



RECORDS AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

GETTING IT RIGHT FROM THE START

HOW TO SURVIVE AN AUDIT

 IRON MOUNTAIN®

WHY READ THIS?

Audits are a fact of life- and they come in all shapes and sizes. This short guide offers practical advice on preparing, and staying prepared, for an audit.

PREPARE FOR THE BEST

Few prospects strike dread into the heart of anyone responsible for managing information than the announcement of an impending audit. Do you know where all your information is held? Could you produce a specific document or record on demand? Were those files destroyed in a secure and compliant manner? Are you complying with new laws on data protection? Are you up to speed on the latest regulatory changes within your industry?

Any organization, large or small, can be subject to an audit. And the more complex your operations are, the more industry regulations there are to adhere to. Without a clear audit trail in place to satisfy government and industry bodies, your daily operations could grind to a halt and your organization held liable to substantial penalties for non-compliance.

However, with the right preparation, the thought of an audit won't keep you lying awake at night. The key to surviving an audit is anticipating what you may be required to demonstrate, and having plans in place to show you are compliant. Here are five simple steps to help you prepare.

NEW RESEARCH ON MID-MARKET ORGANISATIONS INDICATES ONLY 31% IN LEADERSHIP ROLES SAID DATA PROTECTION GUIDELINES ARE EASY TO COMPLY WITH.*

STEPS TO TAKE

1. Know exactly what's required of you
2. Set policies in motion
3. Make sure management is completely on board
4. Set up records information management technology
5. Audit yourself, record and review

1. KNOW EXACTLY WHAT'S REQUIRED OF YOU

You should be aware of every type of audit you could undergo, based on your industry, infrastructure and the kind of information you handle. What deliverables will the auditing agencies want you to have ready for them? This might take some research, but the fastest route to compliance begins with knowledge. Keep in mind that an audit is a process:

1. Make the most of the planning phase to engage people.
2. Business as usual must continue during the audit itself.
3. The improvement and review phase should become a cornerstone for your plans for progress.

2. SET POLICIES IN MOTION

Ensure the following practices are established and second nature to your employees:

- Determine what information your business has and where it is stored. Whether it's in paper or electronic form, having a clear map of your repositories along with an indexing and metadata plan will help.
- Agree a legally enforceable records retention schedule – and make sure that it is understood and followed.
- Allocate information access and security ensuring that your policies include employees, contractors and temporary workers. Rights management is a major shortcoming in many organizations' approach to information governance. It can be a shock to discover that unauthorized people can access and even alter sensitive data. What's more, some organizations don't automatically end privileges after an employee leaves. If you have file access and usage logs, assess them carefully. If you don't have logs, create them. Don't forget information can be located in vulnerable repositories, like mobile phones and emails.
- Conduct regular internal evaluations especially in parts of your business where customer or personal information makes an entry.
- Educate all employees on records and information management requirements and their roles in each audit. Make sure they have a clear understanding of records retention, information risk prevention and the policies of your business.

3. MAKE SURE LEADERS AND BUSINESS AREAS ARE COMPLETELY ON BOARD

Records and information management is as essential to your business as sales, marketing and human resources. A lot of people forget that, including those in charge. Most organizations lack a senior executive dedicated to overseeing corporate data. So, an information governance steering committee or task force of some kind should help prepare for an audit.

- Include participants from all relevant business groups in the process. Legal, compliance, operations, IT as well as records and information managers should all be involved
- If the CIO owns the information audit, look for ways to involve your lines of business.

OVERALL ONE IN TEN IS NOT AWARE OF OR DOES NOT KNOW PROCESSES FOR DOCUMENT RETENTION AND DISPOSITION. BROKEN DOWN BY AREA, 14% FROM LEGAL AND 16% FROM PROCUREMENT HAVE KNOWLEDGE OF DOCUMENT RETENTION GUIDELINES.*

4. INVEST IN RECORDS INFORMATION MANAGEMENT TECHNOLOGY

All the policies you define for managing records are more efficient when integrated into a system that can automate key tasks like records disposition. Technology can help you understand what you have and where it's located. Make sure your systems are configured for compliance. A single records and information management vendor can help you achieve consistency and avoid the trap of multiple systems and processes.

5. AUDIT YOURSELF, RECORD AND REVIEW

Practice makes perfect. Perform internal audits regularly. They will highlight exactly what your shortcomings are, where your weak links are located, and who is responsible for addressing them. Think of it as a fire drill.

- Work with business areas and internal support services to build a clear roadmap of the processes that the business performs every day. Make sure your plans for progress are tied to your business' aims and goals.
- Look at the culture of the organisation. Support the business units with the greatest information burdens or problems and monitor their progress toward achieving recommended improvements. Ongoing, measurable progress delivers lasting value to your programme.

FINAL THOUGHTS

There's no doubt an audit can be a daunting process. But with a plan, firmly outlined policies and procedures, as well as monitored training for every part of your organisation, you'll have the foundation for audit success.

WHEN IT COMES TO DATA HANDLING, 10% ARE NOT AWARE OF DATA COMPLIANCE REGULATIONS AND A FURTHER 13% FIND THEM TO BE SO COMPLEX THAT THEY WORK AROUND THEM.*

If compliance tops your agenda, get additional guidance from Iron Mountain

* The research was undertaken for Iron Mountain by Opinion Matters and questioned a total of 4,006 workers in mid-market companies (with between 250 - 3,000 employees (250-5,000 in North America)) across the UK, France, Germany, The Netherlands, Belgium, Spain and North America.

SHARE THIS GUIDE:

1.800.899.4766 (IRON) | IRONMOUNTAIN.COM

ABOUT IRON MOUNTAIN

Iron Mountain Incorporated (NYSE: IRM) provides information management services that help organizations lower the costs, risks, and inefficiencies of managing their physical and digital data. Founded in 1951, Iron Mountain manages billions of information assets, including backup and archival data, electronic records, document imaging, business records, secure shredding, and more, for organizations around the world. Visit the company website at www.ironmountain.com for more information.

© 2016 Iron Mountain Incorporated. All rights reserved. Iron Mountain and the design of the mountain are registered trademarks of Iron Mountain Incorporated in the U.S. and other countries. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners.