Benefits of Custom Integration - White Paper

Corporate librarians and information managers face the challenge of creating value that can be measured by the financial and operational managers in the organization. Many of these managers are not aware of the impact the librarian may have if they do not utilize the corporate library or its resources on a regular basis.

Corporate librarians can enhance their impact on the organization and make that impact easier to measure by integrating the premium business content they procure into corporate workflows. The result of deeper workflow integration is increased visibility to library resources, increased usage of those resources, and clearer metrics which help to estimate the benefits of the premium content procured through the corporate librarian.

Corporate librarians should expect their information vendors to work with them to optimize the access methods to that content. The vendors should be expected to establish access options that can be customized to meet the organization’s unique requirements.

Custom Integration Overview

Most information vendors provide a standard content offering, which may be accessed via the vendor’s platform, or can be integrated into a corporate library portal. In both cases, the content itself is not integrated into operational workflows in the organization. As a result, the content is “hidden” from operational view, and is less frequently used. In these cases, the operational users may be unaware of the library’s resources, as they are less apt to “leave” their daily online work environment and “go” to the library portal. This leaves the library isolated from the daily operations of the organization. The librarian can bridge this divide by bringing the library resources to the users via customized integrations to workflows.

Integrations can be as simple as a search box incorporated into a departmental portal, or more involved plug-ins such as the insertion of context-specific results in a CRM application like Salesforce.com.

RSS feeds and alerts are particularly effective integration tools. Users can create the alerts or library or information management staff can do it for them. Alerts and RSS feeds are “set it and forget it” tools. Once an alert is set, the information system can support the end user by monitoring content flows and delivering relevant information automatically (Alert) or on demand (RSS), while the end users manage their day to day work requirements.

These types of integrations can increase full text usage of premium content significantly. EBSCO has implemented several custom integrations and the results for selected customers are shown in Table 1:

Table 1: Change in content usage before and after custom integration
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Home center chain</td>
<td>BBS</td>
<td>1,395</td>
<td>2,851</td>
<td>104%</td>
<td>987</td>
<td>1,220</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health service provider</td>
<td>BSC+</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>468%</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>1,050</td>
<td>384%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research foundation</td>
<td>BSC+</td>
<td>744</td>
<td>1,496</td>
<td>101%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>267%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auto maker</td>
<td>BBS</td>
<td>916</td>
<td>2,264</td>
<td>147%</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>838</td>
<td>150%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biotech firm</td>
<td>BBS &amp; BSC+</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>552</td>
<td>151%</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>395</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering firm (small)</td>
<td>BSC+</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>2,200%</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>358%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grocery chain</td>
<td>LMLC</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>208%</td>
<td>341</td>
<td>412</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note:
BBS: Business Book Summaries
BSC+: Business Source Corporate Plus
LMLC: Leadership & Management Learning Center

The impact of custom integrations can be quite significant. Placing the content into the departmental workflows makes operational users far more likely to utilize it. More important, the increased searches generate increased downloads of relevant full text.

The impact of custom integrations is not limited to Global 1,000 firms. While they do have their share of increased usage, even smaller organizations like research foundations and engineering firms can enjoy significant increases in usage.

**Custom Integration Metrics and Impact**

Custom integration metrics include usage of specific content via an operational portal or workflow application, over a set period that can be used to determine library return on investment calculations. Return on Investment (ROI) is best used...
for activities that can be measured using accepted financial accounting principles. Impact on Business (IOB) is best used when the measurements are not definable using accepted financial accounting principles, but where the benefit to be measured is still significant. IOB is an approximation, to be sure, but it can be an important tool for justifying the benefits of library-procured resources to the organization.

Depending on the application/workflow, measurable metrics (for ROI calculations) include:

1. Number of full text views
2. Number of alerts created & items delivered
3. Document delivery charges avoided through better utilization of licensed full text

The impact of integration can also be demonstrated by the operational managers that use the content in their workflows. These managers can attest to the utility of content and demand its continued availability. This “customer satisfaction” is a good IOB indicator. The corporate librarian can capture end user ratings and comments through internal polls and emails, and can even enlist the operational managers as allies in the defending the library’s role in the organization.

Conclusion

Optimizing the utility of business information resources transforms the librarian from information curator to information champion. By integrating premium business content into workflows, it becomes an operational asset that has a direct and continued impact on daily operations. Demanding integration support from vendors, and taking the time to work with those vendors on content integration, will produce measurable ROI and demonstrable IOB for operational and financial managers across the organization.

About EBSCO Global Software Services

EBSCO’s Global Software Services team provides custom integration support for corporate customers around the world. Integrations range from the simple to the complex and are fully customized to meet end-user requirements.

To learn more about EBSCO and its content integration capabilities, please see http://www.ebscohost.com/corporate-research/workflow-integration or contact us on 800-653-2726 or +978-356-6500.