organization?

✓ Can you help identify documents which have gone past their retention dates and are due for immediate destruction?

3 | Securing Data for Storage, Retrieval, and Destruction

Securing sensitive data is essential for maintaining your organization's reputation and client trust. Regulations surrounding the disposition of personally identifiable information (PII) such as the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) are likely to become more prevalent and more onerous in the future. The right partner can help you keep all business records secure and ensure sensitive data is protected throughout the records' lifecycle.

ASK POTENTIAL PARTNERS

- ✓ Can you provide role-based access to sensitive records and documents, and maintain a documented and auditable chain of custody?

- ✓ Do you provide secure offsite storage that adheres to International Safe Harbor Privacy Principles and are PRISM Privacy+ certified?

- ✓ What other external security assessments and certifications do you maintain?

- ✓ Do your methods for physical record shredding and digital document destruction adhere to industry-standard security measures, including NAID[6] certified destruction?

- ✓ Does your physical and digital security adhere to SSAE 18/ SOC[7] standards?

- ✓ Do you conduct security and privacy training internally and certify that employees have the proper understanding and expected compliance?

- ✓ Do you perform internal audits to test your standards (policies, procedures, processes) and regulatory requirements?

- ✓ Can you secure physical records during transfer to and from storage, including GPS tracking of vehicles?

- ✓ Do you seal files in tamper-proof pouches and secure boxes with tamper-proof straps prior to delivery to maintain HIPAA compliance?

4 | Embracing Digitization to Gain Efficiency and Reduce Costs

A digitally enabled records program empowers your team to securely access active records while working from anywhere. Archived records and records that you are obligated to hold in paper format should be stored offsite, scanned, and delivered in an electronic format. A reliable partner will assist you in creating a digitization strategy for frequently used documents and assessing inactive records for scanning or secure disposal, ultimately lowering your expenses.

ASK POTENTIAL PARTNERS

- ✓ Do you provide an assessment of what types of records should be digitized, stored, or securely destroyed?

- ✓ Are you able to provide metadata application, accurate taxonomy application, and indexing of scanned images for easy retrieval?

- ✓ Are you able to implement post-digitization rules for secure disposition versus offsite storage?

- ✓ Can you define and apply a process for establishing digital records and demoting paper versions to copies?
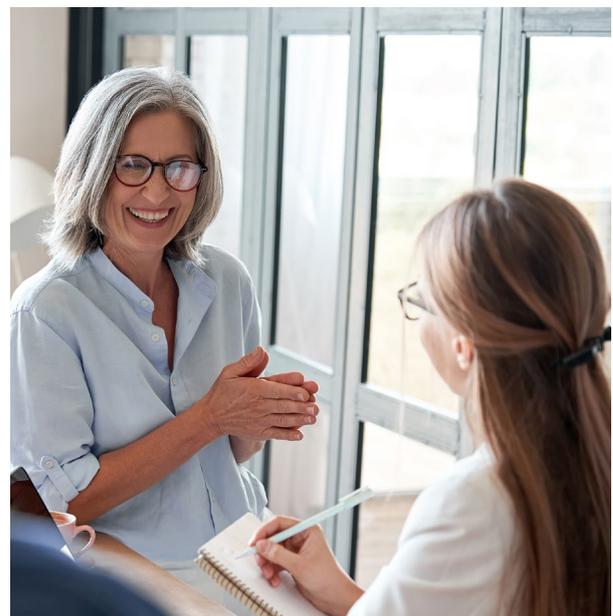
5 | Ensuring Secure Management and Storage of Digital Records

For all the benefits, digital tools also come with their own inherent risks. Digital media is often easy to search, share, and store. As a result, organizations may overlook critical records embedded in email, text, collaboration tools, and business communication platforms like Microsoft Teams. All of these digitally born items should be considered as part of your retention schedule. A holistic RIM program should incorporate the legal and compliant destruction of digital media files, as well as the destruction of computer hard drives and CPUs as necessary.

ASK POTENTIAL PARTNERS

✓ How do you handle digital records, from declaration to proper disposition?

✓ Can you describe how digital records are safely stored and backed up?

✓ Is all digital information encrypted while in transfer and at rest?

✓ Are you able to apply the same metadata and legal holds to digital records as physical records?

✓ Can your solutions sync with an HRIS, ECM, or HCM system to properly maintain records stored there, including flagging missing or expired records and controlling access?

6 | Monitoring the Performance of Your RIM Program

To assess and improve your program, you should monitor your program's performance against policy by incorporating feedback loops. Establishing the right KPIs — and tracking them regularly — is critical to the success of this process and can reduce the need for interruptive audits.

ASK POTENTIAL PARTNERS

✓ What levels of client support do you provide?

✓ Do you hold regular business reviews with an account manager to discuss program performance?

✓ Which KPIs do you track (for example, storage volume, scanning and retrieval rates, and the percentage of documents marked for destruction in a given timeframe), and how do you send reports?

✓ Do you offer reports of inventory for destruction?

✓ Is information kept up to date in real time and do you have self-service options for review and reporting?

✓ What additional reports can be provided to help monitor the program's performance, control costs, and ensure compliance?

7 | Preparing for Disaster Mitigation and Recovery

Protecting your business records from fires, floods, and other natural disasters is as crucial as safeguarding them from unauthorized access. At a baseline, your partner should offer advanced security and fire suppression technology in their offsite storage facilities to ensure records are always protected, as well as provide offsite tape vaults and underground vaults for more specialized secure storage needs. You should also consider the ease of retrieval for your employees. If your vendor makes it difficult or costly to retrieve records stored offsite, your employees may keep them at the office, increasing the risk of unauthorized access or exposure to fire, flood, or other disasters.

ASK POTENTIAL PARTNERS

- ✓ Are all records stored in secure, fire-proofed, climate- and humidity-controlled spaces located outside of flood plains to prevent unplanned destruction or damage?

- ✓ Is the offsite record center guarded 24/7 by an afterhours police/fire/burglar alarm monitoring company?

- ✓ Are there motion and glass-breaking detection devices?

- ✓ Can you identify and protect essential records — those needed for business continuity?

- ✓ Do you have proven incident-management or business continuity procedures in case of an unplanned crisis or event?

- ✓ Do you test these plans regularly? Do you publish and share the results of these tests?

8 | Optimizing the Cost of Integrated Information Management

While risk mitigation should come first and foremost in your RIM program, it must also be cost effective. Your integrated information management partner should be able to retrieve physical records in a secure, digital form to reduce duplicate retrievals and rush charges, while still allowing authorized users to share them across different physical locations. Other cost considerations include assistance in eliminating non-record digital information from your company's backup servers and the ability to retrieve physical records on a document level.

ASK POTENTIAL PARTNERS

- ✓ How do you charge to store and access offsite records?

- ✓ How does it vary by type of physical storage (vaults, etc.)?

- ✓ Do you provide regular reports on cost related KPIs (for example, amount of records destroyed per month)?

- ✓ Can you provide visibility into how individual users are requesting documents, including how often and at what priority level (typical turnaround, next-day, or same-day delivery)?

- ✓ Do you offer best practices for reducing non-essential records in digital and physical storage?

- ✓ Do you provide cloud-based software for easy, secure access when records are needed?

- ✓ What are the vendor service level agreements in terms of turnaround time for standard deliveries, rush deliveries, resumption of business following an outage, etc.?

Conclusion

Records and information management programs have gone far beyond just storing and retrieving boxes. A collaborative partner can provide the tools and services you need to build an effective, holistic program that is scalable as your information grows and compliance needs change. The questions in this document were provided through our work with many clients over years of RIM program development and management. By asking the questions listed here, you can screen potential vendor partners accordingly and find the right one to support your physical and digital records program.

Access is that collaborative partner. We approach RIM as a long-term strategic engagement to help you advance your records management program and take your business further.

To find out how Access can help your business, contact our team today at **1.877.345.3546** or visit us online at **AccessCorp.com/contact-us**.

Unparalleled commitment.
Let's Go Beyond.

About Access

Access is the largest privately-held records and information management services provider worldwide, with operations across the United States, Canada, Central and South America. Access provides transformative services, expertise, and technologies to make organizations more efficient and more compliant. Access helps companies manage and activate their critical business information through offsite storage and information governance services, scanning and digital transformation solutions, document management software including CartaHR, CartaDC, and secure destruction services. For 12 consecutive years, Access has been named to the Inc. 5000, the ranking of fastest-growing private companies in the U.S.

[1] General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

[2] California Privacy Rights Act (CPRA)

[3] Healthcare Insurance Portability & Accountability Act (HIPAA)

[4] Fair and Accurate Credit Transactions Act (FACTA)

[5] Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act(FERPA)

[6] National Association for Information Destruction (NAID)

[7] Statement on Standards of Attestation Engagements 18

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