

IMPROVING BUSINESS PROCESS AGILITY

Singularity



Achieving Agility

The Role of the Case Management Platform

A new and practical approach to achieving greater agility - the Adaptive Case Management platform - is emerging for organizations that want to escape inertia's grip.



Microsoft® Gold Certified Partner

Singularity is a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner and is focused on providing best-in-class Business Process Agility and Case Management solutions utilizing the Microsoft stack. The TotalAgility product supports the Windows Server 2008 and earlier platforms, and has comprehensive integration into Dynamics® CRM 2011, SharePoint®2010 and Office® 2010 (as well as earlier version of all these products where they still exist on a client's premises). The TotalAgility product runs on Windows®, Vista®, and XP and provides a browser interface which supports all common desktop browsers including Internet Explorer®.

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Executive Summary

Most large corporations are at risk of capture by inertia—the force that holds back progress and often seems to overcome once successful organizations as they grow. The organization captured by inertia is characterized by lumbering, ineffective processes. Even the most successful and effective organizations are subject to some degree of inertia’s dragging effect.

But there is an effective weapon against inertia for organizations that retain their determination to succeed and to be on top of their game: **agility**. Agility is a key attribute of successful public and private organizations in the modern world, and the need to increase agility is a top and urgent priority on most management teams’ agendas.

The challenge for organizations is to embark on a journey that traverses the space from “inert” to “more agile” and to do so continually. A new and practical approach to achieving greater agility—the Adaptive Case Management (ACM) platform—is emerging for organizations that want to escape inertia’s grip. The journey is an evolution and the ACM platform is an essential tool for corporations as they steer their course.



Why Agility Matters

Agility has been thrust more urgently onto “must do” lists everywhere because the challenges organizations face today are more pressing than any they have previously known.

Arguably, the most significant of these challenges is the ever more widespread impact of globalization. The world of competition is increasingly “flat” (Friedman 2006). Competitors can, and do, appear from anywhere. Today’s competitor could be a company from across the world that you have never previously heard of. Competitors, in this sense, include challenges to the way the public sector operates—governments are increasingly outsourcing back office functions to suppliers with facilities in developing nations.

Old barriers that slowed or stopped new competitors from entering a market—such as geographic distance, the quality of communications connections, legislative constraint, or supply-chain frictions—have rapidly disintegrated. The move to a “friction-free” global economy is now well underway. To survive and prosper, all organizations must adapt faster today than ever before.

Companies need to be open to global opportunities, in terms of sourcing raw materials and services and in supplying new markets. Public agencies need to consider radical options to cut costs. Organizations may need to consider the outsourcing of the delivery of back office and core services. They need to see competitors and partners in a new light—a company that may be a competitor in one context, can be a partner in another.

Compounding the globalization effect into a “double whammy” has been the global recession that

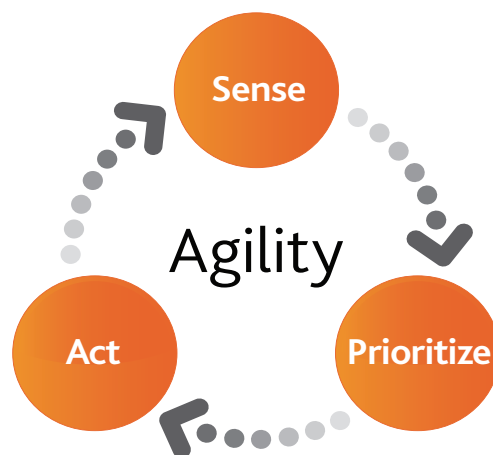
impacted every organization at the end of first decade of the new century. The necessity to become more efficient, more responsive, more attentive, more cost conscious, and to work faster than in the past has become more urgent as a result.

These dynamics contribute to an ever more rapid pace of change in the way all organizations operate. Fast change externally must be matched by fast change internally. Contexts in technology, legislation, knowledge, and innovation are all moving quickly. Only agility enables organizations to respond quickly and positively to a more demanding commercial environment and to higher expectations of personalized service from corporate and individual customers and clients.

What is Agility?

For every organization, we can define organizational agility as follows:

An agile organization is one that can sense opportunity or threat, prioritize its potential responses, and act efficiently and effectively.



An agile organization is like a successful sports team. Consider the excellent basketball player and his winning team. He is continually able to **sense** what is happening, **prioritize** his best next actions, and then **act** effectively. And he does this within a team and in a highly constrained time frame. In the NBA, each team has twenty-eight seconds to make its play and score. Every player must sense, prioritize, and act quickly for the team to win. An agile organization behaves in this fashion. Let’s further examine this sensing, prioritizing, and acting.

Sensing

An agile organization excels at recognizing opportunities and threats. It must be aware not merely of its own organization, but also of its operating environment. It needs to understand its customers' demands and how these change; its competitors' capabilities and how these change; and the macroeconomic environment and how this affects its operation and those of its customers and competitors. Its own performance capability needs to be transparent within the organization, enabling it to respond to changing external realities.

Prioritizing

An agile organization has a clear purpose, which is clearly articulated and widely and deeply understood by its people. The organization's destination is known. It ensures that the organization's entire population is aware of corporate priorities at the enterprise, department, function, and individual levels. It has a set of goals that are coherent and connected, and the achievement of these goals is pursued in a joined-up fashion across the business. The joined-up goals of the organization are used by its people to make the best choice of action in any circumstance.

Acting

Agility culminates in people taking appropriate, timely action. In an agile organization, people execute existing business processes exceptionally well, and crucially, they also adapt those processes quickly as business needs change.

Few organizations excel at sensing, prioritizing, and acting. Even fewer excel at all three at the same time. Those that do are the successful agile organizations.

Take a few moments to answer the following two simple questions and write down your answers in Table 1.

- How agile is your organization today?
- How agile must your organization be in twelve months' time?

	Agility Today (Scale 1:10)	Agility Needed One Year From Today (Scale 1:10)
Sensing	?	?
Prioritizing	?	?
Acting	?	?

Table 1: Agility Assessment and 12-Month Goal for Your Organization

Now take some time to respond to this question: Do you have a plan and the right tools in place to ensure that your organization will achieve the agility goal you set for it in Table 1 for twelve months from now? Let's discuss the relevance of case management to agility and then consider the case management platform your organization will require for its agile journey.

Agility and Case Management

The need for agility when placed in competition with the dragging, constraining effect of legacy structures results in tension. Frequently, this tension is uncreative. We are all familiar with cultures where statements such as "we can't do it that way" and "it would be too hard to change our process to allow for that" are commonplace. Rather than being a creative tension that inspires innovation and drives continual improvement, too often the tension is uncreative, resulting in entrenched and ineffective processes, many unmet customer needs, and widespread failure to exploit opportunities for improvement.

While this uncreative tension is widespread in organizations, it is perhaps most acutely felt in the detailed workings of the relationship between the organization and its customers. It is usually the customer who suffers first. Eventually, the organization that cannot exploit this tension positively suffers also.

At the core of this tension, we find knowledge work in which customer and client interactions (such as complaints, orders, claims, appeals, service requests, incident reports, and investigations) are received, analyzed, and responded to; or, from our new agile perspective they are sensed, prioritized, and acted upon. When this tension occurs in the midst of the case management process, it has the potential to be "creative tension" or "uncreative tension." An agile organization has the capability to make the tension creative and to benefit from it.

This knowledge work is typically both central to an organization's operations, and also, paradoxically, the reason it is unable to operate more dynamically. The knowledge work juxtaposes set procedures (e.g., the "this is how we operate around here" rules in a customer complaints process) with a seemingly limitless range of potential variations in emerging facts for any particular case. The result is frequently very expensive for organizations to deal with, and for many, it presents an insurmountable challenge.

When a customer complaint, for example, presents a challenge to an organization's set procedures, the result can be an ineffective response that leaves the customer unhappy and frustrated. The organization fails to satisfactorily meet customer demands, as a direct result of its inflexibility.

Some inflexibility is deliberate—the result of conscious policy choices by the company. But much, perhaps most, inflexibility is not the result of choice by the organization, rather it is the result of a failure to adopt ways of working that enable the organization to be more responsive. The organization lacks agility.

As if this were not bad enough, there is frequently also a lost opportunity to spot a potential improvement that if implemented would not only make a particular customer happy, but would improve customer service (or case management) more generally. Yet it is rare for an organization to be equipped with case management practices that are capable of helping the organization learn.

Opportunities to improve based on the lessons that emerge from cases occur every day, in every organization, in multiple contexts—customer service, sales, product development, investigations, and many more not limited to "customer-facing" processes. Yet the means to take advantage of this creative tension is lacking or weak in most organizations. The ability to sense, prioritize, and act is low, and as a result, case management is often very poor.

Through agility, knowledge work corporations can overtake their competitors and public bodies can better serve their citizens by responding more quickly and more appropriately, generating higher customer satisfaction, and being more efficient.

The agile organization is one that, like the excellent basketball team, **senses** what to do, **prioritizes** its options, and then **acts** appropriately, player by player. The organization might be pursuing a new sales opportunity, bringing a new client onboard, responding to a customer complaint, or processing an insurance claim. Whatever the particular situation, organizations that are agile in their knowledge work win more new deals, keep more customers happy, operate less wastefully, and spot more opportunities for improvement.

I hear an objection rising in the minds of the skeptics among you: Surely all the basketball team (or organization) needs to do is prepare a very thorough playbook. The team should figure out all the right plays to make and all the situations that such a play should be used in. The players need to sense the situation, prioritize their options, and make the right play at the time in accordance with the playbook. Once the playbook is finished (correctly), it can be set in stone, right?

Really? What about the competitor? Was there ever a winning team that had the game all figured out ahead of time and didn't have to adapt midgame? I don't think so. Yes, good teams revise their playbook after each game, and this intergame learning is important. But they also, crucially, adapt their strategy in the midst of a game. It is this all-around agility—in the midst of the game, as well as between games—that distinguishes the winners. For the knowledge worker, the playbook, if there is one, is at best a guidebook—the plays are adapted to what is occurring in the midst of the action.



What is Case Management?

Knowledge work is common in almost every type of organization. A small selection of examples of knowledge work by organization type is shown in Table 2.

Organization Type	Knowledge Work
Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Licensing and permits management • Freedom of Information Act requests • Planning applications • Industrial health and safety enforcement • Immigration applications • Regulatory monitoring
Law Enforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Firearms licensing • Investigations • Forensics management
Financial Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate customer onboarding • Regulatory compliance management • Insurance claim processing • Trade settlement exception management
Telecommunications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer provisioning • Fault reporting and resolution • Billing issue resolution • Order processing

Table 2: Knowledge Work by Organization Type

There is knowledge work even in something that might seem substantially automated, such as customer provisioning in the telecommunications industry. Have you ever called to find out what happened to that extra broadband line you needed? To query your bill? To ask for digital TV? Or to get extra minutes on your kid's cell phone this month?

Some knowledge work, such as investigation work in law enforcement or compliance organizations, is highly unpredictable. While in other knowledge work, such as Freedom of Information (Fol) Act requests, that unpredictable work is constrained by clear procedures, policies, and regulations to be followed. Knowledge work exists in almost every organization.

Why not take a few minutes and write a list of processes in your organization that are similar in character to the examples above.

Knowledge work always requires some degree of agility. Organizations need to enable their knowledge workers to adapt what they do as they

deal with cases: sensing, to understand clearly the circumstances of each case; prioritizing, to ensure that the case management choices fit with organizational objectives and the best means of resolving each case; and acting, so these choices have the right result.

In any of the examples above, the knowledge worker is faced with a wide variety of circumstances that differ on a case by case basis. This variation leads to tension between "standard procedures, practices, and policies" and "what needs to be done to resolve this case." This tension will be creative if the organization is agile, uncreative if it is not. Let me be clear—when I use the term "creative," I don't mean to encourage "creative accounting" or any other behavior that is not compliant with law, regulation, good policy, or an organization's agreed goals. By creative tension, I mean tension that leads to beneficial innovation, either in a particular instance of a case (e.g., finding a better way to do the right thing in a benefits claim situation) or in general (e.g., finding a better way to process benefits claims overall). Supporting the beneficial innovation of knowledge workers by improving their ability to sense, prioritize, and act is a good thing! The organization benefits by enabling knowledge workers to be more agile.

Some of you might be thinking that this tension exists only in "nonroutine" cases. But consider a "routine" case where one of your colleagues could decide to do something extra for a client. For example, an insurance company processing a claim might see a significant benefit if it was able to ask the claimant: "Why don't I schedule a call with one of our representatives, since we've discussed how your latest insurance claim has highlighted that you really ought to consider increasing your coverage?" Even in insurance companies that can do this today, it's likely to have taken a long time for this idea to surface, longer for it to be considered and ratified, and even longer for it to be enacted. For most organizations, this kind of impromptu idea could not emerge and be acted upon quickly. The organization is constrained by inflexible processes, noncollaborative organizations, and other factors that unwittingly conspire to constrain agility and, with it, beneficial innovation.



In light of the examples and discussion above and bearing in mind your organization's case management processes, consider now the following more complex definition of case management:

Case management is the management of long-lived collaborative processes that require coordination of knowledge, content, correspondence, and resources to achieve an objective or goal. The path of execution cannot be predefined. Human judgment is required in determining how to proceed, and the state of a case can be affected by external events.

Let's dig below the definition and expose some of the common characteristics of all case management processes and how a better case management platform can increase the agility of your organization.

14 Characteristics of Case Management

Knowledge work appears to vary substantially across organizations. In practice, however, case-handling practices are usually very similar. Knowledge workers need to manage a complex set of steps from the start of a case through to its completion. This usually involves interaction with others in their organization or external agencies, and it requires the generation of and complex interaction with correspondence, documents, and records. The key characteristics common to most case management processes include the following:

1. Goal-Driven - Every case is pursued for a purpose. Without a purpose, the effort would be groundless, directionless, and impossible to deem a success on conclusion.

2. Knowledge-Intensive - Typically, processes require the intervention of skilled and knowledgeable personnel. Staff acquire their knowledge through their experience of working on similar cases and through collaboration with more experienced colleagues, becoming thoroughly familiar with the tacit and explicit rules governing how cases should be managed.

3. Highly Variable Processes - While a particular type of case will share a general structure (e.g., handling benefits applications), it is not possible to predict the path that a particular case will take. A case can change in unpredictable, dynamic, and ad-hoc ways. Basic procedures may be fixed, but there can be considerable variation in how steps are executed according to circumstances.

4. Long-Running - Cases can run for months or years—much longer than the short interaction cycles handled by standard Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems, for example. Because a case is long running, it changes hands over time, different people work on different aspects, and often, no single individual has a persistent view of the case all the time.

5. Information Complexity - Knowledge work involves the collection and presentation of a diverse set of documents and records. Emails, meeting notes, case documents, and correspondence related to a case must be easily accessible. This can be difficult for knowledge workers to organize and manage efficiently, with the risk that an important record, note, or file will be unavailable, lost, or overlooked when it is needed. Retrieving the correct information required at a particular decision point may depend on the knowledge of the case worker and the effective linking of electronic and physical filing/storage systems.

6. Highly Collaborative - Knowledge workers usually need to coordinate interviews and meetings among interested parties (e.g., the applicant, colleagues, legal representatives). Many cases require a team-based approach, with different specialists working on different aspects of a case or acting as consultants to their colleagues. Team members need to access case information and discuss this. And people outside the organization, such as clients, third party experts, loosely interested parties, and others must be part of the case community. Increasingly, with the advent

of social networking and other community-enabling technologies, the community of parties that a case can engage is expanding.

7. Multiple Participants & Fluid Roles - Many people mistakenly assume that organizations are stable and that people rarely change position or role. Clearly this is untrue—try calling your insurance company today; it is unlikely that you'll be able to speak to the same person you spoke to last time you called, even though you'll be speaking to a person in the same role. Staff members leave or case workers' roles may change in the course of a case. There may be several parties involved directly or indirectly, and they may play different roles in the case at different times.

8. Inter-Related Cases - The outcome of separate cases may have an impact on each other. For example, an application for citizenship by an individual may be affected by the success or failure of an application by a spouse or immediate relative. Cases can be explicitly linked, or they may be linked by inference and conducted with this inferred link in mind.

9. Juggling Fixed and Flexible Timescales - While individual cases may vary in how they are conducted, they may be subject to the same standard and inflexible requirements for case completion time such as legislation or Service Level Agreements (SLAs).

10. Sensitivity to External Events - External events and intervention can change the state of a running case (e.g., a phone call from a lawyer, the unscheduled arrival of compliance documentation, or the enactment of new governing policies while a case is in progress).

11. Cross-Organizational Visibility - It can be difficult for supervisors to monitor progress or for case workers to do so after handing cases to colleagues in other departments or organizations to undertake specific steps. For example, when onboarding a new client, the client onboarding manager may lose sight of the case when it goes to the legal or the Know Your Client (KYC) or Compliance Department.

12. History - Every action performed, every decision taken, and every piece of correspondence received has to be tracked, not just for audit purposes, but also

to provide guidance for future similar cases. Workers need access to this history when making decisions, while auditors and compliance officials need the history to ensure policies are adhered to. The case history is the organization's defense mechanism and a key learning tool.

13. Demanding Security Requirements - Strict control is necessary to protect access to sensitive information. The scope of this security challenge is unusually wide in case management processes, enveloping many pieces of information/data, many documents and other artifacts, a wide range of case participants in multiple roles and organizations, and many related information systems.

14. Isolated Pockets of Automation - Case management is usually only partly automated and there is a disjunction between those pockets of automation. Legacy systems automate slices of the processes, but the end-to-end management of a case still relies heavily on paper documentation, physical folders, and multiple artifacts that are not able to be automated (e.g., original signature copies of legal agreements).

This list of characteristics is not exhaustive, but it captures the essential common aspects of case management work. So, is there today an Adaptive Case Management (ACM) system that you can buy and deploy that will enable the agile practices that your organization needs?

Supporting ACM with Technology – So Far

A range of technologies has been deployed with varying degrees of success to support knowledge work. These have been partial successes because the characteristics common to all knowledge work present a considerable challenge to automation.

Let's review some of the barriers that have been particularly challenging to attempts to support knowledge work to date.

- The extent to which human judgment is required at various stages is a difficult challenge for traditional automated systems. It is simply not possible to automate all human decision making, hard though many

technology vendors may have tried. An ACM system needs to support human decision making, not replace it. But the human decision making at issue is highly complex and wide-ranging and, hence, difficult to support. For example, the human decision might be to do something completely new that the organization has never done before, or to act in contravention to normal policy for a perfectly good reason, or to create a new way of working that needs to immediately supersede prior practice.

- The “right information, right person, right time” problem is especially challenging in knowledge work contexts. Perhaps the single biggest cause of case management ineffectiveness is the need to put the case on hold because a case participant cannot access the right information, see the right document, or talk to the right person in a timely fashion.
- So many systems, so little communication. A typical knowledge work scenario (pick any of the examples in **Table 2**) transcends multiple organizations and needs to draw on information, documents, and other artifacts from many different information systems. The challenge of bringing all these systems together coherently in the context of managing a case has been too difficult or too expensive for many organizations to address.

Of course these challenges have not deterred the intrepid solution seekers in every organization. They have bought and deployed a great deal of computer hardware and software in their attempts to support case workers.

Various platforms have been proposed for supporting knowledge work, including Business Process Management Suites (BPMs), Enterprise Content Management (ECM) systems, and Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems. While these technologies play a role, no one of them alone is sufficient to address the complete requirements.

The ACM platform that successfully supports an organization’s needs is a combination of these technologies and of others that support human collaboration (e.g., email, texting, instant messaging,

online chat, social networking, etc.), personalization (i.e., allowing individual case workers and other case participants to customize their electronic desktop to meet the needs of their role), etc. A fully effective ACM platform must do all this, or to make the challenge a little simpler, it must at least enable all these technologies to work effectively together in support of the knowledge worker.

5 Capabilities Needed for Organizational Agility

“The trick...is to introduce bits of automation that will fit into the work and do useful things, and then make it possible for people to work with those bits of automation embedded in the systems while leaving them the discretionary space to exercise the kind of judgment they need to exercise to really get the work done.”

Derek Miers - Process Innovation and Corporate Agility (2007)

The five essential capabilities that must be provided by an effective case management platform are:

- (1) goal management
- (2) empowerment of case participants
- (3) adaptability in execution
- (4) effective availability of information
- (5) enablement of continuous improvement



1. Goal Management

- The case must be governable by explicit goals, targets, milestones, etc. These will be provided by the organization or the case participants, or they will be required by, for example, company policy, SLAs, or governmental regulation. Even in one-off cases (as distinct from a single instance of case, such as a particular insurance claim), there is a goal and the platform must allow the governance of case progress to be driven by the need to achieve that goal.
- While maximum flexibility in the “disposition” of a case (i.e., how it is progressed) must be maintained, this must be done within the discipline of required time, budget, and other constraints.

2. Empowerment of Case Participants

- The primacy of the case must rest with the knowledge workers and case participants. While the ACM platform is active in the case, people are the critical determiners of the outcome.
- The case participants must be able to assemble an electronic workspace, similar in concept to the desktop with which software users are now familiar, that suits their needs as a role player in the case management process. Information and data must be organized and presented to all case participants in a useful way to avoid them being overwhelmed or confused and to assist their efficient and effective participation. Such a workspace might, for example, provide instant access to a prioritized to-do list, a calendar displaying key case deadlines, a document folder containing all relevant case documents, a buddy list indicating availability and allowing instant contact with people relevant to the case, etc.
- The case management process and the progress of each individual case must be visible to all case participants. This visibility must allow participants to understand the case goals/objectives, constraints, roles (and who is acting in the role for each case), deadlines, current status, etc.

- Collaboration must be easy, widespread, productive, and appropriately secure. Meetings among parties to the case need to be easily scheduled, coordinated, managed, recorded, archived, retrieved, etc. Case workers and participants need to be able to share everything related to a case, including its history, discussions, correspondence, and previous decisions. Correct information must be available to team members at the right time, without losing the context or current state of progress of the case. The platform must know who needs what and when, must not supply irrelevant information, and must not release confidential information to those not authorized to access it.
- Participation of people in the case must be intelligently and productively driven. Work must be routed to participants at the time and sequence required to meet the goal of the case work. This requires sophisticated workflow routing and synchronization, ensuring overall milestones are monitored and met, identifying delays, anticipating issues, and escalating where necessary.

3. Adaptability in Execution

- The end-to-end activity flow of a case does not have to be fully determined in advance. The case must be allowed to “unfold” or “emerge” over time, either as a variant of standard practice or as a completely new and potentially one-off practice.
- As the case emerges, it must be possible at any time to add new tasks and processes, include new participants, change the roles of participants, alter the rules/policies that apply, etc. These changes must be achievable by human intervention and choice. They must also be achievable as a result of state-aware automated intervention. For example, to accelerate the remaining steps of a case management process if the previous steps have taken longer than planned, and the case must nonetheless meet a statutory deadline for completion.

- At any time, the case worker must be able to “step back” or “jump forward,” to redo previously performed steps, or to skip standard steps that he/she deems unnecessary in a given case instance.
- The state of a particular case may be changed by unpredictable external “out of band” events, such as the result of an unexpected phone conversation, and the case must respond appropriately (for example, by bypassing some or all steps that may have been laid out as standard case procedure). Each organization must make its choice about where the “official” state of the case is held. Some will choose to make the ACM platform the “system of record,” and indeed, the platform must provide this capability. Others will recognize that the “true life” state of the case may lead the state as recorded in the case platform (i.e., it may take the case management platform time to “catch up” with reality, even though it is treated as the system of record).
- The outcome of a case can be affected by progress in other separate but related cases. For example, the granting of a visa to a spouse may trigger automatic approval of a partner’s separate visa application.
- Predictive analytics must be available to guide case workers and participants to prioritize their actions to achieve the case’s goal. These analytics are based on intelligent consideration of historic patterns of case execution performance, case goals, required or expected deadlines and milestones, and on knowledge of the availability of resources, data, documents, etc.
- Many cases are, in effect, a combination of predictable case fragments (e.g., commonly used steps in a customer complaint process) and emergent case fragments (e.g., a one-off information demand or unique action required in a given case instance). The case management platform must bridge the gap between predictable and emergent case fragments, reusing elements of predictable processing where an emergent process can or should do so.

4. Effective Availability of Information

- All case documentation, including emails, meeting notes, correspondence, records, etc., must be organized and readily accessible to participants working on the same case. Content and case artifacts may reside on multiple supporting automated and manual systems, including databases, content management systems, electronic record management systems, and offsite, secure physical storage facilities.
- Complex case information should be structured and presented to case workers simply, intuitively, and in a context-sensitive manner.
- Multiple automated information sources must be orchestrated quickly to provide fast access to the relevant information required in each case context.
- Security controls must allow access to case information and documents by a wide range of case participants in multiple roles and organizations, while also enforcing necessary restrictions on visibility in compliance to organizational policy, legal requirement, etc.
- Case history, audit trails, and associated records must be retained for specific periods, if required by legislation or organizational policy, and made readily available when needed.

5. Enablement of Continuous Improvement

- Case participants must be able to take part not only in the execution of cases (on a case-by-case basis), but also in the proposal, discussion, and decision making of ideas that improve case management effectiveness overall.
- An intuitive, graphical modeling environment should be available to allow case participants to understand the current design of the case management process and to engage in its redesign and optimization. The design should include definition of tasks, roles, goals, SLAs, milestones, data and document requirements, policies and rules, etc. The modeling

environment should allow participants to “kick the tires” on new ideas, conduct “what-if” analyses on improvement ideas, and compare the performance of multiple versions (including several “old,” the current “as-is,” and several “to-be” versions) of a case management process.

- Case execution data must be captured in detail on a case-by-case basis and tools for historical and real-time analysis of that data must be available. This data provides an evidential basis for assessing performance against goals, identifying bottlenecks, and driving continuous innovation. This case execution data must include details such as who did what when, how long each task took, which data and documents were viewed/changed in that task, how the case status varied over time, which case milestones were met and when, etc.
- Learning from experience must be supported. Since similar problems often have similar solutions, the platform must allow case workers to process new cases based on the solutions of similar past cases. Four steps in this case-based reasoning approach must be supported:
 - (1) look at a given case and search for previous cases it might match
 - (2) consider how the solution to the previous cases could be applied to the current case
 - (3) test the solution on the existing case and revise it if necessary
 - (4) record the new case and the solution that eventually worked, for future reference

Some of the capabilities just discussed are available today, usually in separate technologies. However, the complete ACM platform is now beginning to emerge as a commercially available suite.

ACM Platforms Support Greater Agility

We began with a discussion of the agility imperative—the urgent need to increase every organization’s ability to sense, prioritize, and act. We drew a contrast between the inertia that impairs so many organizations, and the agility that enables a top basketball team to win the NBA title.

We have seen that much of the day-to-day operation of organizations of all types involves knowledge work. Whether the case in question was a social security claim, the onboarding of a new customer, the pursuit of litigation proceedings, or the arbitration of a customer complaint, the approach to dealing with cases shared many common characteristics.

At the heart of the difficult challenges that case management must overcome, we identified the need for agility in managing individual cases, and the need for continuous improvement in case management approaches. And we have described at a first level of detail the five critical capabilities of an ACM platform that can support the effective practices of an agile organization.

An agile organization is one that when managing cases, like the excellent basketball team, senses what to do, prioritizes among options, and then acts appropriately, person by person. Organizations that increase their agility by embracing an ACM platform will win more new deals, keep more customers happy, operate less wastefully, and capitalize better on opportunities for improvement.

Contact Us

We would be delighted to discuss any aspects of Case Management with you. Please feel free to contact us:

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