

THE SMART BUYER'S GUIDE TO **DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS**



INTRODUCTION TO DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

In today's fast-paced digital landscape, selecting the right document management system (DMS) can be a daunting task. With a vast array of vendors and ever-evolving technology, including the rise of Generative AI (GenAI), identifying the ideal platform, approach, and vendor for your organization can feel overwhelming.

**But don't worry.
We are here to help.**

Choosing the right DMS for your organization and ensuring successful user adoption is critical to help you achieve the significant increases in employee productivity that are possible. Organizations with a successful DMS deployment can benefit from improved searching, faster filing, more efficient workflows and collaboration, improved security and compliance, revenue uplift, and more. For those organizations who leverage Microsoft 365, the right DMS can even help you optimize that investment by providing complementary capabilities for business processes and information governance.

MARKET GROWTH:

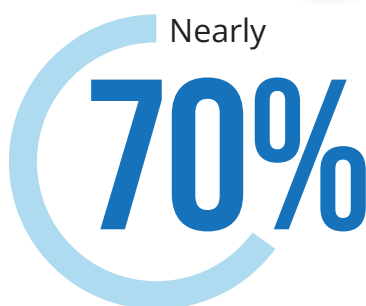


The global document management market size is projected to reach

\$6.78

billion by 2025.

ADOPTION RATES:



of businesses have reported an increase in productivity after implementing document management solutions.

COST OF INEFFICIENCY:



On average, businesses spend

\$120

in labor costs searching for every misfiled document.

Our comprehensive guide aims to demystify the process by helping you understand the capabilities and benefits of a DMS. It also highlights key considerations to keep in mind when evaluating vendors, ensuring you make an informed decision that aligns with your organization's needs and goals. Our guide aims to provide a comprehensive overview of document management systems, their benefits, and the role they can play in automating knowledge work.

A large, stylized blue double quote icon.

"Gartner defines document management as the tools and practices used to capture, store, process, and access documents and content in support of personal, team, and enterprise needs. It is used for a wide range of collaborative and operational purposes, enabling the digital workplace, content collaboration, content-centric processes, content services for enterprise applications, and content governance. Gartner estimates that **70% to 80% of enterprise information is unstructured**, posing a significant challenge for organizations that must unlock the potential and mitigate the risks of content. Document management tools are critical to enterprise application strategies that need to support unstructured information or content."

Gartner Peer Insights

WHAT IS A DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (DMS)?

A Document Management System (DMS) is a software solution designed to store, manage, and track electronic documents and images of paper-based information. It provides a centralized repository where documents can be easily accessed, shared, and collaborated on by authorized users.

Key features of a DMS may include version control, metadata tagging, search functionality, and security protocols to protect sensitive information.

Implementing a document management system can streamline your processes, boost productivity, lower costs, and minimize your company's environmental impact. Additionally, by centralizing your organization's information, a DMS can improve collaboration and communication among individuals and teams, no matter where they are located.

BENEFITS OF IMPLEMENTING A DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

In today's fast-paced business environment, the complexity of information management within companies has reached unprecedented levels. This complexity stems from several factors, including the exponential growth of data, the variety of information formats, and the need for compliance with ever-evolving regulations. Companies are inundated with vast amounts of data from multiple sources—emails, documents, social media, and more. Managing this data efficiently is a daunting task, often leading to information silos, duplication, and data loss.

Contrastingly, in our personal lives, we are accustomed to intuitive and seamless ways of searching for information. Whether it's using a search engine, browsing through a smartphone app, or asking a virtual assistant, we expect quick and easy access to the information we need. These tools can serve up content and information they deem relevant to us based on our interests and behavior. This stark contrast highlights a significant disconnect between the user-friendly tools we use daily and the often-cumbersome systems in place at many organizations, where knowledge workers often have to battle with legacy systems, complex folder structures, and scattered information to find what they need to get their job done.

This disconnect underscores the urgency for companies to adapt their information management strategies. To stay competitive, attract and retain top talent, and foster collective intelligence, businesses must provide their employees with tools that mirror the intuitive experiences they are familiar with. Employees now expect the same level of efficiency and ease in their professional lives as they do in their personal lives. Quick access to information is not just a convenience; it's a necessity for boosting productivity and maintaining a competitive edge.

Investing in modern document management systems that offer intuitive search capabilities, seamless integration with other tools, and robust security features is crucial. These systems can help break down information silos, reduce data duplication, and ensure that employees can find the information they need when they need it. By aligning their information management practices with the expectations of today's workforce, companies can enhance productivity, improve employee satisfaction, and ultimately drive better business outcomes.

KEY BENEFITS

OF A DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

FOR YOUR BUSINESS OPERATIONS

1. IMPROVED DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY AND RETRIEVAL:

Quick access to documents from any location enhances your employee's productivity by eliminating delays.

2. STREAMLINED WORKFLOWS:

Automates processes like approvals and archiving, reducing bottlenecks and accelerating business operations.

3. INCREASED PRODUCTIVITY:

Frees your knowledge workers to focus on strategic tasks by automating repetitive ones and providing immediate access to information.

4. BETTER DECISION MAKING:

Centralized document storage provides accurate, up-to-date information for you to make informed decisions.

5. ENHANCED SECURITY AND COMPLIANCE:

Protect your sensitive information from unauthorized access with features such as encryption, access controls, and audit trails, ensuring your documents are secure and compliance requirements are met.

6. COST SAVINGS:

Reduce your physical storage needs and paper usage while automating tasks to reduce labor costs and improve efficiency.

7. VERSION CONTROL AND COLLABORATION:

Ensure the latest document version is always available, preventing confusion and errors while facilitating collaboration among team members with simultaneous collaboration.

8. DISASTER RECOVERY:

Backs up documents for easy restoration, minimizing data loss and ensuring business continuity, to keep you up and running.

9. SCALABILITY:

Grows with your organization, handling more documents and users as your business expands.

EVALUATING YOUR NEEDS AND REQUIREMENTS

When considering an upgrade to your current document management platform, it's crucial to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of your needs and requirements. Here's a structured approach to guide you through the process:

#1

EVALUATE YOUR DIGITAL MATURITY AND AI READINESS:

- Before making a technology investment, use a tool like the M-Files Knowledge Work Automation Capability Maturity Model to assess your readiness for AI initiatives and the other benefits of a DMS.

#2

DEFINE YOUR OBJECTIVES:

- What are the primary goals you aim to achieve with the upgrade?
- Are you looking to improve efficiency, enhance security, or ensure compliance?

#3

ANALYZE CURRENT SYSTEM LIMITATIONS:

- Identify the pain points and limitations of your existing system.
- Gather feedback from users to understand their challenges and needs.

#4

DETERMINE FUNCTIONAL REQUIREMENTS:

- List the essential features and functionalities required in the new system.
- Consider aspects like user access controls, version control, and audit trails.

#5

CONSIDER INTEGRATION CAPABILITIES:

- Assess the need for the DMS to integrate with other enterprise systems.
- Ensure compatibility with existing tools and workflows.

#6

EVALUATE DATA MIGRATION NEEDS:

- Plan for the migration of existing documents and metadata.
- Consider the complexity and resources required for a seamless transition.

#7

ASSESS COMPLIANCE AND SECURITY REQUIREMENTS:

- Identify regulatory requirements that the new system must meet.
- Evaluate the security features to protect sensitive information.

#8

USER EXPERIENCE AND TRAINING:

- Consider the ease of use and learning curve for the new system.
- Plan for user training and support during the transition.

#9

SCALABILITY AND FUTUREPROOFING:

- Ensure the new system can scale with your organization's growth.
- Consider the vendor's roadmap and commitment to innovation.

#10

BUDGET AND LICENSING:

- Determine the budget for the upgrade, including licensing and implementation costs.
- Evaluate different licensing models to find the best fit for your organization.

#11

VENDOR SUPPORT AND REPUTATION:

- Research the vendor's reputation and track record.
- Consider the level of support and maintenance provided.

#12

GET STARTED:

- Shortlist your preferred vendors.
- Check out their free trial and product demo options.

By following these steps, you can ensure a thorough evaluation of your needs and requirements, leading to a more informed decision when upgrading your document management platform. Remember, the key is to align the new system with your organization's strategic goals and user needs.

ESSENTIAL FEATURES AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR A DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Choosing the right Document Management System involves understanding the essential features and considerations that will best meet your organization's needs. We will outline key aspects to consider when evaluating a DMS.



Artificial intelligence (AI)

Modern DMS solutions leverage artificial intelligence (AI) to streamline document-related processes. AI can automate tasks such as data extraction, classification, and routing, reducing manual effort and increasing efficiency.

Gen AI tools such as ChatGPT and Microsoft Copilot have transformed productivity, and some document management vendors (such as M-Files) now incorporate powerful GenAI technology into their platform, allowing knowledge workers to process vast amounts of information quickly, get answers to complex questions, and arrive at conclusions faster, while still respecting your organization's security and compliance policies.



Workflow Automation

A DMS can significantly enhance workflow automation, leading to a more efficient and streamlined process. Workflow automation ensures that documents move through predefined processes seamlessly, improving productivity and reducing errors. Workflow automation helps save time, reduce errors, promote team member collaboration, and increases document security. By leveraging a DMS for workflow automation, organizations can achieve a more efficient, effective, and secure document management process.



Metadata Management, Powerful Search Capabilities, and OCR

Effective metadata management is crucial for organizing and retrieving documents. A robust document management system allows for comprehensive metadata tagging, enabling powerful search capabilities. Optical Character Recognition (OCR) technology further enhances search functionality by converting scanned documents and images into searchable text, making it easier to find information quickly.



Ensuring Security and Compliance: Data Protection and Regulatory Requirements

Security and compliance are paramount when managing sensitive documents. A DMS offers features such as encryption, access controls, and audit trails to protect data. Additionally, it should help organizations comply with regulatory requirements by providing tools for data retention, e-discovery, and compliance reporting.



Deciding Between Cloud-Based and On-Premises Solutions

Organizations must decide whether a cloud-based or on-premises DMS is more suitable for their needs. Cloud-based solutions offer scalability, remote access, and reduced IT overhead, while on-premises solutions provide greater control over data and may be preferred for organizations with stringent security requirements.



Multilingual and Multi-Device Platform

A document management system should support multiple languages and be accessible across multiple devices, such as desktops, tablets, and smartphones. This enhances productivity and flexibility by ensuring that users can access and manage documents regardless of their location or preferred device.



Integration with Existing Systems

Seamless integration with existing systems, such as ERP, CRM, and email platforms, is essential for a document management system. This integration guarantees that documents can be easily shared and accessed across different applications, improving workflow efficiency and reducing data silos.



Secure Collaboration Internally and Externally

Choosing the right Document Management System is critical for enhancing content centric collaboration, even when the business processes go beyond organizational boundaries. By focusing on key features, such as real-time editing, version control, commenting and annotations, workflow automation, and permissions, businesses can improve their document management processes, boost productivity, and maintain the highest levels of security. With external collaboration, it is particularly important to ensure enough control over permissions and automate audit trails.

Let's take a look at M-Files Hubshare, a user-friendly, dynamic collaboration solution designed to enhance the digital client experience by providing a secure, efficient, and customizable environment for document management and collaboration.



Learn more about
M-FILES HUBSHARE.



User Training and Adoption

Effective implementation of a document management system requires user training and adoption. Providing training sessions, user guides, and ongoing support ensures that employees are comfortable with the system and can effectively and efficiently utilize its features. Selecting a system that is intuitive, user-friendly, and automates as much of the work as possible provides the best possible user adoption.

M-Files provides users with a user guide that is a comprehensive resource designed to assist users in effectively utilizing our document management system by providing detailed, step-by-step instructions for our core functionalities. Additionally, we offer M-Files Academy, an eLearning platform, offering a range of interactive courses designed to help users get the most out of our document management system.



Understanding Different Licensing Models

Document management system solutions often come with several licensing models. Understanding these models and selecting the one that aligns with your organization's budget and usage patterns is crucial for cost-effective implementation.

Sample licensing types can be seen below. Your organization may choose one or multiple licensing types, depending on your needs.

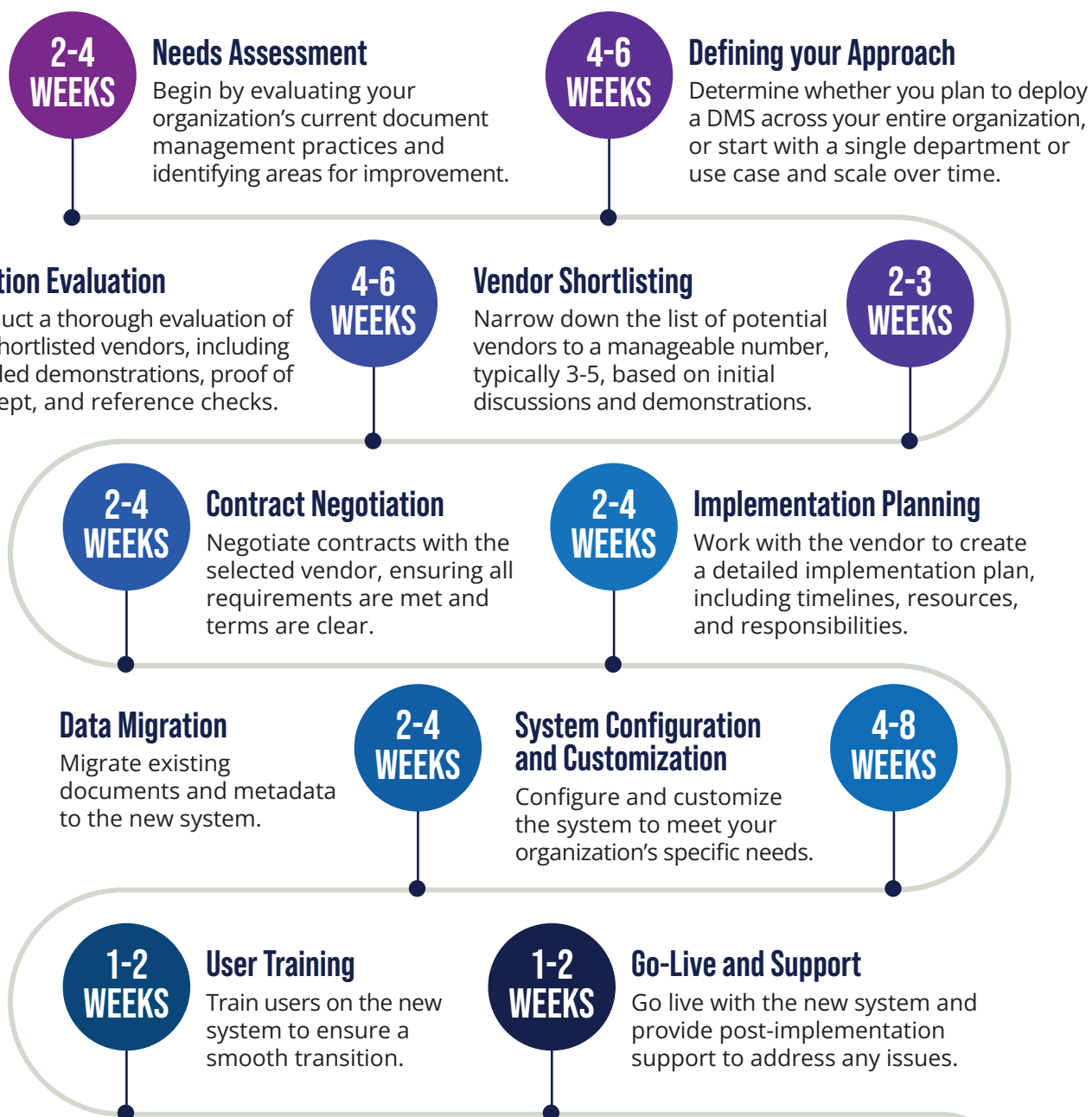
- **Perpetual Licenses:** One-time purchase, typically with optional maintenance fees.
- **Subscription Licenses:** Ongoing monthly or annual fees, often including updates and support.
- **Concurrent User Licenses:** Limits the number of users who can access the system simultaneously.
- **Named User Licenses:** Requires a license for each individual user.

You will be able to select a DMS that not only meets your current needs but also supports future growth and technological advancement by considering these essential features.

IMPLEMENTING A DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Implementing a document management system requires careful planning and execution. An example implementation timeline for your organization to follow is detailed below.

SAMPLE TIMELINE:



Managing the implementation of your organization's document management system is essential for a successful launch. There are a few things to consider when making sure the implementation aligns with your organization's goals.

PLANNING THE IMPLEMENTATION

To ensure a successful implementation of a document management system, it's essential to start with a solid foundation. This begins with the **Project Charter**, which defines the project's scope, objectives, and stakeholders. The charter serves as a reference point throughout the project, ensuring that everyone is aligned on the goals and the boundaries within which the project will operate.

Next, a detailed **Project Plan** is developed. This plan breaks down the project into manageable tasks, assigns timelines to each task, and allocates the necessary resources. It's a living document that guides the project team and helps track progress, making sure that the implementation stays on schedule and within budget.

Risk Management is also a critical component of the implementation process. By identifying potential risks early on, the project team can develop mitigation strategies to address these risks. This proactive approach helps to minimize the impact of unforeseen events and keeps the project on track.

Together, these elements form the backbone of a structured and disciplined approach to project management, which is vital for the successful deployment of a document management system.



STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

Securing an **Executive Sponsor** is crucial to ensure that the document management system implementation aligns with the organization's goals and has the necessary support from the top. Forming a **Project Team** with representatives from key departments brings diverse perspectives and expertise to the project, which is essential for comprehensive implementation. Additionally, engaging stakeholders throughout the process is a key aspect of **Change Management**. This engagement helps manage change effectively and ensures buy-in from all parties involved, which is vital for the successful adoption of the new system. Together, these elements create a strong foundation for the project's success.



SETTING CLEAR MILESTONES

Defining clear **milestones** and **deliverables** for each phase of the project is essential for measuring progress and maintaining focus. To ensure that the project stays on track, it's important to use **project management tools** that can track progress against these milestones. Additionally, conducting **regular project reviews** allows the team to ensure alignment with the plan and make any necessary adjustments. This structured approach helps to keep the project organized and on track for a successful implementation.



ENSURING ADOPTION ACROSS TEAMS

Involving users in the design and testing of the document management system is crucial to ensure it meets their needs and expectations. Developing comprehensive training programs is also essential to educate users on the new system, which helps in smoothing the transition and increasing adoption rates. Additionally, establishing a feedback mechanism allows for the collection of user input, which can be used to make necessary adjustments and improvements to the system. This approach not only helps in creating a system that is user-friendly but also ensures that users feel valued and heard, leading to better engagement and satisfaction.



M-FILES, THE LEADING KNOWLEDGE WORK AUTOMATION PLATFORM



M

WHAT IS M-FILES?

M-Files is the leading platform for document management and knowledge work automation. Knowledge work automation takes document management to the next level, utilizing GenAI technology to automate tasks, leaving knowledge workers free to do the intellectual work for which they were hired. Knowledge work automation allows knowledge workers to automate processes from document creation and management to workflow automation, external collaboration, enterprise search, security and compliance, and more.

With the M-Files platform, knowledge workers can find information faster, work smarter, and achieve more. M-Files features an innovative metadata-driven architecture, embedded workflow engine, and advanced artificial intelligence. This enables our customers to eliminate information chaos, improve process efficiency, and automate security and compliance.



For a quick overview, you can watch this **3-MINUTE VIDEO ABOUT M-FILES.**

HOW M-FILES COMPLEMENTS MICROSOFT

For organizations using Microsoft products, a DMS that complements the Microsoft stack can maximize existing investments. With its integration with Microsoft products, the M-Files knowledge work automation platform helps organizations optimize investments in Microsoft 365 by providing complementary capabilities for business processes and information governance.

M-Files makes Microsoft 365 the single point of access for all enterprise data, empowering enterprises to find, access, and manage all connected data, regardless of its storage repository, through Microsoft 365 user interfaces.



Microsoft SharePoint

With M-Files SharePoint Connector, you will be able to organize documents across all SharePoint servers and help knowledge workers access information faster, work smarter, and drive better outcomes. M-Files automatically organizes information based on type, properties, and relationships within Microsoft 365 and specifically for SharePoint. Knowledge workers don't have to search for information by trial and error or by navigating across multiple repositories or folders.



Microsoft Outlook

Elevate your inbox with M-Files Outlook Integration. You can edit and manage documents directly in Outlook while being able to search, view, edit, classify, and control all your email data. This integration automates filing emails and conversations with the appropriate client and project, enabling users to concentrate more on their work. This enhanced integration streamlines email organization and ensures communications and official correspondence are safely retained within the M-Files platform, enhancing overall productivity, efficiency, and compliance.



Microsoft Teams

M-Files Add-In for Microsoft Teams allows working in the context of a single team while providing unified access to all enterprise data from the M-Files Add-In tab. M-Files automates document governance and guides collaboration with workflows, while enabling ad-hoc conversations within Microsoft Teams. This integration empowers knowledge workers to leverage internal and external content collaboration for all enterprise data across any tech-stack.



Microsoft Copilot

Microsoft Copilot for Microsoft 365 is your every AI companion at work. It helps knowledge workers access relevant data seamlessly, summarize information from recent e-mails, capture meeting transcriptions, create new documents, conduct market research, and analyze regulatory compliance rules. M-Files integrates with Copilot for Microsoft 365 without making copies of documents and retaining all privacy, security, and compliance commitments.

By combining the well-curated information in M-Files with the insights scattered across Microsoft 365 applications, companies can achieve a comprehensive understanding of their business operations. This integration allows knowledge workers to seamlessly access all enterprise information across systems using natural language.



CHECK OUT OUR VIDEO
on enhancing your Microsoft
Copilot experience with M-Files



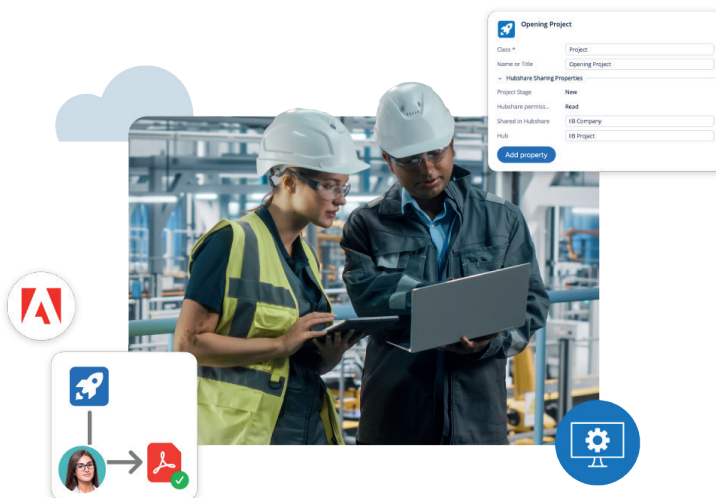
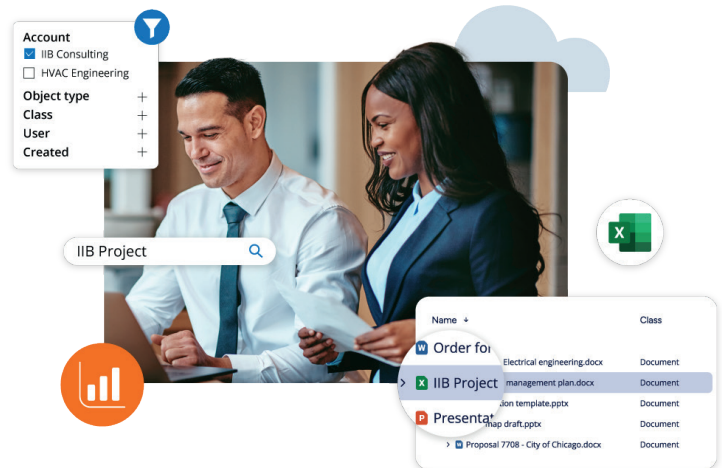
Gain a Unified User Experience. M-Files integrates seamlessly with Microsoft products, allowing Microsoft users to access content directly within the familiar Microsoft interface. Employees can collaborate, share documents, and manage content without switching between M-Files and Microsoft applications. This unified experience enhances user adoption and productivity.

M-FILES KEY STRENGTHS AND DIFFERENTIATORS

M-Files stands out due to several key strengths and differentiators that set it apart from traditional document management systems:

Unified Information Management

M-Files unifies systems, data, and content across the organization without requiring data migration, providing a seamless user experience. Your knowledge workers will be able to process vast amounts of information quickly, get answers to complex questions, and arrive at conclusions faster.

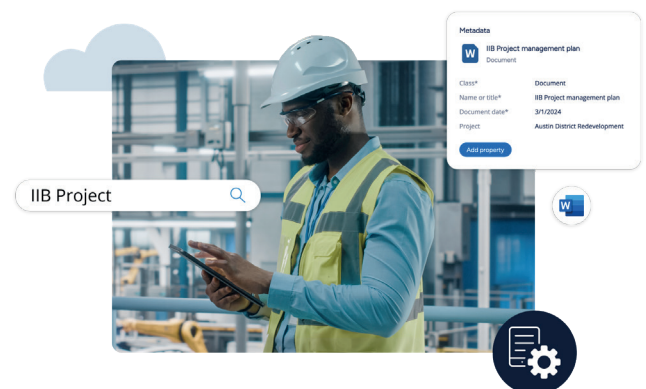


Workflow Automation

Embedded workflow engine automates document-related processes, such as approvals and reviews, enhancing efficiency and reducing manual effort.

Built on Metadata

Instead of relying on traditional folder structures, M-Files utilizes metadata to categorize and find documents, making it easier to locate information based on what it is rather than where it is stored. Our metadata approach drives superior AI experiences with connectivity, confidentiality, and curation capabilities.



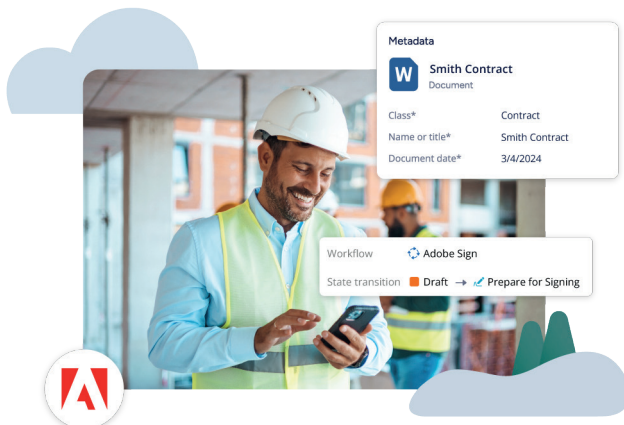
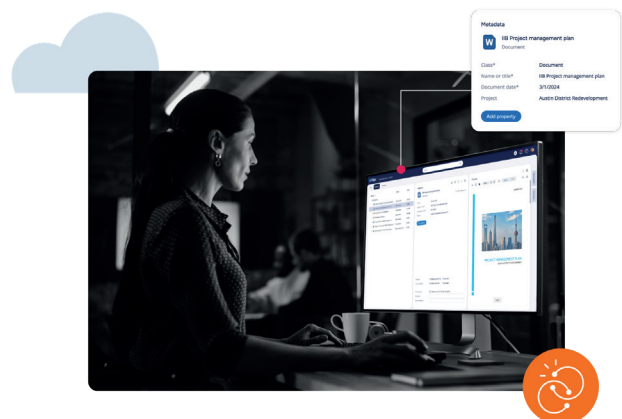


Scalability and Ease of Use

M-Files platform can scale with the organization, accommodating growing volumes of documents and users. Users can manage any enterprise information, from any system, and build relationships between them.

User-Friendly Interface

M-Files offers a simplified, consumer-like user experience, making it easier for users to adopt and use the system and perform searches from all connected systems to find the right information instantly from any source.

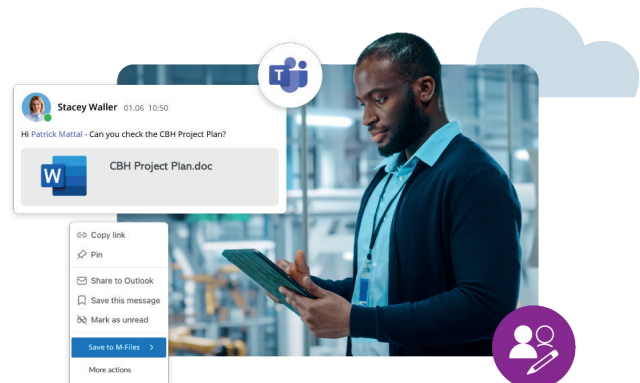


Automated Creation of Complex Documents

Experts minimize manual tasks to focus on what matters most so organizations can easily re-use organizational knowledge.

Smart Migration

M-Files smart migration service assists in migrating documents from external repositories into M-Files, automatically classifying and adding metadata to the content.



Created 10/10/2023 2:07 PM John Doe
Co-edited 3/1/2024 5:02 PM Tina Smith



Metadata

W Smith Contract
Document

Class* Contract
Name or title* Smith Contract
Document date* 3/4/2024

Security and Compliance

Robust security features, including encryption and access controls, ensure data protection and compliance with regulatory requirements.

Manage Permissions Automatically

Users have seamless access to all relevant information while information is safe from unauthorized access.

Metadata

W IIB Project management plan
Document

Class* Document
Name or title* IIB Project management plan
Document date* 3/1/2024
Project Austin District Redevelopment

[Add property](#)



Users	Reading	Edit	Delete
Tina Smith	✓	✗	✗
Jane Doe	✓	✓	✗
John Brown	✗	✓	✗



***Aino**

Summarize the financial performance of Smith & Associates.

Financial results include a record-breaking \$2.5 billion in revenue, up 15%, a net profit of \$350 million, a 12% increase, and expansion into new markets in South America and Asia.

Ask anything [ASK](#)

Generative AI Enhancements

M-Files utilizes Generative AI technology to streamline document management, workflow automation, and search using natural language interaction.

Complement Microsoft Investments

M-Files adds classification, automation, search, and compliance to Microsoft 365 and embeds in the apps for easy, secure access for improved knowledge worker productivity.



By understanding these features and strengths, you can see **how M-Files can significantly enhance your document management processes and overall business efficiency.**

FEATURE	M-FILES	OTHER TRADITIONAL DMS
Architecture	Metadata-Driven	Folder-Based
Workflow Automation	Embedded Workflow Engine	Limited or None
AI Capabilities	Advanced AI for Automation	Basic or None
Integration	Extensive (Microsoft 365)	Limited
Security	Robust (Encryption, Access Control)	Basic Security Features
Compliance	Comprehensive Compliance Tools	Limited Compliance Features



TAKING THE NEXT STEPS

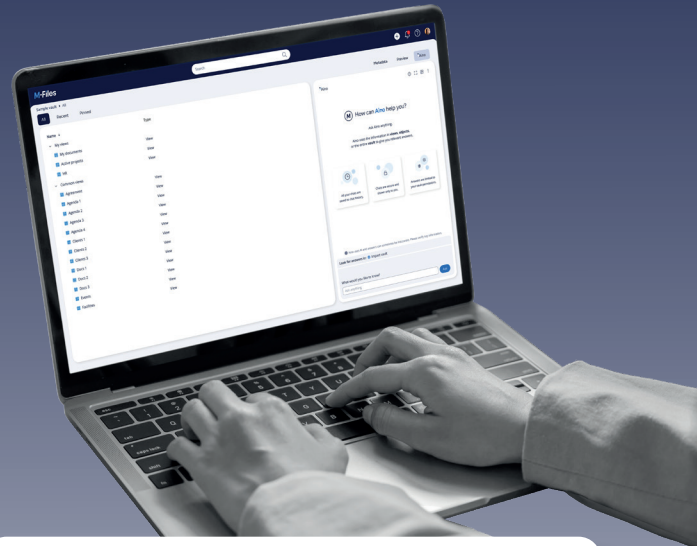
When considering M-Files for your document management needs, you have two primary options to explore the platform: trying M-Files for free or scheduling a demo. Each option serves different purposes and can be chosen based on your specific needs and stage in the decision-making process.

Try M-Files for Free

Our free trial is ideal for organizations or individuals who want to get hands-on experience with M-Files before making a commitment. It allows you to explore the basic features and functionalities at your own pace for 30 days. You can also invite your team to test M-Files together to ensure you are making the best decision for your business.



**START YOUR
FREE TRIAL**



Schedule a Demo of M-Files

Scheduling a demo provides a personalized, guided tour of M-Files by an expert. This option is perfect for organizations that need a deeper understanding of how M-Files can address their specific challenges and requirements.



SCHEDULE A DEMO
with a document
management expert today



M-Files is the leading platform for knowledge work automation.

With the M-Files platform, knowledge workers can find information faster, work smarter, and achieve more. M-Files features an innovative metadata-driven architecture, embedded workflow engine, and advanced artificial intelligence. This enables customers to eliminate information chaos, improve process efficiency, and automate security and compliance.

To contact one of our regional offices, visit m-files.com/en/contact-us

m-files.com

M-Files is a registered trademark of M-Files Corporation.
All other registered trademarks belong to their respective owners.