

## **Basic Content Services Will Give You Better Content Management Choices**

James Lundy, Debra Logan, Karen M. Shegda

Basic content services will enable companies to better organize document handling in day-to-day operations. Companies have sound business reasons for buying these offerings, but the choices are surprisingly complex.

## ANALYSIS

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A new category of content management offerings has emerged that fulfills a large and important need. "Basic content services" offers simple, commodity functions at a low price so companies can afford to provide them to most or all employees. Basic content services offerings will enable companies to better organize document handling in day-to-day operations.

Several business drivers have forced companies to seek out content management tools, but the offerings of established enterprise content management (ECM) vendors remain too expensive for wide deployment. Consequently, basic content services will disrupt the ECM market as major software, hardware and outsourcing vendors push these offerings at the expense of ECM specialists.

### **When Should You Consider Basic Content Services?**

In general, companies need better control over the documents they produce. In any midsize or large company, thousands of workers produce documents every day using the Microsoft Office suite and other productivity applications, and these documents typically reside on individuals' desktops or in file servers. They aren't organized and other people can't use or search them. If two or more people have access to the same document, they often inadvertently create two different versions. This content chaos has become a serious business risk. New laws and regulations require companies to deliver documents and accurate information within a short period of time. With intensifying competition, more companies also recognize that they can't afford to leave all of the value and knowledge that their workers create locked up in isolated documents, scattered on desktops and servers.

Unfortunately, ECM suites cost too much to roll out to every employee (a 100-seat deployment still costs at least \$500,000). Moreover, the ordinary worker doesn't need all of the sophisticated functions that an ECM suite typically has. The cost and complexity are overkill for many users and applications. Thus, Microsoft and others have started offering products that provide basic functions, such as version and access control, document checkout/check in and search (see "Content Management for the Whole Company"). Basic content services typically cost \$100 per user. In addition to cost and functions, the other key considerations are scalability, ease of deployment and ease of integration.

Companies should consider basic content services under certain conditions (see "Introducing Basic Content Services"). For example, to handle document applications, companies should have a large number of workers using Office applications, e-mail and file servers. However, basic content services won't be adequate for companies looking for advanced functions, such as records management. Although companies can roll out basic content services universally, they shouldn't treat them as mere desktop applications that need to run properly on the enterprise PC platform — basic content services pose bigger technical challenges. Also, companies should consider their own business needs, as well as how they want their content management solutions to expand.

### **What Vendors Offer Now and in the Future**

The question of which offering to buy now is complicated, because offerings remain incomplete and the market will be undergoing dramatic changes through 2008 (see "Who Will Own the Enterprise Content Management Market?"). The powerhouse vendors (IBM, Microsoft, Oracle and SAP) will use basic content services to dominate the content management market. Business process outsourcing vendors will also add commodity functions, as will some hardware providers such as HP — whose strength in output will encourage it to manage content as well. All of these

vendors will seek to add functions by acquiring stand-alone vendors, which will force the remaining ECM players to become more specialized.

The powerhouse vendors differ significantly in what they offer. The individual content management functions they offer may be commodities, but these vendors have *different* mixes of functions, levels of maturity, architectures, kinds of integration and more. Many of these differences stem from the vendors' various backgrounds. For example, IBM is the only powerhouse vendor that has leading-edge ECM technology, and its basic content services offer the advantage (or restriction) of working within the larger WebSphere software stack. SAP will excel in linking content management functions to business applications, but doesn't yet have all of the content functions it needs. In essence, basic content services aren't all the same — companies must find vendors that are most capable of fulfilling their particular needs.

Before buying, therefore, companies must inquire closely into a wide range of issues. For example, clients frequently ask us about Microsoft, because basic content services are a natural extension of its office applications (see "How Well Does Microsoft Windows SharePoint Services Support Enterprise Content Management?"). Companies want to know which Microsoft SharePoint product handles content management, what features it offers, how it stores and manages records, what level of security it provides, and how to migrate files from file servers and desktops.

Finally, many vendors haven't filled out their offerings yet, so a gap remains between vendors' marketing and current capabilities. For example, Oracle will offer basic content services within its Collaboration Suite (see "Oracle Adds Instant Messaging and Content Management to Collaboration Suite"). The anticipated price of less than \$60 per user will attract many buyers, and Oracle's database expertise means the product will excel in managing files and records. However, Collaboration Suite hasn't launched yet, and to date, Oracle has moved slowly to establish its position in content management and collaboration.

## REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS

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Corporate Headquarters  
56 Top Gallant Road  
Stamford, CT 06902-7700  
U.S.A.  
+1 203 964 0096

European Headquarters  
Tamesis  
The Glanty  
Egham  
Surrey, TW20 9AW  
UNITED KINGDOM  
+44 1784 431611

Asia/Pacific Headquarters  
Level 7, 40 Miller Street  
North Sydney  
New South Wales 2060  
AUSTRALIA  
+61 2 9459 4600

Latin America Headquarters  
Av. das Nações Unidas 12.551  
9 andar—WTC  
04578-903 São Paulo SP  
BRAZIL  
+55 11 3443 1509