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Best Practices for Successful Migration to a New Policy Management System

For ComplyALIGN | Apr 24, 2019

Congratulations! The time has finally come for you to migrate your existing policy management system into a better solution that alleviates the headache of your current policy management system, which has been inadequate and insufficient for quite some time. As you're getting started with this project, it is important to keep in mind that the quality of a new system's functionality will be directly proportional to the quality of information utilized during implementation.

Here are a few key elements to ensure a smooth and successful implementation when migrating policies into a new system.

1. Planning and Initial Decision Making for Policy Migration

One of the most critical, yet often overlooked steps, in a policy system migration is planning and defining the scope of the project before the migration begins. Some of the questions that you will need to answer during this initial phase are:

- What policies will be transferred over to the new policy management system?
- What is the current location of, and can policies be easily extracted?
- Will the new system house past, current and future versions of the policies?
- Can current workflows, roles, and responsibilities be extracted in their current format or do they need to be configured during or after the migration process?
- What is the desired timeline for the migration and will all key stakeholders be able to provide the necessary information for that timeline to succeed?

Once you have answered these questions, you should be able to formulate a roadmap for your implementation that includes staffing needs, records, documents, and components that will need to be included in the planning for, and execution of, your system migration.

2. Creation of Document Extracts

The key component of policy system migration is a complete extract of your existing policies, procedures and forms.

Note: While most of your documents likely reside in your current policy system, make sure to also consider document repositories that are currently being managed separately. It may be beneficial to have such documents included in your initial migration even though they were not managed in the original system.

When preparing document extracts, make sure the final directory of files is complete and well organized. You will want to pay specific attention to:

- Consistent naming conventions (e.g. file names should correspond to policy names and numbers)

- Organization of folder structure
- Inclusion of previous (archived) versions along with current documents

3. Policy Meta Data – Document Listing Spreadsheet(s)

The final component of a successful migration is to develop a method to map your document extracts to each policy's meta data. Typically, this is accomplished by providing your new vendor a report or a spreadsheet that contains the following information:

- File name that maps to a document in the file extract
- Policy title (if different than file name)
- Policy location which maps to a directory
- Important dates such as: version date, next review due date and original effective date
- Relevant meta data such as references or links to regulatory standards
- A listing of parties involved in document management and approval broken down by responsibility (e.g. approvers, moderators, reviewers, editors). *Hint: In order to allow for scripting of information into the new policy management system, these names should be mapped to networks or system user accounts.*

The document listing spreadsheet also serves to provide for a way to validate that the documents imported, match those from the original system, thus ensuring that no documents are lost. If importing archives, drafts or other documents into the new system, it will be critical that you provide the vendor with reports on these as well.

Various systems and vendors may require adjustment to the basic requirements listed in this article, as every implementation is different and unique. However, if you follow the general steps outlined in this article and take the time to ensure completeness, your chances of having a successful and painless implementation will be greatly improved.

Lastly, before you begin your policy management system migration journey, make sure to pick a vendor that is willing to assist you with the process. At ComplyALIGN, for example, we work very closely with our clients to ensure source documents and records are as complete as possible to eliminate unnecessary steps, lower transition costs and shorten your implementation timeframe.

Looking for a demo of the ComplyALIGN Policy Management System? [Click here.](#)