

ECM Migration Without Disrupting Your Business: Seven Steps to Effectively Move Your Documents

A White Paper by Zia Consulting, Inc.



Planning your ECM migration is just as important as selecting and implementing a new ECM system. It's not something you hastily add to the end of an ECM roll out. You need to plan your transition just as you plan your ECM architecture and implementation or risk failure of the entire project. In addition, for many companies, the migration step has involved a lengthy process of weeks, months, or even years without clarity on where documents might reside at any point in time or the ability to use those documents - something that many companies simply can't accept... and so a decision to switch ECM technologies is postponed.

At Zia Consulting, we have developed a strategy and framework called ActiveMigrate™ that companies can use for their ECM migration projects. Comprised of seven steps, our effective approach is based on 10+ years of migration experience and countless migration projects. These steps will help you define your business drivers, break down your project into critical components, and ensure that you can continue to utilize your documents throughout the migration process.

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Introduction

It's a common story: a company needs an effective tool for managing and governing its content and has invested in a pricey legacy Enterprise Content Management (ECM) system. However, the system is underutilized; employees circumvent the content repository by storing and sharing information in shared drives, email, or cloud-based file shares. Users are unhappy because the ECM system doesn't work the way they do and the company struggles to manage critical business information according to governance policies.

If this sounds familiar, you are not alone. Today, many companies are rethinking their content management strategies. Even the analyst community agrees that it is time for a generational refresh of ECM strategies and systems.¹ This means evaluating your current ECM system or shared drive and migrating to a more flexible, mobile, open ECM system—such as Alfresco—that meets the demands of today's businesses and users. Once a new approach is determined, the biggest challenge is often planning and implementing your ECM migration strategy; however, it doesn't have to be.



Your content is mission critical—you can't slow down or stop regular business activities when undergoing an ECM system transformation. It's content that drives your business processes in corporate legal, human resources, contracts and procurement, and much more. ActiveMigrate™ solutions from Zia Consulting go beyond simply moving content and consider your entire business process and continued use of content during migration.

ActiveMigrate is based on a proven methodology that combines knowledge and experience with industry-leading tools to migrate your content without disrupting your business. Our agile approach is flexible and tailored to your needs. We work directly with you on a daily basis to provide assessments and help you through the discovery process. We assist you in better understanding your workflow and business process to provide an easy ECM solution that meets the needs of your users and your business. We relocate content behind the scenes without halting your business processes by building a multi-repository solution or doing an in-place migration. Our goal is to help you implement an ECM solution that will simplify your business processes and put content back in the hands of users.

In this white paper, we will discuss best practices and provide practical advice for planning an ECM migration. With dozens of successful Alfresco migration projects completed, we have seen it all. As a result, we have developed a unique approach that focuses on understanding business drivers and mapping requirements to content demands that will ultimately help you plan and execute a successful migration.

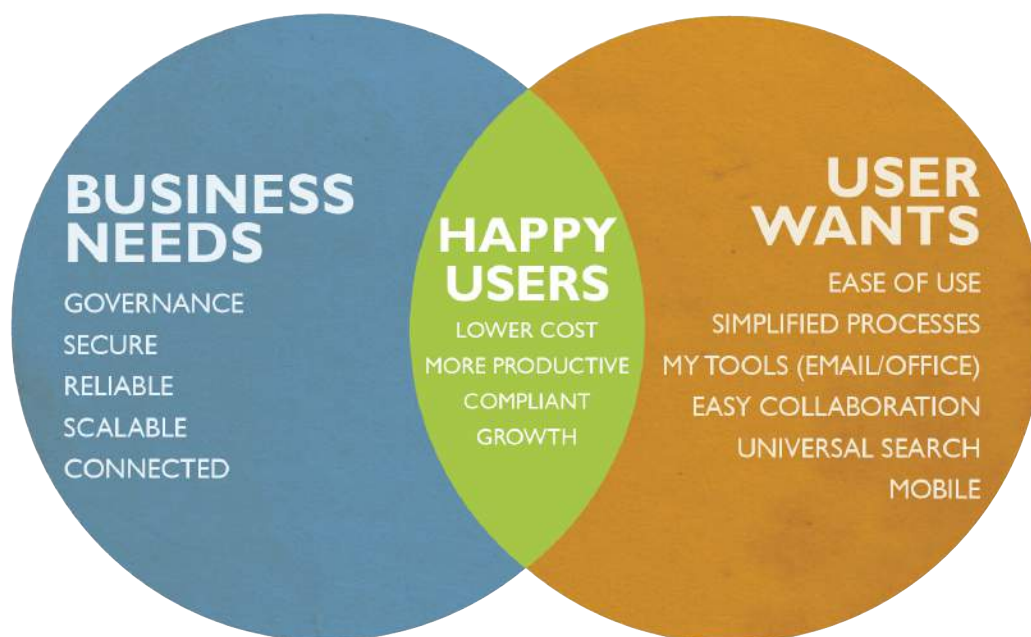
¹ Gartner, Inc., *Magic Quadrant for Enterprise Content Management*, Analyst(s): Mark R. Gilbert, Karen M. Shegda, Kenneth Chin, Gavin Tay, Hanns Koehler-Kruener, Published September 23, 2013

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Why Migrate?

Is your current ECM system easy to use? Does it work the way your users do? Or do your users cringe at the thought of the ECM repository? If you describe your ECM as “complex”, “expensive”, and of “limited value,” it’s time to move to something different.

Businesses, particularly IT departments, require ECM solutions that are secure, accurate, scalable, and connected. This means that data is secure and can only be accessed by the appropriate people within the organization. Documents and records are accurate, meaning they have not been duplicated, are versioned appropriately, and adhere to the company’s retention policies. The system needs to be scalable to handle growing amounts of content and may be accessed from multiple locations. Lastly, content should be connected to other enterprise systems, eliminating silos of information.



Users, on the other hand, need content management to be simple and quick—they don’t want it to infringe on their daily routine. They want tools for collaboration. Content should move with users and be available anytime and anywhere, on any device including smartphones and tablets. Users don’t want to be confined to rigid business processes when it comes to their content. They want systems that work the way they do—combining simplicity with enough process/regulatory controls necessary to meet governance requirements. They want tools that make their job easier.

Migrating to an open and flexible ECM platform like Alfresco allows you to find the intersection between the needs of the business and the needs of users. Alfresco offers a hybrid approach that leverages the cloud with on-premise management of content. It mirrors the way users work while keeping all the complexity of managing content behind the scenes to meet governance policies.

Benefits of Alfresco include lower costs; an ECM architecture built for the future with open standards; support for mobile and cloud computing; easy systems integration; and strong governance. A successful ECM migration is about making content easy and smart. With the right system and migration approach, you will build an ECM system that business teams will actually embrace using.



Planning your ECM migration is just as important as selecting and implementing a new ECM system. It's not something you hastily add to end of an ECM roll out. You need to plan your transition just as you plan your ECM architecture and implementation or risk failure of the entire project. If you simply move content from one system to another without performing analysis, you will likely repeat the same mistakes of previous implementations. As a result, you will not maximize your return on investment (ROI).

Planning does not have to be difficult if you leverage a methodology built on understanding business drivers and following best practices.



Understanding Goals

As part of the planning process, you need to fully understand the business drivers for the ECM project. What are the key problems the company is trying to address? Outlining requirements for the project provides valuable information for your content migration. It leads to understanding business processes and the resulting system features and functionality.



Plan, Plan, Test, and Plan

Successful migrations are all about planning, testing, and more planning. Once you have a plan, test it with a subset of content, readjust your model, and continue planning. This will help you build a solid migration strategy to reduce errors and unforeseen complications. If you don't have the resources or knowledge in-house to help plan for your migration, work with a partner who can offer you best-practice approaches and guide you through the process.



Best Practice Framework

Migrations can be large and costly for a lot of companies and having a framework based on proven best practices mitigates the risk. Migrations can be time and resource intensive; having a framework helps manage the project and ensures your content is migrated in a way that works for your business.

At Zia Consulting, we have developed a strategy and framework companies can use for their ECM migration projects. Comprised of seven steps, our effective approach is based on 10+ years of experience and countless migration projects. These steps will help you define your business drivers and will break down your project into critical components.

STEP 1: DISCOVERY

The discovery process is designed to gain an understanding of the business drivers for the project. What is the total cost of your ECM system? Have you recently gone through a merger or acquisition and now have multiple ECM systems? Do you have new compliance or regulatory requirements? Are users demanding more functionality? Answering these questions will help define the goals for the project and establish measurable ROI objectives.

The discovery process also includes understanding the requirements for success. Building on the business drivers, you need to ask the business users how they are actually working with their content—storing it, searching for it, copying it to other systems, collaborating on edits or approvals between organizations, and more. What business rules are needed? Once you know the drivers and requirements, compare them to where the content is stored or referenced today and where you are going to migrate your content.

Begin by building a migration checklist based on the following content areas:



Volume of Data: Understand how much content you have, how many folders you need, and what the structure of your data is. Determine the volume that needs to be migrated and from where. This will provide guidance on the runtime of the migration and how much processing power is required.



Changes to Documents: Analyze what is happening to your content on a daily basis and where it is in your business processes. For example, if you were to run a migration today while users are making changes to the content, how will that affect your migration strategy? Knowing where content is in its lifecycle and how users interact with it will define the migration timeline and approach you take.



Metadata and Properties: Content is more valuable if you can easily search and find it. Understanding the metadata and document properties you need for your content is crucial for governance and search. Examine the content model and how it is used; where is your metadata stored and what metadata is needed in the new system? This will ensure you map the right content and metadata into the new system. Take a critical approach to mapping legacy metadata into new systems. Now is the time to get your new content model right to ensure your content meets business needs.



Sources of Content: Where is the content you want to move? Is it in one system, multiple systems, or in a file share? Understanding the nuances of each system will determine the best tools to use for the migration.



Target Location: Have you made the decision on what ECM platform you will move content to? If it is Alfresco, have you implemented the system? Have you built the new information architecture? Don't increase your risk of failure by moving content to a system that isn't set up and tested.



Document Lifecycle: Understand where your content is in its lifecycle. Do you have content in active workflows? Do you need to retain versions? Are there specific features in your legacy system that you need to preserve and does that require custom code? Do you have code embedded into your content that needs to be considered when migrating? What content can you archive or delete from the system? These are important questions to ask when planning your migration to determine what needs to be moved and the best approach to use.

STEP 2: EXTRACTION

Extraction is about automatically identifying and exporting your content and supporting details from the source system. Not only does this include the content itself, but also the metadata and supporting taxonomy, data lists, users, groups, permissions, and other ECM functions. *A note of caution on this step:* your legacy ECM system might contain a lot of supporting details that no one uses. Determine what you need and extract only that information. This will eliminate excess data in the new system. Extraction analysis is essential for companies with records management requirements to ensure that supporting details are not lost during migration.

Questions to ask:

- What are the permissions on content from one system to another?
- Will you use LDAP or active directory extraction or integration to maintain security permissions?
- What specific metadata do you need to extract?
- How will you store the content in a new taxonomy?
- What information do you need for governance and compliance regulations?

STEP 3: TRANSFORMATION

Transformation focuses on using the intelligence you have gained in the previous steps to stage and map content to the new ECM system. Staging the content may mean extensive spreadsheets with supporting metadata or databases for extracted metadata. Other tools are also available to map content and supporting details from a legacy model to a new model. It is in this step where you will be able to preserve and repurpose metadata or organize content to meet your business needs.

If your legacy ECM system is unorganized and content is difficult to find, this stage helps transform 'messy' content into a well-organized ECM repository. You may reclassify content, remove and delete unneeded content or metadata based on your new information architecture requirements.

STEP 4: BUSINESS RULES

In the discovery process you learned how content is used across your organization and how it is tied to your business processes. When you migrate from a legacy system, you need to determine how the new content *will* be used and what business rules should be applied. Focus on providing your users with processes that are simple and intuitive.

If there are steps that can be done by the system automatically, leverage them. For example, you can create business rules or behaviors around content types or within certain business processes to automatically extract valuable information about a document as it is entered into the system. This is particularly helpful for any unstructured data you want to move to the new repository. Establishing business rules will help extract metadata such as document type, properties, permissions, and more without the users needing to manually apply all those rules and properties. This is important for user adoption, as users will avoid manually entering metadata that is repetitive and obvious.

Business rules provide the first checkpoint for how well your data is mapped to the new system. As you test the business rules, you may discover that you missed something with regards to how the content is used. This allows you to make adjustments to your overall strategy before you do your final migration of content.

STEP 5: CONTENT MIGRATION

Before you actually begin relocating content to the target system, check that the new system is ready.

Items to consider:

- Does the target system have defined content models, metadata, users, groups, permissions, and more?
- Are the appropriate system integrations in place for effective business processes?
- Has the target system been fully tested?
- Is it tuned and scalable for the incoming demands?
- Have you tested migration with a variety of types of content?
- Have you verified your business rules with migrated test content?

Once the target system is complete, it's time to migrate documents and supporting details into the new system. How you move content into the target system can take multiple forms. You may need to quickly decommission an existing system and perform a full transition all at once. Or, you might need an in-place approach where business systems continue to function while subsets of content are migrated out to new systems. Your volume of data, business requirements, and content lifecycle will determine what tools to use and how long it will take. Selecting the right approach for your business will promote success.

Case Study

Migration Without Disruption

Challenge:

A technology company needed to migrate critical customer support and knowledgebase documents from a legacy custom ECM repository to Alfresco without disrupting in-processes editing and workflows.

Solution:

Zia worked with the company during the discovery process to develop the right migration strategy so that all documents remained accessible and up-to-date throughout the process.

Zia performed detailed planning and testing to ensure that all content and associated properties could be properly migrated. After various cycles of planning and testing with multiple subsets of content, the team was able to migrate the in-process documents in a single day without disrupting the workflows, allowing for the continuation of publishing to the customer support portal. With the new “Easy ECM” system limited user training was required, which was delivered through a “train the trainer” model.

STEP 6: AUDITING AND INDEXING

Having a detailed auditing and indexing trail for data after migration is important for highly regulated industries such as financial, healthcare, government, and education. Determine what types of auditing requirements are needed for your business. Do you need a simple audit trail or do you need detailed statistics and reporting? Is a log file report enough, or do you need reporting and visualization of what is happening with your content during migration? If you require detailed tracking of content before and after migration, plan on investing in tools for gathering log data and other statistics. Indexing should occur as new content is added to the target system.

STEP 7: FINAL VERIFICATION

As with any project, you need to verify that it is fully complete by identifying errors and diagnosing them. Managing errors that arise during migration certifies that content is being indexed according to defined content models.

You also need to perform user validations and testing. Is content available to users and does it work the way you planned? Often, user validations are accompanied by user training. This allows you to collect user feedback and verify that all information has been removed from the legacy system before decommissioning it.

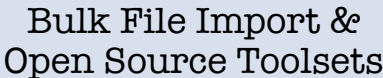


Make sure the new ECM system is fully operational before you shut off the legacy system. If you need to migrate content by a specific date, build your timeline accordingly. Allow for plenty of time to adequately test the new system.

Migration tools have become a critical component in the migration processes, reducing both the cost and the risk associated with a migration project. At Zia, we recommend selecting the right tool for each job, leveraging best-of-breed tools such as:

Bulk Filesystem Import is a simple open source tool designed to bulk import content with metadata and version control into Alfresco. It is deployed with Alfresco and is easy-to-use. Simply point to a given file storage location and content within the file system is replicated in Alfresco. It can be used for migrations from legacy systems such as Documentum and SharePoint or file shares. If you have already gone through your data and know what you want to migrate, this is an effective tool. If you require auditing controls and reporting, you may want to consider other options.

Simflofy is a software solution that acts as a virtual repository for discovery, building a content framework, and for migration of content. Simflofy can index and connect to content and provide detailed reports on how content is used across your business. If you are not sure what content needs to be moved or from which source systems, Simflofy will help. Detailed reports allow you to build a migration framework for your business and consolidate content. It is a great tool for migrations of all sizes, including extremely large (hundreds of millions of records) migrations, in-place migrations, or for companies that need to migrate in six to twelve months and need to better understand their content. Simflofy also offers a flexible cost model.

Fme migration-center is a full function, out-of-the-box product for highly automated, large volume content and data migrations. It features automated content migration with intelligent metadata enrichment, real-time simulation and testing, supports various source systems, and offers time scheduled batch migration. It is an established tool and if you are moving a large volume of records that have strict governance requirements around your content, this is an ideal tool.

 Bulk File Import & Open Source Toolsets	 SIMFLOFY	 fme
Bulk migrate files, metadata, & versions	Lazy or "in-place" migrations	High volume migration platform
Mirror on-disk file system folders & files	Virtual repository used for discovery, framework, & migration of content & details	Full-featured user interface with framework for all steps in migration
No/minimal auditing support	Supports to/from many standard ECM systems with connectors	Comprehensive audit & reporting

Don't Go It Alone

ECM migrations take planning and time. Your organization might not have the resources or expertise. You could be under critical time constraints to execute on a comprehensive migration strategy. Perhaps you need a fresh eye to look at your business rules. Or, you want to ensure you meet the business metrics and ROI of your ECM implementation. Whatever the reasons, you do not have to tackle a migration project alone. Zia Consulting can help make your migration a success.

As an Alfresco Platinum Partner and Alfresco Partner of the Year, Zia has helped organizations from small companies to the largest enterprises leverage Alfresco and create next-generation content management solutions. Whether it's replacing email or shared drives as primary ECM tools or replacing legacy ECM systems that cost too much and don't work, Zia's ActiveMigrate can help. With Zia, you can quickly migrate to Alfresco and improve business processes by delivering secure content solutions that work the way your business users do.

Case Study

Migration for the Millions

Challenge:

The CIO's office for a centralized court system covering state, district, and local courts needed to migrate over 25 million legacy PDF documents from a custom e-filing system with a legacy document management system to a more reliable and accessible Alfresco ECM repository with a new e-filing portal.

Solution:

Zia worked with the team at the court system to design a migration plan leveraging the bulk file system import tool, making sure that the millions of documents and associated metadata were migrated to Alfresco accurately. At the same time—and critical to the success of the project—work was being done to ensure a seamless transition to the new e-filing portal backed by Alfresco, without any disruption. Through detailed planning and testing, critical metadata for the migration was discovered and business rules were applied. Once the rolling migration was done, the decommissioning of the legacy ECM system was completed successfully.



Featured Partner: Simflofy

As a featured component of Zia's ActiveMigrate, Simflofy helps accelerate the migration process--delivering content that users require and allowing for a rapid ROI on your modernization project. Simflofy was built by content management experts who have delivered solutions to more than one-third of the Fortune 100 companies. Their Virtual Repository allows Zia to provide solutions that access a wide range of legacy ECM systems without the need for costly customizations.