

Top Trends in Content Services: How to Change Your Business Now



Raising the content management bar with AI, hybrid cloud, and automation



CHERYL MCKINNON

Principal Analyst
Forrester

Cheryl McKinnon is a principal analyst serving enterprise architecture professionals; she helps them support their firm's need for content and collaboration technology capabilities in the age of the customer. Cheryl delivers research and advisory services in areas including enterprise content management (ECM), content archiving, enterprise file sync and share, document-centric collaboration, life-cycle management, information governance, and file analytics.

We recently hosted a webinar with guest speaker Cheryl McKinnon of Forrester and are continuing the conversation in this Q&A.

Organizations embracing major content services trends have now supercharged the consumption and utilization of their documents and information for employees, partners, and customers. By embracing artificial intelligence (AI), hybrid cloud, and automation—these leaders are achieving unheard-of results in cost savings, customer acquisition/upsell, and raising the bar on governing sensitive information.

We will dissect the challenges and successes of remote work, bridging the gap from on-premises to cloud and areas to target for business automation—from big trends to real-world customer stories.

Which key content services trends do you think will have the largest impact on businesses in the next two years?

Three of the top trends shaping the evolution of content services are the rise of AI and machine learning (ML) for tangible use cases, increased investment in B2B/B2C content-centric processes, and a rejuvenated interest in information governance driven by privacy and data protection laws.

1. AI and ML have been infused in content platforms for several years, but we have yet to see widespread adoption of these intelligent content services to automate common processes at scale. Over the next couple of years, Forrester expects to see vendors step up and spur adoption by creating packaged, pre-trained models for common scenarios, such as identification of sensitive data, automated data extraction from routine document types, and transcriptions and translations to make rich media more searchable and consumable. Tools built for information managers or subject matter experts—not data scientists or developers—will kick-start more AI/ML adoption.

2. Organizations continue to invest in content services to digitize their business processes, and many of these essential processes include external stakeholders: customers, partners, and suppliers, among others. Documents are at the core of many of these B2B or B2C use cases. External parties must be embraced as participants in these workflows at key stages—what Forrester has called the “content microprocess.” These moments may be the submission of forms, uploading of digital photo evidence, provisioning of proof of identity, or even invitations to collaborate and approve agreements. Elimination of paper, automation of manual tasks, and extending content and process services to apps that support external parties continue to drive investment in this market.
3. The rise of data protection and privacy laws in many jurisdictions around the world has compelled enterprises to take a fresh look at their information governance practices, policies, and the tools to execute them. Protected customer, citizen, or employee data presents financial and reputational risks when improperly collected, used, or left unsecured. Companies often struggle to execute their deletion policies due to a lack of automation capabilities or internal resistance to data disposal. Privacy concerns, however, have raised new focus on data minimization and execution of deletion policies to protect and eliminate risky data and documents.

Many organizations have moved from a desire to “put everything in the cloud” to now striking a balance between cloud and on-premises with hybrid cloud strategies. How do you think hybrid cloud will evolve over the coming years?

While the shift to content in the cloud continues, there will continue to be demand for content repositories and applications to run on-premises or private clouds. Complex applications, particularly when integrated into other line-of-business apps, are difficult to migrate, and organizations with large volumes of content may not see cost benefits. Large enterprises, especially those that grow via acquisitions, will always have multiple systems. Hybrid approaches can offer flexibility in these scenarios. Organizations may prefer to deploy new applications in their own preferred public cloud but will need to access existing content and data sitting in private or on-premises deployments. Federated content services that enable search, content generation, or execution

of retention policies across systems can allow organizations to use the cloud model(s) that best suit their needs.

For organizations that want to get started on raising their employee experience and automation, where would be the best place(s) to start?

Digital employee experience is a sum of the perceptions that employees have when working with the technologies they use to do their daily work. Perception is shaped by the apps, software, processes, and even the devices we use to do our work. Innovative companies are investing in digital employee experience teams to break down existing internal silos and using surveys, analytics, and user interviews to find opportunities for improvement. Common starting points include rethinking application integration and delivery. Improved user interfaces and delivery of relevant information into their preferred endpoint (mobile app, web UI, or via a frequently used collaboration channel or enterprise application) help to reduce context switching and interruption of focus. Routine, manual, and tedious tasks can also be engagement killers. Look at process automation tools, including workflow, data extraction, or robotic process automation, to put repetitive data-centric tasks in the background.

Where do you see the greatest opportunities for organizations to elevate their governance for documents and records?

Regulations and laws that affect the retention, protection, and disposal of documents, records, and data continue to evolve. At the same time, the complexity and variety of the content that organizations produce and receive continue to grow—especially with the rapid adoption of video and audio meeting platforms since 2020. Organizations can elevate their governance game by focusing on technology and teamwork. Technology can enable automated categorization and better use of metadata to describe and organize content. At the same time, teamwork means better stakeholder alignment among business, legal, compliance, and IT leaders to establish common priorities and policies. Organizations with mature and successful information governance programs have direct alignment with their data governance programs. Often led by a chief data officer, data governance focuses on extracting value and insights from data; information governance focuses on protecting information and reducing the footprint of risky data and documents. Elevated programs find the balance between the two.

Watch our webinar with Cheryl now.

Watch

