White paper

The HR information gap: Modernising employee records for digital agility

How businesses bridge the gap between legacy paper records and digital HR workflows.

IRON MOUNTAIN®

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Executive summary

For growing organisations, People Teams face a distinct operational hurdle: managing the friction of a hybrid HR environment. Years of physical personnel archives, legacy payroll files and paper-based health records trapped in office filing cabinets or local storage act as a constant drag on HR productivity.

As organisations scale, managing paper manually becomes unsustainable. The goal for People Teams is to move beyond mere document storage to secure digital access. By converting physical personnel files into indexed digital records, HR leaders can eliminate "dark data", reclaim valuable office space and give their team instant access to employee files — all while maintaining strict compliance with regional data privacy laws.

The business challenge: The cost of the hybrid HR gap

In growing organisations, physical personnel records transition from a minor inconvenience into a major operational bottleneck. When critical information remains split between filing cabinets, email attachments and your HR system, it creates daily friction across your organisation:

- **Lost capacity:** People Teams spend hours manually hunting down physical personnel files, scanning medical notes or retrieving old contracts – diverting time away from hiring, retention and strategic HR initiatives.
- **DSAR and compliance vulnerabilities:** When a current or former employee submits a Data Subject Access Request, searching unindexed paper files to locate and redact sensitive third-party data stalls the team and creates regulatory exposure.
- **Onboarding and approval bottlenecks:** Paper-heavy onboarding, manual work authorisation verifications and physical certificates slow down hiring cycles and can lead to manual data entry errors.
- **Retention and statutory risks:** Retaining former employee records past statutory limits creates unnecessary data liability. Proactive record management and defensible destruction are essential to keep your business compliant with data protection regulations.

Smart digitisation: Prioritise high-impact HR documents

Digital transformation doesn't mean paying to scan every piece of paper your organisation has ever generated. For established and expanding businesses, being future-ready means taking a pragmatic, cost-effective approach: research shows that **only about 42% of paper records** actually need to be digitised for daily work.

Before starting, audit your physical HR archives and categorise them by business value:

- **Digitise and index for daily access (High impact):** Active personnel files, contracts, offer letters, work authorisations, sickness certificates and frequently requested HR documents.
- **Store off-site securely (Low access):** Inactive statutory records, historical payroll archives and tax statements required for compliance but rarely needed day-to-day.
- **Authorise secure destruction (Expired):** Legacy personnel files and candidate records that have passed their statutory retention limit under regional data protection laws (e.g. GDPR).

By digitising only what your People Team needs daily and storing or securely destroying the rest, you cut upfront transformation costs while freeing up office space.

How it works: A simple, secure process

Transitioning your personnel files is straightforward and secure from start to finish:

1. **Audit and plan:** Review your physical HR files and set clear goals — whether that's clearing out office filing cabinets or speeding up audit responses.
2. **Secure collection:** Vetted logistics teams collect your boxes with a documented chain of custody from your office to a secure scanning facility.
3. **Preparation and digitisation:** Documents are prepared (staples removed, pages prepared) and scanned in high resolution.
4. **Data capture and indexing:** Optical Character Recognition (OCR) captures key identifiers (employee name, staff ID, document type) so files become instantly searchable.
5. **Secure access:** Encrypted data is delivered into a secure cloud repository for instant, authorised access.
6. **Secure destruction:** Securely destroy physical copies in a compliant manner or return them for archival storage.

How Iron Mountain supports growing teams

Iron Mountain provides the **local expertise**, **scale** and **compliance framework** required to help companies modernise their records without overcomplicating the process:

- **Save time:** We handle the heavy lifting of sorting, scanning and indexing so your HR team can stay focused on your people.
- **Improve agility:** Give your HR team secure, instant access to personnel documents from any location.
- **Maintain compliance:** Ensure strict adherence to regional data privacy regulations (e.g. GDPR), statutory retention schedules and secure document disposal.

Whether you need to clear out filing cabinets in a single headquarters or standardise HR record storage across multiple regional offices, Iron Mountain offers practical, scalable solutions tailored to your organisation.

Ready to modernise your HR archives?

Contact our dedicated specialists today to discuss your HR records project: Contact our local team for a free consultation

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+44 (0) 1782 654 710 | ironmountain.com/en-gb
R.O.I. 1800 732 673 | N.I. +44 (0) 1782 654 710 | ironmountain.com/en-ie

About Iron Mountain

Iron Mountain Incorporated (NYSE: IRM), founded in 1951, is the global leader for storage and information management services. Trusted by more than 225,000 organisations around the world, and with a real estate network of more than 9.1 million square metres across more than 1,400 facilities in over 60 countries, Iron Mountain stores and protects billions of information assets, including critical business information, highly sensitive data, and cultural and historical artifacts. Providing solutions that include secure storage, information management, digital transformation, secure destruction, as well as data centres, art storage and logistics, and cloud services, Iron Mountain helps organisations to lower cost and risk, comply with regulations, recover from disaster, and enable a more digital way of working. Visit www.ironmountain.com/en-gb for more information.

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