

Sharepoint Alternatives

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Harnessing the output of knowledge workers can be challenging

Content and Document Management Issues Percolate at Many Organizations

One of the quickest productivity wins for CIOs is to adopt a central place to store documents and information, and Microsoft's Sharepoint is often the first solution that comes to mind. Sharepoint is a powerful off-the-shelf offering especially for office collaboration purposes, but of course in the end, business requirements are unique from organization to organization.

What is Enterprise Content Management?

Enterprise content management (ECM) is the manifestation of a vision into a framework for implementing a broad range of content management technologies. The goal is to extract higher value from disparate content formats throughout an enterprise.

ECM implies the acquisition and management of both structured and unstructured content that is dispersed across a number of different repositories, often described as "information silos". The technology is typically capable of managing structured content, unstructured content, email, images, raw print data, and other digital assets.

Who is using ECM?

Organizations seeking to address all of the problem areas related to the use and preservation of information within their organization, in all of its forms, are turning to ECM. And the solutions they look for are ones that concentrate on providing in-house information, usually using internet technologies.

Increasingly ECM solutions are being sought to manage legal compliance with regards to privacy, content

metadata, and records management. Another important consideration is the move towards service orientation — the ability to manage information without regard to the source or the required use. The advantage is that for any given context, one general 'source of truth' is available, avoiding redundant, expensive and difficult to maintain parallel functions.

According to a 2007 report, Forrester indicates that over 90% of the Fortune 1000 have at least one type of enterprise content management (ECM) system, less than 10% of the staff in most of these companies utilize what is in place. This white paper examines the weaknesses of an all-Sharepoint approach, and looks at two alternatives that address strategic gaps. [<http://www.oracle.com/corporate/analyst/reports/infrastructure/ocs/forrester-ecm-q42007.pdf>]

The three solutions examined here are in wide use by small- to medium size commercial, government, non-profit and educational organizations. All three emphasize secure and public access to documents and other content, presentation via the web, and some level of workflow, versioning.

When evaluating ROI and cost control, most organizations consider the opportunity to implement open source alternative, and enjoy the related reduction in costs. Alfresco is a general purpose content repository with content management services. It can be used to manage all your business documents and transform them in web-ready formats (HTML, PDF) and categorize them linking into overall site navigation and

index pages. Alfresco can also be used to capture HTML pages.

Figure 1, from a Forrester survey report, illustrates ECM as a leading investment goal for many organizations.

The design and structure of portal systems for intranets and extranets is fundamentally changing, as organizations move away from traditionally managed in "verticals" by department or business areas, to a more cohesive enterprise approach. Sharepoint is a collection of Microsoft products and software components that include Internet Explorer based collaboration functions, process management modules, search and a document-management platform.

While marrying content management with social media and web 2.0 is hardly revolutionary — nowadays, it's more about execution than the idea itself. Workbench is a content and document management tool that leverages the social collaboration paradigm to make data more relevant to knowledge workers. Workbench combines project, content, and task management with a personalization engine. Through this next-generation family of data controls Workbench enables users to manipulate data from its own internal repository or external sources (such as any JDBC source) without coding.

The differences between these three may not seem obvious at first, but the most obvious is that Workbench is a true enterprise content management system with built-in workflow and metadata management features married to recommendation algorithms and social collaboration. Unlike Sharepoint or Alfresco, which are primarily document management systems with limited web functionality, Workbench includes additional modules for project, asset and training management. The product's public web display handles CSS and HTML with aplomb, rendering web content accurately in any modern browser. Its emphasis on through-the-browser interaction makes Workbench ideal for intranets and extranets.

Workbench can be customized and extended to meet the specific needs of an organization in terms of site structure, content types, workflow rules, integration

Top 10 Roundup — Issues Impacting Document and Content Management

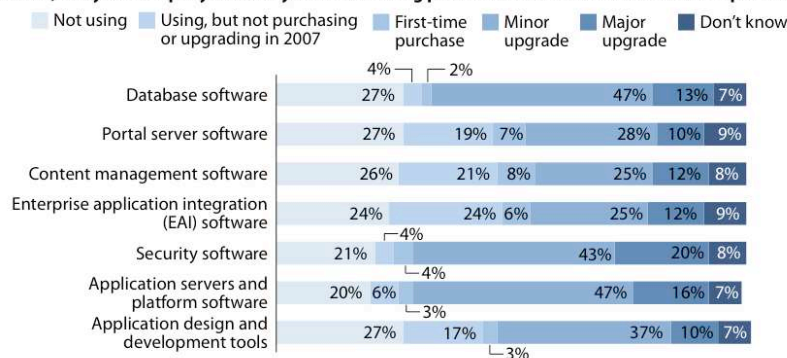
Pam Doyle's (a member of Fujitsu's imaging group and ECM trainer) presentation at an AIIM conference (in Chicago, October 2008) contained some "fast facts" about document management. These are reminders of ECM value, particularly relevant given the current tightening of IT resources:

1. Companies spend \$20 in labor to file a document, \$120 in labor to find a misfiled document, and \$220 in labor to reproduce a lost document.
2. Seven-and-a-half percent of all documents get lost; 3 percent of the remainder get misfiled.
3. Professionals spend 5 – 15 percent of their time reading information, but up to 50 percent looking for it.
4. The average document photocopied 19 times.
5. There are over 4 trillion paper documents in the U.S. alone and they are growing at a rate of 22% per year (PricewaterhouseCoopers).
6. Corporate users received an average of 18 megabytes (MB) of e-mail per day in 2007; E-mail is expected to grow to over 28 MB per day by 2011.
7. Users send and receive an average of 133 e-mail messages per day (Radicati Group).
8. A single FAX machine costs \$6,200 per year (Captaris); the average time to manually FAX a document is 8 minutes.
9. The average cost to send a package via courier service is between \$8 and \$15.
10. The cost of office space has increased 19% (Office Space Across the World 2008).

http://aiim.typepad.com/aiim_blog/2008/10/10-fast-facts-a.html

Figure 1 ECM Leads New Software Infrastructure Investment Purchases

"In 2007, will your company make any of the following platform and infrastructure software purchases?"



Base: 712 IT decision-makers at North American and European enterprises (percentages may not total 100 because of rounding)

Source: Forrester's Business Technographics® September 2006 North American And European Enterprise Software Survey

with project and asset management, issues and training. The other two do not offer the same level of flexibility.

Because they are built with Java, Workbench and Alfresco are very secure, which is a reason why many switch from Sharepoint.

Alfresco offers a 100% open source version; Workbench utilizes three separate open source initiatives, and both are based on open standards. Workbench does not require purchasing a per-server license to get commercial support, as is the case with Alfresco or Sharepoint.

On the Coattails of Office, Sharepoint Makes Inroads

Sharepoint is aimed at document and content management, lists management, calendar of events, and integrated search capabilities. In a Microsoft-centric environment, Sharepoint can be an effective first step towards centralized content management.

The question one might ask however is, why would anyone want to do use an alternative to SharePoint?

Users express concerns around cost and complexity of deployment, which in the current economic environment presents significant risks. Whether it is Sharepoint Server 2003 (WSS) or SharePoint Server 2007 (MOSS), the costs and complexities of Sharepoint are simply too much for most small and mid sized customers. It requires expensive hardware, multiple SharePoint Server licenses, and "Sharepoint experts" to install and maintain. Costs often run into tens of thousands of dollars, and implementation runs into months.

Sharepoint is not an enterprise content management system. SharePoint is a process-based collaborative environment to create and manage documents and other content. Files are replicated across the file system, and synchronization for version management is relied upon. Many of SharePoint implementations tend to be siloed and maintained at the department level. For an organization who needs to be aware of what is happening with their information for regulatory compliance reasons, or for those who just need better access to all

their data, Sharepoint can be problematic.

Sharepoint also offers a 'Windows Explorer' experience, using WebDAV. But this file system approach is inherently not scalable, injects additional maintenance issues regarding Windows Server administration, duplication of files, and of course opens another avenue for security breach.

"Workbench was built...from

the ground up as a social

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knowledge workers.... Its unique

Personalization Engine has its

origins in the dot-com era..."

When talking about enterprise content management (ECM), we rely on a common definition offered by the not-for-profit community that provides education, research and best practices in this space (<http://www.aiim.org>):

".... the strategies, methods and tools used to capture, store, manage, preserve and deliver information in support of business processes".

I. What is Sharepoint's role in ECM?

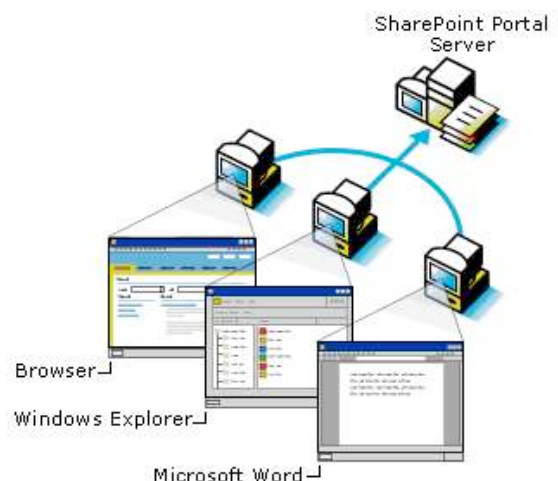
Most organizations own Sharepoint through an existing licensing vehicle like an Enterprise Agreement with Microsoft, often described as, "we already own Sharepoint, so why not use it". And many of these same organizations also own other content management products (Documentum being the usual high-priced commercial off-the-shelf product in the ECM space).

But larger organizations are struggling with real or perceived scalability challenges surrounding Sharepoint. Often times, there is a global aspect to an implementation, performance limitations related to content database sizes, and site collection limits within a SharePoint applications. Microsoft doesn't advertise, but there is plenty of information available about these limitations (for example, <http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/cc262787.aspx>).

Sharepoint falls short for public-facing website publishing due to a lack of user-friendly, AJAX-driven contribution interfaces or unstructured content capabilities that many are embracing (wikis, for example).

In the end, a document or content management system may not be what an organization is truly seeking. Often time, the real goal is a large-scale knowledge management tool, one that leverages the expertise of the individuals in the organization, or stakeholders in communities outside the firewall. Workbench customers report that buying the service or enterprise appliance for documents and content management was a good first step, but that the real value goes beyond ease of installation and use, personalized support, and relatively inexpensive cost. Workbench's strength goes beyond ECM to empower average staff to publish content for internal knowledge systems, and bring together people and ideas autonomously.

Often a Sharepoint deployment spread like a virus within departments or sub-units because a corporate installation



budget impact is concealed within the larger project's bottom line — just another cost subsumed into IT overhead.

II. Gaps in an All-Sharepoint Approach

Avoid vendor lock-in for risk-mitigation. Sharepoint denies the organization flexibility and choice of a standards-based solution that can run on any platform without vendor lock-in. Java-based solutions are aimed squarely at this weakness. Architectural components of Sharepoint contribute to this vulnerability, as the interconnect issue highlights.

Ease of use. Naturally, Sharepoint in turn follows the “Microsoft centric” strategy for all supported software — full functionality is only available if using Microsoft products for all associated programs (OS, Office suites and browser). Although Sharepoint can be used in the browser, ActiveX and other IE-specific rendering issues can make alternative browser clients useless.

Cost is often a factor. Sharepoint can have a low entry cost as a workgroup solution, but it uses Microsoft's standard licensing model; for more than a few dozen users, the on-going costs can run upwards of tens of thousands of dollars annually, or closer to a million in a large scale environment. Sharepoint requires an expensive per-server and per-user licensing scheme.

Licensing can be complex with Sharepoint, and costs quickly escalate. Sharepoint Server requires separate licenses if you want to use it for both your intranet and internet facing SharePoint portal. Workbench allows both in a single easy solution — create customer portals, partner portals, sales team portals and any other portal that will help improve your productivity.

Deployment. Complexity of deployment means longer lead times and higher up-front costs. deployment scaling is limited on several fronts. Data stored in the back-end MSSQLserver database runs into the BLOB limitations. the issue of file size limits are a result of a BLOB size limitation in MSSQLServer. Unfortunately, Sharepoint is only compatible with MSSQLServer, so one

can't simply use another database platform to avoid the limit. Synchronizing content across file systems is impractical and introduces the possibility of errors.

Customization. One drawback of configuring Sharepoint is the overkill of options presented during set-up. A drawback of Sharepoint's versioning is not offering branching. Worse, most version control is only possible for Microsoft Office Documents. Tuning features in Sharepoint can be very extensive. This can offer advantages to an

“Sharepoint is superior for file

sharing when the majority of

documents are Word, Excel or

PowerPoint. Sharepoint

integration with other Microsoft

products is an advantage for

content creators...”

advanced supervisor but for an average user, complexity can be a hinderance.

Other research supports the cautious approach. Forrester says companies that use Sharepoint's tools for building customized intranets, portals, electronic forms, workflows, and dashboards could potentially face management and support issues. "Sharepoint is risky in external site, workplace, and [dashboard](http://www.forrester.com/Research/Document/Excerpt/0,7211,45560,00.html) scenarios because it has gaps that matter for those kinds of applications," Forrester says in the report. [<http://www.forrester.com/Research/Document/Excerpt/0,7211,45560,00.html>]

Sharepoint can vend public sub-pages of different forms (document libraries, wikispaces) by an URL, but with obvious administration challenges.

Scaling is a major challenge with Sharepoint. Many consultants recommend that the number of specifically defined users in a Sharepoint site should not exceed 2,000, or the risk of performance degradation arises.

Alfresco uses a clustering approach for scaling, essentially a group of linked computers working together closely so that in many respects they form a single platform. Workbench relies on in-memory Java data caching and synchronization. Its functionality into multiple web services: Read-Only/Read-Write and Public/private/administrative ones. Workbench also provides separately configurable numbers of instances to match different kinds of load.

Inability to interconnect with non-MS solutions. Sharepoint is a dot-net based solution; MSSQLserver is the only repository supported. With other solutions, the organization can retain full control of their data by storing document and content information in the database of their choice.

Security can be problematic — server side due to platform vulnerabilities, and client-side because of the interdependence on I.E. and Windows. Domain-centric, creates and uses local NTFS permissions, so migrating data between systems is difficult.

The IE limitation means Sharepoint users have to be aware of the vulnerabilities around that platform.

Sharepoint has demonstrated multiple vulnerabilities to SQL injection attacks. Sharepoint uses URLs with the same host name and port number for a web site's primary files and individual users' uploaded files (aka attachments), which allows remote authenticated users to leverage same-origin relationships and conduct cross-site scripting (XSS) attacks by uploading HTML documents.

Alfresco

<http://www.alfresco.com/>

Open source \$0 license. Support up to US\$50,000.

Sharepoint

<http://sharepoint.microsoft.com>

Intranet: \$4,424 - \$57,670

Public website #22,118 - \$40,943

Plus up to US\$75 per user

Workbench

<http://www.bluedog.net>

Between US\$1-US\$25 per user

Alternately, a cross-domain vulnerability exists in XML Core Services that allows remote attackers to obtain sensitive information from another domain and corrupt the session state via HTTP request header fields, as demonstrated by the Transfer-Encoding field, aka "MSXML Header Request Vulnerability."

Finally, in many situations, Sharepoint and alternative ECMs can coexist. Alfresco provides a means so that Microsoft Office can seamlessly access the repository in the same way that it works with Microsoft Sharepoint Server. This could mean significant savings for many enterprises by leaving the existing Sharepoint deployment in place, but deploying alternatives for additional functionality and capacity.

III. Two Java-Based Alternatives

These two solutions provide interoperability with, and be complementary to Microsoft Sharepoint. In recent years, Workbench, and, since its introduction to the marketplace, Alfresco, have been replaced products like Sharepoint, Red Dot, Documentum and Vignette for systems such as departmental intranets, document management systems and public websites for organizations such as NIH, DOJ, and other agencies. Besides cost, the appeal stems largely from the ease by which non-technical end-users manage documents and web content efficiently.

Alfresco was developed by several of the original Document designers who recognized that the COTS product's goal of being everything to everyone resulted in an overly complex, expensive and inflexible value proposition. Alfresco comes in two flavors — a free open-source version, but never officially stable, and a commercially proprietary licensed one. Alfresco includes a content repository, an out-of-the-box web portal framework for managing and using standard portal content, file system compatibility on Microsoft Windows, a web content management system capable of virtualizing web apps and static sites via Apache Tomcat, Lucene indexing,

and jBPM workflow. The Alfresco system is developed using Java technology.

Workbench was built in the early part of the decade from the ground up as a social collaboration solution for knowledge workers, and its roots show in how the product merges document and content management with projects, team spaces, event scheduling, and workflow.

“As a Java-based solution,

Alfresco emphasizes the

importance of cross platform

compatibility...”

Its unique Personalization Engine has its origins in the dot-com era, repurposed to leverage the dynamic relationship between what people know, and what they share with each other. An entirely browser-based three tier architecture means no file system interaction occurs, a significant distinction from the Alfresco and Sharepoint.

Both Alfresco and Workbench use the Lucene search/indexing engine and Java business process management tools. Workbench also uses Java Messaging Service as part of its service oriented architecture, another significant distinction from Alfresco and Sharepoint.

Alfresco — open source with lots of options

The core of Alfresco centers on creating a “space” as a container and adding content into the space, a satisfying experience as content and document management tool. As a Java-based solution, Alfresco emphasizes the importance of cross platform compatibility by supporting MS Windows, Mac OS X, Solaris and Linux.

Alfresco and Workbench offer simple development entirely through the web interface. Rich media is a seamless part of the Alfresco and Workbench experience, and Workbench supports

podcasting as well as media asset management.

Themes do not require platform-specific knowledge. Alfresco enables basic user interface modifications that don't require knowledge of the underlying code (Java for Alfresco and Workbench, .NET and .ASP for Sharepoint). Workbench takes this further — extensive skinning is possible with conventional knowledge of HTML and CSS, and the results work in any browser.

Alfresco carries Sharepoint's folder model as a primary navigation tool. Workbench provides multiple views into content; all three platforms expose content via search. Only Workbench offers a recommendation widget that uses a Personalization Engine to increase the relevancy of browsable content.

With Alfresco, searching, grouping/batching operations for content are accessible to everyone. Workbench goes one better, with its Collections widget. Like Alfresco and unlike Sharepoint, Workbench integrates federated search via a web services interface.

Alfresco offers a streamlined, unified install experience on all platforms, although customization of business logic requires knowledge and expertise in Java. Of course, Sharepoint customization ‘under the hood’ is very difficult, and dot-net expertise is in far shorter supply than Java developers.

An unlikely way to be susceptible to SQL injection attacks with Alfresco is if code is not using prepared statements or if the JDBC driver is not preparing SQL submits or escaping errors properly — likely to occur only with third-party code.

Alfresco and Workbench lower migration barriers from other systems via flexible import utilities. Sharepoint generally focuses on Office file formats. Both alternate platforms rely on a robust XML export/import strategy that sticks to open standards.

Java developers in general, and the open source community supporting Alfresco in particular, have an increased focus on a culture of systematic performance tuning. Workbench, in contrast, is developed and maintained by a dedicated team focused on one product.



DO YOU REALLY NEED ECM, OR KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT?

Workbench — best-of-breed technology, ease of use

The developers at Bluedog have spent the last eight years crafting a Java-based alternative to Microsoft's Sharepoint platform/ Workbench leverages several open source components, wedded to high level personalization algorithms and a workflow engine for document collaboration and management. Available as a subscription-based software-as-a-service or on a standalone Unix-based appliance, Workbench joins Alfresco as a lower-cost offering, with the additional benefit offered by the extensibility of its services-oriented architecture.

Similar to Alfresco, Workbench is a Java-based solution that leverages cross platform compatibility with MS Windows, Mac OS X, Solaris and Linux.

But Workbench was designed from the ground up to enable organizations of any size to quickly deploy an easy to use a SharePoint-like portal server that seamlessly connects users, teams, and information so that people can take advantage of relevant information across business processes. But with enhanced functionality. Social collaboration is the use of technology to support sharing of information and enabling sharing through social connections and to tap into the value of the "Wisdom of Crowds", a concept made famous by James Surowiecki in 2004 to explain how many people are smarter than individual experts. Social collaboration in Workbench is oriented toward people and their informal or formal networks (the extended relationships of individuals) to connect and share knowledge.

Workbench's browser based interface is certified compliant with Section 508 of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and works with Internet Explorer, Firefox and Safari. Sharepoint in turn follows a "Microsoft centric" strategy for all supported software. Ease

of use is central to the web-two-oh design of Workbench. For example, uploading a document in Workbench only takes one click.

Working together on documents also suits casual, less advanced or infrequent users. Functionality such as locking, version control and adding comments are all easy to use, with Ajax interface elements, on-screen help, and simple interface cues to lessen training. The ability to compare versions of content in the browser, and see comments and forum discussions along side any kind of web content means users are more likely to make use of these advanced features without turning to administrators for help.

Further, Workbench engenders user interactivity through its novel social collaboration toolset. For any organization seeking an enterprise social networking system, Workbench is the only one of these three products to provide a full set of collaboration tools that leverage the documents and content stored in the repository, and facilitates interaction among users, within the firewall or outside the organization. Workbench avoids making things too generic. otherwise, it becomes difficult for people to recognize patterns and makes it harder for the tool guide them in what they want to do. Workbench achieves a simply data model and a flexible user interface with a unified back-end for central application structures that make it easier to maintain and is well-tested, performance-oriented and maintained.

In Workbench, setting up a new project environment takes only a minute, and desired interface customization and functionality can be set in real time with little additional effort. This ease of setting up a project, community or team environment is the result of pre-configured templates and Widgets — the dynamic building blocks analogous to portlets.

To invite members in Workbench, one only needs a name and e-mail. Invited members get an e-mail with a link to activate their account and choose their personal settings (preferred language, time zone, affiliated organization, etc.). Of course, connectivity to Active Directory or other LDAP means members within the organization already have access with the same login and password they use elsewhere inside the network.

The reverse proxy and integration with SSL provided with Workbench means secure extranet access is available out-of-the-box. Workbench differs from Sharepoint by presenting information to the public that is not part of the authenticated environment. Documents stored in Workbench's repository (or other sources, linked via web service or JDBC) can be accessed from portals and internet sites through easy to use 'file links' or custom landing pages. One can mix secured content with public content on a page — the granular security model means a user only sees the objects he/she is entitled to.

Workbench delivers explicit archiving functionality — only an administrator may truly delete content. The audit feature reveals all activity and modification on an object, be it a document, web content, project, event or other. Other features include:

- ◆ Listserve and integrated email traffic directly into the knowledge base
- ◆ Meta data and tagging
- ◆ Personalization engine
- ◆ Cross-object workflow and business rules
- ◆ Knowledge base model
- ◆ Improved tabular data store and on-line forms via the Multi Utilities Table module.

One of the striking advantages Workbench as an alternative to Sharepoint is the Workbench iPhone application, which enables users to stay

in touch with Workspace, communities, and team members at any time without opening a browser. Of course, Alfresco and Sharepoint could be accessed via a mobile web browser, if access is available outside the firewall. Workbench provides notifications via SMS, to external email addresses, and securely through its iPhone application.

Of course, Workbench is offered in two models — the enterprise appliance version, which is a turn-key installation, and the software-as-a-service (SAAS) offering. Workbench SAAS has all the features of an ECM and robust social collaboration tools, packaged in an easy to use, online solution. There is no hardware to install, no software to download, no experts to hire. Just sign up online and get started.

IV. Choose the Right Tool for the Job

While Sharepoint offers a great deal of functionality, and is often the right choice for a Microsoft-centric small or medium size organization or department within a larger unit, other options can be more compelling based on unique business requirements. Sharepoint's price tag for larger deployments escalates quickly, and Sharepoint grows difficult to manage when faced with enterprise requirements (number of users, scaling, reliability). Security, deployment, administration and ease of use can also cause consternation. Sharepoint locks its users into Microsoft on all levels — server and client, database, operating system and of course, Office products. In an all-Windows environment, Sharepoint's desktop integration remains strong.

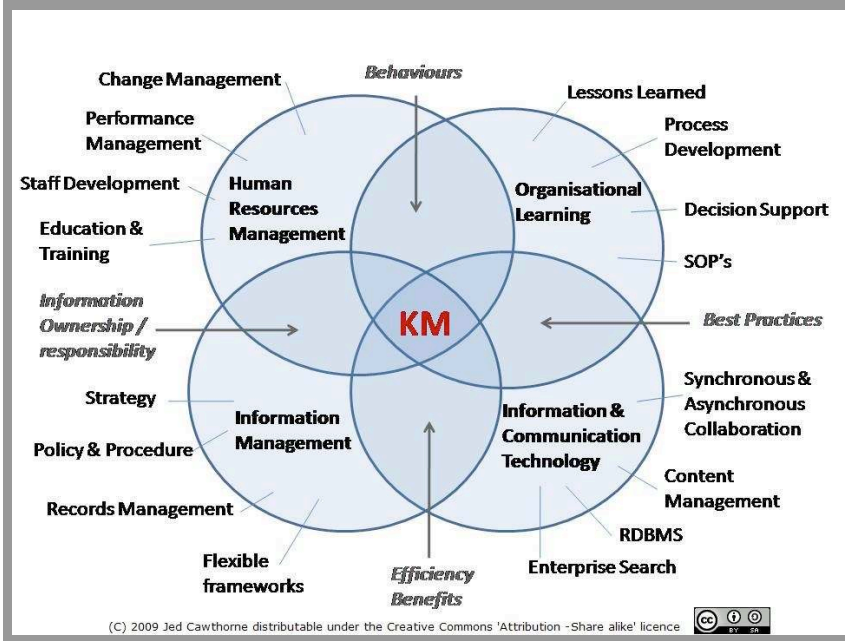
Microsoft is leveraging its channel to co-opt institutions into buying proprietary Sharepoint licenses. Every feature is done as well as or better by, open standard compliant, often open source, products outside the Redmond hegemony. In the public sector and the non-profit worlds, Microsoft's attempt to box-up the Internet as its done with the Office suite is intended to introduce the company's proprietary business model with all the encumbered licensing, lock-in and forced upgrades.

Managing What Your People Know Keeps Eyes on the Ball

Many times, an ECM is sought to manage an organization's knowledge assets, any information, data, or strategic learning content saved in a form that makes it accessible and usable. The current business climate will impact knowledge workers — reductions in work force, budget constraints, doing more with less. Yet the demand for managing and delivering knowledge services will increase in intensity.

Attempts to use an ECM to converge information tools, knowledge management, and organizational learning frequently fall flat. Some positive results occur when a portal is used as the prism through which some aspects of organizational knowledge may be accessed.

Many organizations are realizing they need both ECM and KM systems: the former to input, validate, and archive content, and; the latter for retrieval or manipulation to enable multiple end-user views and personalization.



One Workbench customer summed up her buying decision: "Workbench is an excellent choice for any organization that need to manage the increasing volume of business data. I see it becoming increasingly valuable to enterprise-level organizations. Workbench's very low initial acquisition costs and highly transparent deployment — combined of course with BlueDog's outstanding technical capabilities — makes it a very attractive alternative to the often

overweight and expensive proprietary alternatives". — Cheri Collins, MMRS Program, U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services

The Java alternatives, particularly Workbench, come out ahead as the best choice for a broad set of needs. The report team has found Workbench is significantly better on accessibility, and it equals Alfresco in standards compliance.

Workbench is easier to customize and access to the source code, somewhat

Comparing Features	Alfresco	Sharepoint	Workbench
Collaboration	Store and share documents online. Collaborate with colleagues, customers and partners. Designed to enable collaboration across virtual teams featuring information capturing, sharing and retrieval capabilities	Store and share documents online. Collaborate with colleagues, customers and partners. Sharepoint packages a few tools as it's collaboration solution: discussion boards, wiki pages, project task lists. Most deployments primarily based on using Sharepoint as a document library and storage solution, with little to no workflows built around it.	Store and share documents online. Collaborate with colleagues, customers and partners. Create team-based community pages with mix of dynamically generated and selectable content. As you work on different projects you can easily link documents, tasks, events, contacts and even email records to create a virtual blueprint of all pieces and parts that are relevant to a project, event or customer. 
Content and Document Management	Repository looks the same as a shared drive. So out-of-the box use authoring common tools, from Microsoft Office to Open Office, Dreamweaver or AutoCAD, with no desktop installation or retraining.	ActiveX required. Lacks true document management capabilities. Many organizations use Sharepoint as a way of improving on existing File Shares (e.g. G: or P: drive) for managing their documents and files. This approach of reproducing existing File Share folders with Sharepoint folders leads to frustrations. The names of folders cannot be used to refine a search. In order to take advantage of SharePoint's capabilities a preferable approach is to make use of meta-data columns, which are defined at the document library (rather than folder) level. Does not support single unique document ID for comprehensive document management. Lack of advanced workflow.	Unique content types. Archetypes generated from UML models to handle special use-cases. The need for questionnaires, surveys, inventories, calendars, wikis, workgroups, and other features are solved with the product "off-the-shelf." Document sharing. Getting the traditional webmaster out of the way so site owners can upload their own content using their own folder hierarchy. Customizable workflow. Special roles for individuals and groups, perhaps for just a particular subset of the portal.
Deployment and Configuration	For installation, at least three different files for download, depending on what the target environment is like. Deployment is then used to push approved content out to a "production" environment of some kind, which is how that blessed content is delivered to the intended audience. Deploys in as little as one hour.	Installation varies depending on external vs. internal users, centralized vs replicated content, and a host of other factors. Weak admin tools. requires Windows Services and understanding the relationship between platform and Sharepoint Portal Server Deployments may take weeks or months of consulting time.	With the online central repository, easily share across teams, projects, or with customers. Post announcements, documents, calendar events, and tasks so everyone is well informed. Deployment is then used to push approved content out to a "production" environment of some kind, which is how that blessed content is delivered to the intended audience. deploys in as little as three minutes.
Integration with Office	Flash document viewer removes the compatibility problems of users working with different versions of office productivity suites. Alfresco supports the Sharepoint protocol that enables the use of document workspaces within an Office application (like the Word screenshot above). The protocol is officially called "Document Workspace Web Service Protocol Specification"	Sharepoint also integrates with other Microsoft Office products using network protocols that enable Office users to interact with SharePoint without having to leave the application and use a web browser. Some of these include: Opening files directly from an Office application like Word, Excel, or PowerPoint. In this case the application works directly with files stored in SharePoint. 	Users download a file to local disk before it is opened by an Office application and then sends it back to the server when the Office application closes.
End-user Interface	Entirely browser based, works with any modern browser. If you're changing the logo or basic colors you're fine. If you want to create a whole new interface, you will find it a challenge.	Some browser based interaction, works best with I.E. Windows client required for full usability. ActiveX required. SharePoint Designer is provided as a GUI based tool for creating new themes as well. Template system is significantly simpler	Fully language-localized. Authors can provide multi-lingual content. Fully compliant with The U.S. Section 508 of the ADA and WC3 WAI. Entirely browser based, works with any modern browser. Supports customization at multiple levels through separation of layout, look and feel, and templates 
Extranet	Multi-site management, XML authoring via XForms, Multi-channel output, Site snapshotting and rollback. Support for JSP templating, .NET, HTML-based, script-based sites (PHP) on a single server, and integrated multi-server deployment.	Creating and customizing SharePoint sites with predefined templates and Web Parts Personalizing a SharePoint site with layout modifications, themes, and alerts. Separate installation recommended for DMZ. License for internet site expensive.	Flexible theming. The ability to skin a site quickly to either the corporate standard or a particular project's own brand. Unlimited Portals and Extranets. Brand your portals to protect and promote your organization image. Very secure; uses reverse proxy.
Personalization	Users can pick content manually to display. Lacks portal personalization.	Manually pick content that is of interest. Lacks portal personalization.	Recommendations based on metadata, personal profiles, community ratings and Personalization Engine. User personalization built in.
Platform Security	If Unix-based, robust.	Very weak. Windows, ActiveX and IE vulnerabilities. 	Robust.

Comparing Features	Alfresco	Sharepoint	Workbench
Total Cost of Ownership	Support and customization costs tend to run in the thousands. Licensing can be free (open source) but the supported version (enterprise) is per cpu. Support contracts run around \$10-20,000 per cpu.	Pricing starts at about \$5000 but for intranet cost is per named user at about \$75-94 a user. 200 users would cost about \$20,000. Recurring license cost unknown, but likely in the thousands.	Can run as low as \$1-5 per user. Annual maintenance from U\$0 to \$12,400. 
Platforms	Windows, Solaris, Linux, OS X 	Windows only	Windows, Solaris, Linux, OS X
Support for open standards	Lots. JBoss platform is open source and designed to be expanded with modules and portlets 	dependent on Windows platform, .Net and ASP. No out-of-box support for JSR-168. WRSP or other web services. 	Lots — particularly in the web services realm. SOAP/WSDL web services XML parsing via SAX JINDI, JDBC and ODBC XHTML, CSS
Tasks, Lists, Surveys, Ad hoc Databases, Notifications	Full featured and robust document management system with file locking, version control, commenting, auditing.	Sharepoint does a poor job in capturing the meta-data related to Outlook email messages, and requires users to manually copy messages from Outlook. Other mail clients are not supported.	Online forms. Forms from ad hoc databases and the ability to permit anonymous submission of completed forms, for example, workshop registration or non-citizen visit request. Provides a common framework for incorporating social media features, community building and e-mail traffic into websites. Email is automatically harvested from watched mail boxes, parsed based on business rules, and can trigger work flows. Full featured and robust document management system with file locking, version control, commenting, auditing and more.
Other Features	• Customizable Page Components • Site Finder: Search for Public sites • Site Members: Managed, email based, invite process for existing users or new (non-registered) users to join site; Automatic registration for new users; • Manage site invites pending, accepted, and cancel invites • Site Profile: Site metadata including name and description • Favorite Sites: User managed lists of favorite sites for quick access	Full featured and robust document management system with file locking, version control, commenting, auditing. • Debugger • Log Viewer: viewing Logging Service within Central Admin • Print List • Toolbar Manager: selectively show and hide menu items on the standard list/library toolbar • Window Links: control all aspects of opening the link in a new window	Full learning management to organize curriculum, courses (online and off line), computer-based training. Personalized training based on an organization's particular needs, and focus on the particular high-use modules.  Online tutorials, onscreen help, and extensive in-system documentation. activity feeds, which can keep team members updated on what is changing in a project, including content or team members
User Management and Security	Users: Active Directory or other LDAP	Users: Via domain and Active Directory	Users: Active Directory, OpenLDAP or other . Assign strict read, write and deletion rights to your users and data. Only authorized users have permission to access your files. Plus, Workbench uses 128-bit encryption to protect files during transfer.
Scaling		Doesn't scale well beyond 75 concurrent users.	Supports tens of thousands of concurrent users.
Search	Alfresco's search is powered by the open source search engine Lucene and Open Office, which is able to extract text from many file formats and make them available to the Lucene search engine. Support for Microsoft Office and PDF file formats is strong.	Has a decent Search engine, but organizations looking to use it for large-scale document management find that the out-of-the-box interface leaves a lot to be desired.	Automatic indexing/full-site search. Recommendation engine matches content to users based on ontologies, behavior patterns, and personal preference. uses Lucene engine. Federated search via web services, including access to deep web (via JDBC). Enterprise level search engine with relevance ranking, synonyms, and federation model. Out of the box search can index other content, etc. and with plugins through third party.
Support	Limited, but in some markets quite good. Look for open-source experts as Alfresco has strong ties to the open source community. The software itself is Java based, so there are plenty of developers available. But the support contract costs are pricy. 	A lack of application life cycle management tools; incomplete application backup and restoration tools, "primitive" state of enterprise data integration; and the dearth of skilled Sharepoint developers and administrators. As one of Microsoft's most successful products, the company has made a commitment to the product, with its standard paid product support.	On-site customized training for hands-on learning.  On-screen context related help. "Hot To" tutorials on-line. The software itself is Java based, so there are plenty of developers available. Support and upgrade included in license.



more than Alfresco and significantly more than Sharepoint. This allows developers to solve problems that are difficult or impossible to solve in the closed source world of Sharepoint.

There are numerous large public Workbench sites, but no similar Sharepoint sites were found by this report team.

Sharepoint is superior for file sharing when the majority of documents are Word, Excel or PowerPoint. Sharepoint integration with other Microsoft products is an advantage for content creators, although Alfresco has demonstrated how open source can leverage existing closed source APIs.

Alternatives such as Alfresco and Workbench offer more intuitive and more efficient collaboration environments. Alfresco and Workbench embrace open standards, and both are Java-based for platform independence. The browser-only interfaces of each ensure flexibility. Sharepoint doesn't focus on web publishing the way these two alternates do; combined with the ability to act as intranet portals, collaborative workspaces, and document management, the alternatives are head-and-shoulders above Sharepoint. Finally, these alternatives are backed by robust developer communities, these two products respond to customer demands in a nimble fashion, and each has a proven track record and high potential, in place of or along side the Sharepoint option.

Not long ago the difference between various content management platforms were distinct: web content management (designed for creating and managing

content on web sites); groupware to manage the creation and distribution of interactive group content; digital asset management (products for controlling the storage and manipulation of images and other digital media); and, document management to track, store, and control business documents.

At its core, an ECM product is designed to control and manage the creation and distribution of all content created by an organization. The author recommends that organizations base their ECM decision making on the 80/20 rule of content requirements. If most essential content is web-based, for example, then a web content management or portal may be the best option. Is the organization most concerned with control and tracking a lot of PDFs, Microsoft Office files and scanned hard-copy documents? Choose a solution with strengths in classic document management.

If an organization is seeking to leverage knowledge workers' output, Workbench may in fact be a good choice. Its intuitive interface allow information to be "virtually" organized through collections and taxonomies while the recommendation engine continually mines and delivers new content as it is generated.

The report team's advice: if one have an immediate need inside the workplace to start even a small site with Workbench, just do it. Don't wait until the entire organization decides to what to use. Launch quickly with Workbench or one of the other solutions to show what it can do.



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Boston with a degree in computer science from Northeastern University. He has been working in software development and consulting for over 17 years. Prior to consulting, David worked at MITRE Corp., Fidelity Investments, Spyglass Inc. (the first commercial browser company licensed as original Internet Explorer to Microsoft) and Progress Software. Besides consulting, he had owned a restaurant in Somerville, Massachusetts, established successful e-commerce web sites and founded a consumer electronics trading business in Thailand. With his solid engineering and business background, David offers a unique perspective on topics of interest to CIOs.

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