

Thought Leadership Document Outsourcing



Productivity growth is vital to the future of every enterprise. But how do you increase the productivity of knowledge workers, the vitally important employees who work with information and data?

I'll provide three suggestions below that could help your knowledge workers get more done every day.

A heightened focus on productivity growth.

A couple of months ago, Jeremy Siegel, a renowned professor of finance at the Wharton School, gave his assessment of the global economy at a forum in Madrid. In his remarks, he highlighted one factor that was vital to the future: "Productivity growth will be key to the global economy going forward," he said.

I couldn't agree more. But I also realize that productivity has become increasingly difficult to evaluate in the Information Age. After all, knowledge workers are highly mobile and often self-managed. Their tasks may vary from day to day. And their output can be impossible to define and quantify, because it includes expertise, ideas and decisions that may take years to reach fruition. They are also very collaborative. So it's hard to separate one employee's contribution from the rest of the team.

Identifying a key factor in the knowledge work process.

Despite these challenges, there are some sensible steps you can take to boost productivity, especially if you consider this telling fact: Most knowledge work begins and ends with documents.

Input documents bring in raw data and other information. Output documents capture the processing, research, analysis, intelligence and ideas that represent the final product.

Once you recognize the pivotal role documents play, you can take action to improve the way you manage them and the information they contain. And that can help you increase the efficiency and effectiveness of your knowledge workers.

Three proven ways to boost productivity.

1. **Automate paper-based processes.** In 2010, the U.S. Treasury Department reported that government agencies spend \$750 million simply processing paper invoices for payment. The department also reported that automation could help reduce those costs by 20 percent. That gives you some idea of the step-change improvements that come from converting traditional paper-based processes into fast, efficient digital workflows. Knowledge workers also benefit, because they no longer have to spend so much time handling paperwork. Instead, they can devote more attention to tasks that deliver more value to their organizations.



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2. **Create an enterprise document management system.** Instead of relying on physical filing systems and a disconnected series of digital repositories, you can implement a centralized digital repository that makes it much easier for knowledge workers to find the specific documents and information they need.

A centralized approach to document management also helps knowledge workers accelerate the revision process, maintain version control, maximize the reuse of content and improve information security. This sensible approach works for engineering drawings, product documentation, discovery documents, marketing assets, HR and finance documents, and all of the other documents that support your daily operations.

3. **Liberate the informational content of your digital documents.** Major technological advancements are bringing more structure to unstructured documents. As a result, it's easier for people to find, access and work with the critical information stored inside documents. This development—fueled by the latest cataloging, tagging and optical character recognition techniques—has enormous implications for knowledge work, because it gives unstructured content the advantages of a structured database.

All of these approaches speed up the flow of information, eliminate time-consuming steps involved in document-driven business processes, and give knowledge workers more time to devote to higher value tasks. And they're all based on the same fundamental idea:

If you want to boost the productivity of people who work with documents, you have to improve your approach to document management.

What happens next? Your knowledge workers will be able to deliver more value every day. And that will help you contend with a challenging economic environment, develop high-powered plans for growth, and drive your organization forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John M. Kelly". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

John M. Kelly