

## Summary Evaluation Checklist for Document Management Systems

See below for the Detailed Evaluation Checklist

<h3>Questions to Ask the Providers</h3>	Answer you want to hear	Supplier: <b>businessfitness™</b> DMS: <b>HowNow®</b>	Supplier: DMS:	Supplier: DMS:
<p><b>1. Does the Document Management System connect directly to your existing client database(s)?</b></p> <p>The DMS should connect to your existing client database so that you don't have an additional database to maintain. Advanced DMS's can connect to <i>multiple databases</i> for pulling data into letters and reports.</p>	Yes	Yes		
<p><b>2. Are they Document Management Specialists?</b></p> <p>Is the supplier a specialist or is their Document Management module just one module/tab among many, not their core focus? A DMS is a crucial system for a knowledge intensive business such as an accounting firm. It pays to use experts.</p>	Yes	Yes		
<p><b>3. Is their DMS based on a <u>ZERO LOCK-IN</u> design?</b></p> <p>Has their Document Management System (DMS) been designed with zero lock-in features? The <b>worst kind of lock-in</b> is a DMS that saves the documents and files <b>into its own database</b>. Another type of lock-in is a DMS that saves files with <b>obscure file names</b> that don't make any sense when viewed in Windows Explorer. In other words, they are making it difficult to stop using their system – they are 'locking you in'. Such DMS's increase your firm's risk, in the medium term should you wish to switch to another DMS in the years to come, and your risk in the short-term is also increased because a system down or 'go slow' with their DMS will mean your staff will not be able to access their documents and files. A DMS should save the documents and files into Windows Explorer with plain English file names so that you are <i>not locked in</i> to using the DMS.</p>	Yes	Yes		
<p><b>4. Do they provide a service to include all of your firm's pre-existing documents into the DMS and is this service provided at a low <u>FIXED PRICE</u>?</b></p> <p>Most DMS providers will tell you it's too difficult to incorporate your pre-existing documents into their DMS. They'll use phrases like "it's best just to draw a line in the sand" with excuses such as they can't predict how large or complex a job it will be for them, so they will scare you off the idea by offering to provide the service at an hourly rate with no cap on the number of hours. There is only one DMS provider in Australia—and the world as far as we know—who will do this 'records cataloguing' process on a fixed fee basis.</p>	Yes	Yes		
<p><b>5. Do they offer an integrated Content Update service that automatically publishes updated templates directly into knowledgebase area of the DMS?</b></p> <p>Most providers of best practice templates and standards to the accounting profession rely on you visiting their web site, downloading the new templates, deciding where to save them and what to call them, and then manually importing them into the DMS. It is far more efficient to work with a provider with 'content push' technology that automates this download-the-latest-templates process for your firm so you can be assured of staying up-to-date.</p>	Yes	Yes		

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<p><b>6. Does the DMS integrate with Microsoft® Outlook® to prompt for the saving of Sent and Deleted emails?</b></p> <p>An email management system without reminder prompts for saving emails will result in only a small fraction of emails that should be saved, being saved. In line with point 3 earlier regarding zero lock-in, the emails should get saved into a folder structure outside of Outlook, and not into the DMS's own database.</p>	Yes	Yes		
<p><b>7. Is the Document Management System designed with the bigger picture of knowledge management in mind?</b></p> <p>Document Management—electronic filing and retrieval—is a sub-set of Knowledge Management (KM). KM is about capturing, sharing and leveraging the know-how within your firm about how things are to be done. An effective DMS manages your 'knowledge documents' (templates, precedents, procedures, policies, reference material) equally well as it manages your 'records' (correspondence, emails, invoices, returns, statements, etc.), plus it provides integration between the two areas with automation of filing protocols.</p>	Yes	Yes		
<p><b>8. Can the DMS manage <u>all documents</u> that flow into, are created within, are stored within and sent by the firm?</b></p> <p>This includes received mail (paper correspondence) scans, emails and their attachments, client accounting data files (such as MYOB and QuickBooks files), file notes, Word, Excel, PDF, multimedia files, etc.</p>	Yes	Yes		
<p><b>9. Does the DMS integrate with scanning automation software?</b></p> <p>If your firm receives large quantities of correspondence on behalf of clients and you wish to be a 'less paper office', scanning automation software such as ATO Paper Buster is essential. So is a DMS that integrates with it.</p>	Yes	Yes		
<p><b>10. Do they offer a <i>Successful Implementation Guarantee</i>?</b></p> <p>If a specialist DMS supplier is confident they will deliver what they promise, they should offer you a guarantee that the DMS will work as you expect.</p>	Yes	Yes		
<p><b>11. Does the provider offer ongoing education and training about all aspects of 'going paperless' and running the firm more efficiently?</b></p> <p>The DMS is one part of 'going paperless'. Other aspects include scanning hardware and software, digital signatures, designing Word and Excel templates to more easily facilitate on-screen completion, the use of multiple and/or widescreen monitors to encourage on-screen rather than on-paper work, and so on. Does the provider not only understand all these related pieces of the puzzle, but also provides ongoing free monthly training in these aspects?</p>	Yes	Yes		
<p><b>12. Is the document search tool lightning fast and easy to use?</b></p> <p>Bottom line, if the DMS doesn't make life easier for your team, they won't use it, or they will resist using it. The DMS should provide per-keystroke search speed so that it is a quantum leap ahead in terms of speed and ease of use compared with 'browsing' through folders and links in Windows Explorer or a 'Documents' tab in another piece of software. The DMS should be designed in a way that not only is staff take adoption instantaneous, but they <i>love</i> using it.</p>	Yes	Yes		

## Detailed Evaluation Checklist for Document Management Systems

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<b>The Supplier</b>				
1. Are they specialists in Document Management Systems? Or is their Document Management module just one module among many, not their core focus?				
2. Are they specialists in Document Management Systems for accounting firms?				
3. Are they experienced in DMS or are they new to it?				
4. Do they understand the bigger picture of helping firms with their 'knowledge management' systems, not just 'document management'? Document management is but one element of effective knowledge management.				
5. Have they developed the software themselves? Or did they acquire or license in the software?				
6. Do they control the programming themselves so they can readily make changes to the software code?				
7. How long has the DMS been in actual use in the market (not including time spent in beta testing phase)? From full release, expect a new software program to take 12 to 18 months to become stable and bug free. 'Early adopters' of new software are paying for the inconvenience of being beta testers, having to tolerate bugs and then wait for fixes. A costly exercise.				
8. How often are new software enhancements released? What track record do they have? Ask for the version numbers and release dates of each version. (Do not include minor updates – only significant releases)				
9. Does the supplier actually use as their own DMS in their organisation, the DMS they are trying to sell you?				
10. Are they willing to show you a live view into their own DMS database containing many thousands of documents, and not just a 'demonstration database'? Ask to see some example searches to see if the search speed is as fast as was demonstrated to you.				

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<p>11. Does the sales person actually <i>use</i> the DMS regularly in their everyday work? This does not include use of the demonstration version during sales meetings. Ask for some proof such as the number of documents (including emails) the sales person has filed into the DMS in the past 3 months. The number should be in the hundreds. Ask how these numbers were produced – real data or a guess? You want to know, <i>‘Does the person who is trying to sell me a Holden, drive one?’</i></p>				
<b>Design and Structure of the DMS</b>				
<p>12. Does the DMS save documents—behind the scenes—into a normal folder structure that could be accessible in Windows® Explorer if the firm stopped using the DMS in later years? The worst type of ‘lock-in’ feature is where a DMS saves the documents into a database, rather than into the folder structure. This makes it very difficult and costly for a firm to switch to another DMS in the future, plus over time such DMS’s become quite slow and sometimes unusable as the database gradually becomes enormous. Another type of lock-in design is where the files are saved into folders, but into a folder structure or with file names that make no sense when viewed in Windows® Explorer (e.g. 0089gyz~001.doc, 987vft~984.xls etc.). This design forces the firm to use the DMS in order to retrieve the documents, achieving this same ‘lock-in’ effect. A well-designed DMS does not include such lock-in features. It should allow the firm to retain its independence so that after years of using the DMS, should the firm wish to stop using the DMS, all the files ever saved using the DMS are sitting out in Windows® Explorer, perfectly organised in a logical folder structure, using plain English folder names and file names that make it possible to retrieve them via Windows® Explorer. The DMS, however, should be far quicker and easier to use than Windows® Explorer so that even though its <i>possible</i> for users to retrieve documents via Windows® Explorer, they don’t bother because that seems extremely slow compared with using the DMS.</p>				
<p>13. Can the DMS connect to your existing client database, such as your Practice Management System so that client data can be pulled into merge documents including letters, checklists, etc.? This also means you won’t have to update an additional client database.</p>				

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14. Can the DMS connect to multiple client databases from multiple vendors? For example, can it connect to your firm's Practice Management System <i>and</i> your Corporate Secretarial <i>and</i> Super software, regardless of which vendor provided each program? Can the DMS then treat all these databases as the one 'master database' for pulling data into documents simultaneously from multiple databases?				
15. Does the DMS integrate with a knowledgebase that stores the firm's templates and precedents so that filing can be automated and standardised?				
16. How flexible is the DMS? Is it easy to create and change your own filing structure, topics, areas, etc.?				
<b>Getting Documents into the DMS Part 1 – Scanning</b>				
17. Does the DMS connect to scanners, both to network scanners and to desktop scanners? (Desktop scanners connect to one workstation and cannot work across the network.)				
18. Does the DMS provide a 'watch folder' function where if a file is scanned into a particular folder on the network, then the filing wizard appears on the specified person's workstation so that the file can be filed into the appropriate subfolder on the network?				
19. Can the DMS also file documents that are 'scanned to email' and are then received as attachments?				
20. Does the DMS integrate with scanning automation software such as ATO Paper Buster which can automatically place scanned documents into their correct subfolder under the relevant client?				
21. Does the DMS provide a 'Filing Tray' function where a user can delegate the electronic filing of scanned documents to a support team member?				
22. Can the DMS provider advise on the selection of scanners?				
23. Does the DMS provider offer to also provide the scanning software as part of the DMS solution?				
<b>Getting Documents into the DMS Part 2 – Your Pre-Existing Electronic Files</b>				
24. Can the DMS import or retrieve your firm's pre-existing electronic files on your network so that when the DMS goes live, all documents are in there, old and new?				
25. Does the DMS supplier encourage you to import or 'catalogue' your pre-existing files into their DMS? If they don't, it indicates that it is a manual process.				

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26. Does the supplier offer you a fixed price quote for cataloguing your pre-existing files into their DMS?				
<b>Getting Documents into the DMS Part 3 – Email Management</b>				
27. Does the DMS integrate with Microsoft® Outlook®?				
28. Does the DMS automatically save any emails sent to or received from clients?				
29. Does the DMS prompt the user to save an email after clicking Send? Or does the DMS rely on the user to remember to click a button to 'Share' or file the email into the DMS? Prompts are essential.				
30. Does the DMS prompt the user to save an email after reading it?				
31. Does the DMS prompt the user to save an email after deleting it?				
32. Does the DMS automatically select the Contact during the filing process, by recognising their email address (or part of their email address)?				
33. Does the DMS save the email out into Windows® Explorer under the client's folder structure <i>outside</i> of Outlook®? This is preferable from a knowledge sharing perspective and an IT maintenance perspective.				
34. Does the DMS save the email in the ".msg" format which leaves it looking the same as if it was saved within Outlook®, and also saves any attachments?				
35. Does the DMS ask the user if they want to save attachments separately to the email message?				
36. Is it quick and easy to retrieve emails within the DMS?				
<b>Getting Documents into the DMS Part 4 – Client Accounting Data Files</b>				
37. Can the DMS save and manage your clients' accounting data files such as MYOB, QuickBooks, Agrimaster, Phoenix and any other type of accounting software data file?				
38. When saving accounting data files, does the DMS automatically compress ('ZIP') the file size down in order to save server space?				
39. Does the DMS record the type of software (e.g. MYOB Premier) and the version of the software (e.g. v17) when an accounting data file is saved so that all a user has to do to open it is double-click it, and the DMS automatically opens the data file in the correct software and the correct version of the software?				

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<b>Creating Documents</b>				
40. Does the DMS have smart template technology that allows templates such as standard letters (e.g. engagement letter templates) to be created with a number of optional paragraphs and optional wording so that when the user double-clicks on the template a wizard appears allowing the user to select which options apply and don't apply? This allows letters to be created extremely quickly and efficiently, yet achieves standardisation within the allowable options.				
41. Does the DMS efficiently create batches of merge letters by (1) creating an individual Word document for each letter and (2) automatically filing each Word document under each client's appropriate subfolder?				
42. Does the DMS automatically format letters as they are created so that the firm's logo, fonts, margins, and layout preferences are applied?				
43. Does the DMS automatically file documents created using templates so that by the time the document or workpaper appears on the screen, it has already been filed under the client's appropriate subfolder?				
44. Does the DMS eliminate the need to use 'Save As' in Word and Excel®, and the subsequent time consuming and tedious browsing through drives and folder structures on the network?				
45. Does the DMS virtually eliminate the need for staff to ever use Windows® Explorer?				
46. Does the DMS make it one-click easy to start an electronic File Note when speaking with a client over the telephone?				
47. Does the DMS automatically save these File Notes out into Windows® Explorer in the client's appropriate subfolder? Most software saves such notes into their database, not as a file in Windows® Explorer. This is another attempt to lock you in so that if you switch software in the future, getting the File Notes out of the system and across into a another one is either not possible or very expensive in consulting time.				
48. Does the DMS manage internal documents—such as management and HR-related documents—equally well as it manages client-related documents?				

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<b>Integration with Knowledgebase – Template Management</b>				
49. Does the knowledgebase section of the DMS display only the approved and up-to-date 'master version' of each template so that standard users cannot see or use old versions or new versions yet to be approved?				
50. Is the DMS designed so that the file name of the current approved 'master version' is always the same? If not, each time a template is edited and a new version with a new filename is created, all the hyperlinks pointing to that template—such as links from procedures—will be broken. This wastes a lot of time and is an example of a hidden cost of maintenance.				
51. Does the DMS prompt for a Revision History note to be documented each time a new version of a template is created? If not, the DMS will not help you comply with international standard 'ISO 9001-2000 Quality management systems – Requirements'. Apart from compliance, a list of Revision History notes is extremely useful internally when managing your templates.				
52. Does the DMS provide each user with a 'My Procedures' view that lists only their procedures that then link through to all related templates?				
53. Does management control which documents appear on each user's 'My Procedures' list?				
54. Does the DMS allow users to create their own 'My Favourites' list of their commonly used templates?				
55. Does the 'My Favourites' list still link to the 'master version' of each template so that users are always working on the up-to-date version? DMS's that allow users to create their own folders for templates increase the risk of error and version control problems where different people will be working off different versions of the templates. This is far from best practice.				
56. Does the DMS protect the templates from users making unauthorised changes to them?				
57. Does the DMS allow you to specify which users are allowed to create, edit, review and approve templates?				
58. When adding a template to the knowledgebase, can an Expiry Date be specified so that the template is either automatically hidden from users from that date or, alternatively, a 'Caution: This Document has Expired' message is displayed when the template is accessed after this date?				

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59. Does the DMS allow you to specify on a template by template basis where documents created using this template should be stored and how they should be named so that filing protocols are automatically and effortlessly achieved?				
60. Does the DMS knowledgebase allow you to electronically file technical library, training and reference material for centralised storage, firm-wide sharing and ease of retrieval via keyword search?				
<b>Integration with Content Providers – Outsourcing Updating of Templates</b>				
61. Is the DMS designed to integrate with a Content Update service where updated templates can be downloaded into the system over the internet as easily as accepting a software update download? This means your firm does have to remember to check the content provider's web site to see if new templates are available, instead the DMS notifies the firm when a new Content Update is available and with one click all the Microsoft® Word and Excel® files automatically download into your firm's DMS.				
62. Does the DMS protect your existing documents from being overwritten by the new documents downloaded in a Content Update?				
63. Does the DMS provide a Review function for efficiently reviewing the documents in a Content Update before making the new versions available to users? For example, can templates be assigned to different Reviewers within the firm who view the documents before making them available to other users?				
64. Does the Review List highlight those documents in a Content Update where your firm has edited the templates since the last Content Update? This makes it easy to identify which documents in a Content Update should be reviewed first.				
65. Does the Content Update function give the firm the option of accepting all the documents in Content Update in one step so that they are instantly made available to all team members? This bypasses the Review process if the firm simply wants to use the 'Trust & Adopt' approach to using the templates.				
66. When your firm edits a template supplied by a Content Provider, or adds their own templates, are such documents automatically flagged as "Our Firm's Content" so this list can be brought up with two clicks?				

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<b>Securing Documents</b>				
67. Does the DMS allow you to control which team members see which documents so that sensitive documents can be safely saved into the DMS?				
68. Does the DMS also provide an option to encrypt sensitive documents so that they are locked down and cannot be opened via Windows® Explorer. This provides peace of mind for management and removes any need to consider some documents 'too sensitive' to be filed into the DMS.				
69. Can these visibility and encryption functions be applied automatically to documents that are saved under certain categories or areas?				
<b>Retrieving Documents</b>				
70. Is the keyword search extremely fast and convenient? For example, does it provide 'per keystroke' search speed that brings up search results as you type without the need to press Enter or click a Search button?				
71. Is the default search always within a Date Range so that the fast search speed is maintained regardless of how many documents are stored into the DMS?				
72. Can each user specify their preferred Date Range parameters so that they don't have to select it each time they open the DMS?				
73. Is the search based on a 'metadata search' (which searches the Profile which describes each document) or is it a full text search that searches the words within each document?				
74. If a metadata based search, are keywords automatically added to the Profiles when documents are filed so that searching is as effective as possible?				
75. If a metadata based search, is a full text search function also available if the metadata based search does not find what the user is looking for?				
76. Can the DMS search simultaneously across all clients or is it necessary to first select a client?				
77. Does the DMS allow keyword searching on any part of a word such as client name, entity name, client code, title of document, etc.?				
78. Can a search list be filtered down to only show the desired file type, such as emails, Excel® files, PDFs, etc.?				

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<b>Managing Document Flow</b>				
79. Does the DMS allow you to search and filter on the status of a document – e.g. Draft, Review, Approved, Out For Signature, Final?				
80. Does the audit trail automatically record who changed the status of a document and when this was done?				
81. Does the DMS allow you to search and filter on roles such as who created the document, who reviewed (or is to review) the document, who is the signatory, etc.?				
82. Does the DMS allow users to ‘check out’ documents so they can be worked on offline, say on a laptop when off-site or travelling? A ‘check out’ feature protects the copy of the document that is left on the server from being edited whilst the document is checked out. If a user attempts to open the copy of the document on the server, the user is told who checked the document out and when. Whilst others are able to view the copy of the document on the server, they cannot make changes. This avoids changes being overwritten. When the user who has checked out the document is back on the network, they ‘check in’ the document to update the version on the server and allow editing.				
<b>Managing Tasks and Workflow</b>				
83. Does the DMS allow you to attach a task to a document and then delegate that to another person, or assign it to your own Tasks list?				
84. Does the DMS allow you to specify who can see whose Tasks list?				
85. Does the DMS allow you to see a list of tasks you have delegated, and then filter further based on any combination of who is to complete the task, who the client is, when the task is due, whether tasks are overdue or due soon, etc.?				
86. Does the DMS Tasks function provide reminders to the person completing the task and the person who delegated the task?				
87. Does the DMS include a Job Tracking (‘workflow’) system that allows a view of all jobs flowing through the firm?				
88. Does the Job Tracking function allow you to filter further based on any combination of who is to complete the job, who is to review it, who the client is, when the job is due, whether jobs are overdue or due soon, etc.?				

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<b>Quality Assurance</b>				
89. Does the DMS automatically create an audit trail recording every event that happens in the creation, approval and dispatch of each document? This should include who created it and when, when it changed status and who changed the status, who opened it and when, who printed it or emailed it and when, etc.				
90. Does the DMS allow you to specify who is allowed to progress documents to certain stages such as Approved and Final? Such QA measures are vital.				
91. When a batch of merge letters has been created, can the list of documents in that batch be displayed quickly and easily so that they can each be checked?				
<b>Getting Documents Out the Door</b>				
92. Does the DMS allow a user to quickly and easily email a document to a client, automatically attaching the document to an email and simultaneously pulling the client's email address out of the Practice Management System and into the email message's "To:" field?				
93. Is a PDF converter built into the DMS at no additional cost?				
94. Does the DMS allow combining of multiple PDFs into one PDF?				
95. When emailing a document or multiple documents, does the DMS offer options of how the documents are to be emailed? For example, left in their original format, or converted to PDF, or zipped (compressed)?				
96. Can documents be emailed internally as a hyperlink rather than as an attachment? This avoids creating unnecessary copies of documents at attachments, and it removes the risk of version control problems because the hyperlink opens source document on the server.				
97. When a batch of letters is created, can they all be printed in one step?				
98. When a batch of letters is created, can they all be emailed individually to each client in one step?				
99. When using the batch email function, if an email address for a contact is blank, does the DMS instead send that document to the printer? This allows an entire batch of letters to be processed in one step.				
100. Does the DMS provide an export to web function that can upload documents to a web site such a client portal's login area on your firm's web site?				

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<b>Archiving Documents</b>				
101. Does the DMS allow you to archive an entire year's worth of documents across all clients in one step?				
102. Does DMS retain information about where the documents were archived to (e.g. which DVD or tape?) so that they can be easily retrieved should they be required at a later date?				
<b>Reporting</b>				
103. Can the DMS provide utilisation reports regarding use of the knowledgebase and templates? Such reports should include which templates are being used, which are not, which team members are using which templates, and how frequently is each team member using the knowledgebase and templates.				
104. Can the DMS provide reports on the electronic filing activity of each team member? For example, can the DMS show you how many emails a particular user has filed in the past month or past year? Such reports help track utilisation and user compliance.				
<b>The Support</b>				
105. When you call the supplier's Help Desk, do you get to speak with the programmers or technicians who can actually <i>fix</i> the problem, or are you forced to first speak with a 'customer service representative' level of person who is only a 'messenger' through to the developers?				
106. Is the organisation renowned for their customer service and responsiveness?				
107. Does the supplier offer a successful implementation guarantee? If so, what are the conditions of the guarantee?				

Please email us at [efficient@businessfitness.net](mailto:efficient@businessfitness.net) if you are interested in having  
**A Demonstration of the HowNow® Document Management System**  
 HowNow®: The Document Management System developed by businessfitness™,  
**Australia's only specialists in Document Management Systems for accounting firms.**