

**TRANSCRIPTION:**

**Xerox Thought Leadership Podcast Series**

The Future of Documents  
Interview with François Ragnet  
Xerox Global Services

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**FR: François Ragnet**

GM: I am Gabriele McLaughlin from Emerging Technologies. On behalf of Xerox Global Services, I welcome you to Think Free with us. This podcast is part of an ongoing series. Be sure to visit [Xerox.com/ThoughtLeadership](http://Xerox.com/ThoughtLeadership) to download future podcasts.

GM: I'm chatting today with François Ragnet. He's a thought leader at Xerox Global Services. He's an expert on the future of documents. François, what can you tell us about the sheer volume of information in businesses today?

FR: Do you know that over seven and a half billion documents are produced yearly, and that over 100 million knowledge workers actually spending over 20 percent of their time looking for that information, but that only 50 percent of them find that information? That's really a symptom of what we call information explosion.

GM: What is the document's role in this information explosion, and how is it changing?

FR: The document is central to information explosion to that problem, because the information you're looking for is contained in the document, whether a Word document, a spreadsheet, a PDF, or any other kind of paper document. The role it has is changing though in the sense that the document we choose to be opaque and contain that information that hold it will

now become much more open through a concept that we call smarter documents.

GM: What is a smart document? What does that mean?

FR: That's a good question. I wish I had a straight answer, but from what I can tell, I think it's going to be open. It's going to be able to broadcast its metadata information to all business processes that it plays into. It is also going to be secure at the very fine level where specific parts of the documents will be hidden to specific users and will be accessible to others, and this might actually go down to a very fine level of granularity where specific words might be hidden for specific customers or might not be for others. Finally, it will be evergreen. It will automatically fetch relevant content from the Internet or from other sources of information in order to refresh its content and keep it up to date.

GM: Okay. We're talking about paper documents and electronic documents, but weren't paper documents suppose to go away by now—you know, the paperless office?

FR: It's interesting you ask this question, because there has been a lot of discussions or rumors about the paperless office back in the 80s. The first report that when to gain a paperless office was actually reaching in the Xerox Research Center Europe in Cambridge at the time by Abigail Sellen, and that paper, called "The Affordance of Paper," actually stated that paper was not going to be disappearing any time soon. Instead, its usage was changing. That's what has proved to be true over the last few years. We still see paper actually growing, but we don't use it anymore as a long-term storage. We use it more as

an informal communication tool, as a short-term archival system, as a review media. So, it's really still there, but its usage is changing.

GM: What are the key advantages to smarter document management?

FR: Total document management or smarter document management will help you cut costs out of your organization by making your processes automatic and more efficient as well as potentially generate more revenue, because once you realize you can cut this cost, maybe that opens areas for new ways of handling documents, which you can offer your customers.

GM: So, François, how can businesses become more efficient in the use of paper, or even color printing?

FR: It's a very good question. You probably know that today there is a huge waste of paper and printing resources. Did you know that on average, companies have one device, one printing device, for every 2.2 workers? That these office devices are used only two percent of a typical day. So, that's about 50 minutes. That, you know, companies can face output costs of nearly \$1,000 per office base employee per year. So, it really shows that document management is not a very well controlled domain in any organization. Now smarter document management can help you cut those costs. You can implement effective device management and save between 10 percent and 30 percent very easily, but in the future we believe we'll be able to achieve more like in the 40 percent to 50 percent savings range. Now we've mentioned paper, but color is the next frontier, because today color is an underutilized tool, because it

is much more costly than printing in black and white. In the future, though, we will be bringing out techniques that will allow a more responsible use of color, allowing users to print in color when it really makes sense, but then making sure it is printed on the right device, so it doesn't cost too much to your organization.

GM: What is preventing the full-blown smart document from advancing?

FR: It is almost there. There are bits and pieces that are available, so technology is almost ready for prime time. We have technology to get categorized, to extract information. In fact, we have technologies to help you filter that information. Now we need two critical pieces. The first one is a better understanding of the work processes that the customer is involved in. Even more importantly, we need the right infrastructure to pull all of these smarter document technologies together, and provide that as a service to our customers.

GM: When you say the right document infrastructure needs to be created, what do you mean?

FR: It will take a few components. The first one is those smarter document technologies I referred to earlier in pulling them all together, orchestrating them so that they can mimic your business processes. Almost as important is the fact of providing portals between the paper and the electronic world. Typically, scanners, multifunction printers, office devices, or production devices that would let your document seamlessly flow from the paper world into the digital world and follow your business processes.

GM: I hear you've developed a piece of technology called a categorizer. What does it do?

FR: It's based on very advanced machine learning techniques, state-of-the-art research, and basically, what it does is pretty simple. It takes a document or any piece of text, and it will tell you what categories a document belongs to. It can take a document and say, "This is a letter, this is a mortgage application, this is a resume," and it will be therefore able to automate one of the most critical steps in a business process, which is routing a document to the right person or to the right business process. A good example I like to mention very often is work we are doing hand in hand with one of France's leading mobile telecom operators. We have worked with them on applying the categorizer to streamline their incoming customer correspondence and automatically assign it to the right category and business process. There already we're able to accrue savings between 25 percent and 30 percent on their very diverse correspondence.

GM: How is the trend towards increasing mobility affecting documents, and how are we dealing with it?

FR: Imagine working with your document in the future through your PDA. You will be able in any place to just walk around with your document that you've received by e-mail. You will be able to discover surrounding devices that will let you print and scan our document, connect to it, and then beam your document and get it printing in front of you or scanned to whatever recipients or whatever business process you want to execute. That is something that we are

working on, and will become a reality in the near future, and will make sure all of the implications of that are taken into accounting, including security, because you will be working in a nonsecure context, and you will be dealing with some very sensitive information in those documents. So, you want that process to be secured.

GM: François, are there any other points you'd like to touch on regarding the future of documents?

FR: In conclusion, I would say that smarter document management is not far away. It's actually at your fingertips. It's ready for you to use, and Xerox can help you bring smarter document management to your organization. Smarter document management will help you reduce costs, cut cost out of your business processes, but also potentially generate revenue. I haven't touched upon the long-term future of the document, the e-paper, the free digitalizations, and all of these things, but that might be the topic of another podcast.

GM: Thank you François. If you'd like more information on "The Future of Documents" and other important topics, join us at [Xerox.com/ThoughtLeadership](http://Xerox.com/ThoughtLeadership).

I am Gabriele McLaughlin. On behalf of Xerox Global Services, thank you so much for listening.

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