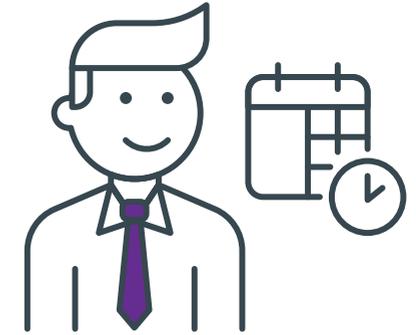


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How to preserve your business assets in five simple steps

Across all industries, whether by choice or necessity, businesses are acknowledging the importance of preserving and securing their data for the future. However, knowing where to start is a challenge that most face. This simple guide will help you on your way and set you on a clear path to safeguard your most valuable assets.



1. Acknowledge your need for change

The most common situation we find is that organisations are experiencing exponential growth of their data and creating more digital assets than ever before. These businesses will also have legacy systems used for storage and a degree of paper copies that need retaining. The sheer quantity and variety is daunting and makes a project hard to start.

We are all guilty of being caught up in our day-to-day roles. Therefore, it's important to take a step back and look at the bigger picture to determine which opportunities exist in protecting our business' critical data. Make a simple assessment of existing storage and current ongoing data creation within the business. Although it sounds simple, acknowledging limitations in data preservation is an important first step in safeguarding your business' future.

2. Assess which assets are most at risk

So, you have realised action is needed sooner rather than later, but where to start? We advocate a risk-based approach to this process. Different groups and batches of documents can be assessed and classified. Often this exercise will result in some document types being destroyed in a controlled manner, with a certificate of destruction as evidence of a controlled decision. Some paper and digital records may be deemed as low value/risk and can remain in their current format leaving the high risk or high value assets as being identified. This is where you need to start, you need to address this group first.

The risk assessment stage will vary due to the size and variety of storage but take the time to complete this step fully as it is important to assess the size of the various tasks you are facing. There will be many questions that will arise from this data audit but only by identifying the questions can you then answer them.

3. Choose your solution wisely

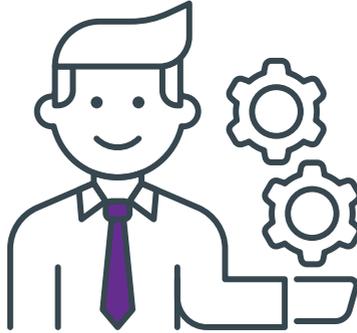
Once this risk assessment of all current data has been carried out, it's time to find a solution. But, it's not simply a case of picking the first solution you can find, as each business will require a different approach to tackle their individual challenges. There is much to consider with data preservation, but there are also a lot of helpful guides available. The Digital Preservation Coalition (DPC) is a great place to start, as it serves as a robust resource, across numerous industries, on data preservation challenges and solutions.

It is very unlikely that businesses will know and understand every option available to them, which is why it is crucial the team take a set period of time to comprehend the solutions at their disposal. Research is key. Off-the-shelf software solutions offer additional resource and support via the vendor, yet flexibility to meet your exact requirements may be limited. Custom solutions provide an enormous amount of flexibility, yet tend to come with a hefty price tag and limited support. Investing significant time in this decision and educating the project team accordingly will pay off in the long run, as you'll have chosen a solution that works best for your team and meets your business goals.

4. Create an implementation plan

Now that you have identified a suitable solution, it's time to plan for action. You know what assets you want to preserve, which are your priority and where they will reside. All you need now is clear direction for the journey to digital preservation. There will be many internal business obstacles that need to be navigated, such as time, cost and staff restraints. All these will influence the implementation, so there needs to be a clearly defined structure in place to help it run smoothly.

Obtain sponsorship for the project from a high level, data preservation mitigates a multitude of risks and due to this it is often a board level discussion. If sponsorship needs promoting then illustrate how the project will introduce cost savings whilst ensuring business continuity, the majority of board members will want to discuss such a proposal. Once leadership has been established, set out a clear timeline, as well as a big goal to work towards and small manageable steps so everyone knows what they are working towards.



5. Put your plan into action

The time has now come for action. If the correct planning steps have been taken beforehand, this action should be the easiest stage of the whole implementation. Whilst the end goal for every business will be total data preservation, this is not the result of the initial implementation. Instead, focus on the small wins and keep your eye on the prize.

It is unrealistic to think that all assets will be preserved overnight, but small steps can be

taken to set the process on its way. Although it may seem like a simple task, reminding your team of the process and helping them to focus on the small successes will go a long way. There will be a lot of change to the business, so staff need to be reassured of their progress with rewards for tackling the various stages of the project. With these steps in place, your business will be on the right track to safeguarding your digital assets.

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