Enhancing information management with Iron Mountain's Policy Centre

This UK Government Department signed a contract to start using Iron Mountain's Policy Centre application a few years ago. After a successful implementation, the contract has recently been renewed for a further year and its scope extended.

The Department's retention schedule existed on a PDF, which hadn't been updated for a number of years and wasn't taking legislative changes (such as, the UK Data Protection Act) into account. This was a difficult gap for the Department to fill because their in-house team didn't have the resources to make sure that the correct legal advice was in place.

The Department needed to enable the destruction of expired records and their Information Governance team was seeking an automated solution which would also allow them ongoing access to detailed legal advice. They wanted a dynamic retention schedule which would keep pace with external changes and punctually communicate updates to end users.

Policy Centre is an online system provided by Iron Mountain which is purpose-designed to harness the power of automation for information governance purposes. Policy Centre provided the Department with a solution that met the above requirements and enabled their Information Governance team to jettison their static PDF schedule and replace it with a solution that was more comprehensive and able to add detail for teams and functions. The Department was also able to include much greater levels of detail about specialist areas than previously - for example, calling out differences in retention periods for varying types of financial records rather than just saying that all financial records need to be kept for seven years.

Another advantage to the Department was that updating their Information Asset Register became much easier. Policy Centre includes a standardised referencing function and the Information Government team's feedback stated that they were able to use this function to gain a much greater understanding of what their records consisted of and this additional knowledge had the additional benefit of enabling the team to provide greater accessibility to the information the Department holds, to their colleagues.

Policy Centre encourages people to take ownership of information management. It is a tool for all users to use, not just Information Governance teams, and it aims to empower other users and reduce the pressure on Information Governance teams.

The Department has communicated to us that they are looking to take this set-up to the next level with an initial contract renewal and then by increasing the integration between the retention policy and the information itself. Currently, they have integrated Policy Centre with their hard-copy records management application so that every logged box has the Policy Centre retention calculation against it, automatically applying the appropriate retention dates.

They are also thinking about how to achieve greater systems integration in the future - i.e. how can you get Policy Centre to automatically delete records which have expired? What does it look like having more systems which actually talk to each other the way Policy Centre and IM Connect talk to each other? **Improving this efficiency has the potential to enable cost reductions and allow budget efficiencies**

Getting the level of clarity around information which Policy Centre has provided has been foundational to their making good decisions and now forms the bedrock of what the Information Governance team do. They are no longer second-guessing what they have or getting behind with destroying or deleting expired records and this tighter management then enables the team to do more to support the Department, including freeing them up to make intelligent use of the data the Department holds.

The Department's records team have communicated to us how impressed they are by how much simpler and quicker, and less daunting the system has been. This is particularly the case around updating the retention schedule and pushing that information out to colleagues. Once the initial work is done they regard ongoing maintenance as straightforward. Other teams have also commented on how clear the system looks.

The Department is now looking forward to the potential benefits this initial stage has enabled, including increased flexibility and easier management. They are even considering conducting an annual review of their retention policy to make sure it fully serves their needs. This is something that is best practice but would have been difficult to carry out under their prior set up.

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