



White paper

Fast forward: 6 tips for accelerating media contract processes



Summary

The advent of streaming has radically changed the business model for media and entertainment companies. It means organizations must manage a lot more contracts than they have in the past – and do so quickly – if they want to compete in a crowded marketplace.

Unfortunately, contracts often get bogged down in internal approval processes. Following these six tips can help streamline contract management, improve efficiency, and enhance profitability.

Contents

03/ Smash cut to streaming

03/ 6 ways to streamline contract management

04/ 1. Standardize contract creation with templates.

04/ 2. Establish a timeline upfront

05/ 3. Centralize document access

05/ 4. Optimize workflows

05/ 5. Automate as much as possible

06/ 6. Track key metrics

07/ Bonus benefits

07/ About Iron Mountain

Smash cut to streaming

The advent of streaming has revolutionized the way people consume media and entertainment.

The combination of cloud computing and widespread access to broadband Internet was already leading to an increase in the number of people consuming media at home during the 2010s. Then the pandemic kicked streaming adoption up a notch.

According to the [Motion Picture Association](#), total subscriptions to online streaming services hit 1.1 billion in 2020. That was the first time streaming services had more than a billion subscribers, and it represented 23% growth over the previous year. And it wasn't just movies – music, gaming, and live TV also saw increases in subscriber revenue during this time.

While some services experienced declines after the pandemic subsided, most people haven't canceled their subscriptions. A [2023 survey by Forbes](#) found that 78% of U.S. households subscribe to at least one streaming service, up from just 52% in 2015. And on average, Americans spend about 13 hours and 11 minutes each day consuming digital media.

For media and entertainment industries, this resulted in a rapid shift to their business models – the equivalent of a “smash cut” in movie parlance. “The status quo is gone. A lot has changed,” Disney Chief Executive [Bob Iger told his staff](#).

Today, consumers have more options than ever at their fingertips. [Actor Tom Hanks bemoaned](#), “Be honest: How many times have you – and maybe you alone, or you and your family – said, ‘Hey, let’s watch something tonight?’ Great, you pick up the remote and it takes you forever to

agree on what you’re going to watch on Apple or Netflix or Hulu or Amazon Prime.”

If that situation is frustrating to consumers, it’s doubly so for media and entertainment companies who now face intense competition in a marketplace where consumers have easy access to many different options. By one count, American consumers now have [271 different options](#) for streaming video services. And that doesn’t even include music and gaming options.

At the same time, media companies face the challenge of re-negotiating contracts with [writers, actors, musicians](#), and others. And regulators are taking interest, which could result in [lawsuits](#) and/or new compliance challenges.

To remain competitive in this environment, media companies are looking for ways to boost their profitability. Iger, for one, [has said](#), “Instead of chasing (subscribers) with aggressive marketing and aggressive spend on content, we have to start chasing profitability.”

One way to do that is to approach contract management differently.

6 ways to streamline contract management

One of the results of this new emphasis on streaming is that media companies need to manage more contracts than ever before. That poses challenges because negotiating and approving contracts can take a considerable amount of time. And after the contracts are negotiated and approved, companies face difficulties of making sure they comply with the relevant terms and re-negotiating when contracts come up for renewal.

If they want to keep subscribers happy, streaming services need to provide a steady stream of quality new content. If that new content isn't available because of contract issues, it puts the business at risk.

Smart media companies are re-examining their contract management processes. Many are implementing the following best practices to help them become more efficient and make new content available as quickly as possible:

1. Standardize contract creation with templates

Every media company has a boilerplate that they include in their contracts. But firms with leading contract management capabilities take that a step further. They write standard templates for each of the many different types of contracts they regularly need.

For example, streaming services have contracts with their artists and their subscribers. They have contracts with employees and service providers. They may also have contracts with labor unions, other media partners, and agencies. They have non-disclosure or confidentiality agreements, option agreements, sales agreements, exclusivity agreements, professional services agreements, distribution agreements, licensing agreements, and more.

Companies can benefit from standard templates for each of these categories, preferably with variants tailored to some of the most common use cases. And the legal department can pre-approve this standard language. For best performance, companies can store these templates in a centralized repository where anyone who needs them can access the most up-to-date versions.

Then when a new contract comes through, the people involved in negotiating the agreement can simply flag any places where the contract deviates from the standard terms.

That can speed up contract processes in several ways.

First, those creating the contract don't have to spend time drafting a new document. It can also speed up negotiation. If you have an agreement that artists or organizations have found acceptable, it's likely that other people you are entering agreements with will also be willing to sign.

Most importantly, it can speed up the approval process. The process of obtaining approvals often creates a bottleneck in contract management processes. But if legal has already approved most of the language in a document, they can concentrate on the few areas of the contract where the wording has changed, requiring them to spend less time.

The end result is a faster process from start to finish.

2. Establish a timeline upfront

In the media and entertainment industry, contracting is often a complex process that requires the parties to negotiate and sign multiple agreements. Because the different pieces are so closely intertwined, teams involved may need to wait while others complete their portion of the work. Many media contracts languish because one of the parties involved is slow to complete one small part of the process.

Companies can minimize these delays by laying out a schedule in advance. This schedule details the milestones and deliverables at each step, clearly laying out how long each party will have to complete the required tasks. For effectiveness, the schedule needs to include the consequences should either party fail to keep the timeline. Those consequences may be financial or logistical. In extreme cases, failure to adhere to the schedule may terminate the process.

The challenge of hybrid contracts

While most media companies have digitized many parts of their contract processes, many still find it necessary to process some paper documents. This can lead to challenges when it comes to storage, access, retention, and eventually, secure destruction of the documents. To overcome these challenges look for a vendor with experience that spans **both digital and physical assets**.

Some companies offer incentives for getting approvals more quickly. If, for example, a faster turnaround process will make it possible for a streaming service to make new content available on their platform before it will be available on competing platforms, it might be worthwhile to offer a financial bonus to the content provider.

A contract management solution can simplify the process of laying out this schedule. It can remind everyone of important steps so that nothing gets missed, and it can recommend deadlines based on past experience.

These solutions also make it possible to track how long each step takes. That allows organizations to measure whether they are accelerating contract approvals, and identify any outliers that take considerably longer (or shorter) than usual. Over time, companies can use this information to further streamline their processes.

3. Centralize document access

If you only implement one of the tips mentioned, centralized document access is the one with the greatest possible impact. Having a centralized repository provides a foundation that makes many other optimization opportunities available.

Without a centralized repository, organizations have multiple versions of these important legal documents – each slightly different from the others. Tracking down which version is correct and making sure the right version gets signed takes additional time, and can even lead to unnecessary conflict.

Centralized access can also improve security. Most contract management solutions allow you to control who has access to various documents and provide a log of those who interacted with a document. That makes it easier to protect your organization's sensitive information, and to respond quickly to possible breaches.

For example, [Iron Mountain's contract solutions](#) allow you to host your files in a centralized location and then deliver multi-site protected access to any number of authorized users over secure connections. This centralized approach can provide a more consistent and secure program, which in turn can enhance control and access, increase auditing and reporting accuracy, and improve overall business continuity.

This centralized access improves collaboration by allowing

everyone to work on the same documents. It makes it possible for users to search for and find both pending and signed contracts quickly. It lets you see what kind of terms the company has on previous deals so that you can compare your current negotiations. And the best contract management solutions also route documents to the appropriate person at each step in the contract workflow.

4. Optimize workflows

Many media companies have a lot of ad hoc contract management workflows that vary over time as new situations arise. As a result, team members might not always route documents in the most efficient order. For example, they might sometimes send contracts first to finance and then to legal, while other contracts go to legal first and then finance.

If you haven't defined your processes well, it can lead to delays as team members pass documents from one department to another and back again. In the worst-case scenario, you might even miss important steps, allowing contracts to be signed without all the appropriate approvals, potentially putting the company at risk.

One of the big advantages of a contract management solution is that it forces you to think about your contract workflows. You might notice that some of your approval loops have unnecessary steps, or repeated routings. On the other hand, you might also notice that some contracts aren't receiving all the necessary approvals, or aren't being re-visited when the contract terms lapse.

A contract management system lays out these workflows so that you can see exactly what is happening when. It can highlight friction points where paperwork gets hung up frequently, providing an opportunity to consider ways to streamline, while minimizing risk for the organization.

5. Automate as much as possible

If your contract management process relies on people manually forwarding documents to one another, you are going to find that sometimes, people can be slow to do their jobs or might not complete all the tasks.

Whenever possible, look for opportunities to automate your processes. When one person is done with their work, the contract can automatically move to the next step.

For example, many contract management solutions include the ability to set up automatic alerts when documents are

ready for review. For example, your initial contract needs approval from four different people in your organization. When one person signs off, it can automatically send an email or text to the next person in the chain, alerting them that they need to review the document.

Your contract management solution also needs to automatically track changes. By highlighting any edits in the language, it can focus attention on the portions of the document that need the most careful review. That can further speed contract approval.

In addition, look for a solution that sends alerts before a contract is set to expire. That will allow you to take action in advance of the deadline so you can comply with the terms of your agreements and minimize risk for the organization.

Contract solutions from Iron Mountain and AWS

Iron Mountain and Amazon Web Services (AWS) partner together to offer a full spectrum of contract management capabilities. Iron Mountain InSight is a global information management and content services platform designed to help manage and add structure to your organization's unstructured content, which includes both contracts and media assets, such as audio, photos, and video. You can run [InSight on the AWS cloud](#), which provides a centralized repository for your team to access documents from anywhere in the world.

For more information, check out the following resources:

[Contract Lifecycle Management Services](#)

[Application Solutions: Contracts](#)

[Improve Governance and Compliance](#)

[Information Governance Advisory Services](#)

[Compliance Outsourcing Guide](#)

[AWS Media & Entertainment](#)

[Iron Mountain InSight on AWS](#)

[Iron Mountain Entertainment Services](#)

Automation minimizes the opportunities for human errors in contract-related processes. It also keeps things flowing smoothly through the business to generate revenue.

6. Track key metrics

When people know that something is being measured, they naturally try to improve it. This principle applies to many different aspects of business – including your contract management workflows.

After you've optimized workflows, keep track of how long contracts spend at each stage of the process. This provides some good measures of contract processing efficiency that you can improve over time.

Another key performance indicator (KPI) that you might want to track is how much your signed contracts vary from the standard templates established. This can be an indicator of organizational risk.

Other contract management KPIs that media companies often find valuable include the following:

- › Number of contracts
- › Annualized contract value (ACV)
- › Contract renewal rates
- › Contract lapse rates
- › Qualitative contract scoring

Once you begin collecting this data, you can analyze your KPIs over time. That makes it easier to see how well your contract management processes are performing, and whether you need to make some tweaks to improve efficiency.

And while you don't necessarily need a contract management solution in order to track these metrics, a good solution can make the process easier. Software can automate report generation, and/or generate dashboards that allow you to see trends over time.



**Available in
AWS Marketplace**

Bonus benefits

Taking the six steps outline above can not only streamline your contract management, it can also result in additional benefits, such as the following:

- > **Lower costs** – Saving time saves money. By improving efficiency, you can free up your team to accomplish more tasks. Also, having a centralized digital repository can eliminate some costs related to storing and managing paper. In addition, using templates and automation can help you reduce the risk of lawsuits, potentially leading to additional cost savings.
- > **Better negotiation** – When all your contracts are stored and managed from a central repository, it becomes easier for your team to see the typical terms of your agreements. That can improve negotiating position, enabling deals that are better for your company.
- > **On-time renewals** – With manual processes, contracts lapsing can lead to higher risk and costs for your organization. By automating the renewal process, you can minimize the likelihood of expensive mistakes and improve your overall renewal rates.

- > **Improved security** – Media companies need to secure their valuable intellectual property. A centralized repository with access controls can help you protect your valuable data.
- > **Improved compliance** – Improved security can also help you comply with relevant regulations. Some contracts include personally identifiable information protected by law in some jurisdictions. Again, a centralized repository with appropriate access controls can help you keep that information secure, as well as provide necessary logs for audits.
- > **Lower risk** – Most importantly, good contract management can help your organization lower its overall risk profile. That helps your company remain profitable and keeps you competitive in an increasingly crowded market.

For more tips to improve your contract management capabilities, visit [Iron Mountain's Contract Lifecycle Management page](#).

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 organizations around the world, and with a real estate network of more than 85 million square feet across more than 1,400 facilities in over 50 countries, Iron Mountain stores and protects billions of valued assets, including critical business information, highly sensitive data, and cultural and historical artifacts. Providing solutions that include information management, digital transformation, secure storage, secure destruction, as well as data centers, cloud services and art storage and logistics, Iron Mountain helps customers lower cost and risk, comply with regulations, recover from disaster, and enable a more digital way of working.



800.899.IRON | [ironmountain.com](https://www.ironmountain.com)

© 2023 Iron Mountain, Incorporated and/or its affiliates "Iron Mountain". All rights reserved. Information herein is proprietary and confidential to Iron Mountain and/or its licensors, does not represent or imply an invitation or offer, and may not be used for competitive analysis or building a competitive product or otherwise reproduced without Iron Mountain's written permission. Iron Mountain does not provide a commitment to any regional or future availability and does not represent an affiliation with or endorsement by any other party. Iron Mountain shall not be liable for any direct, indirect, consequential, punitive, special, or incidental damages arising out of the use or inability to use the information, which is subject to change, provided AS-IS with no representations or warranties with respect to the accuracy or completeness of the information provided or fitness for a particular purpose. "Iron Mountain" is a registered trademark of Iron Mountain in the United States and other countries, and Iron Mountain, the Iron Mountain logo, and combinations thereof, and other marks marked by © or TM are trademarks of Iron Mountain. All other trademarks may be trademarks of their respective owners.

