INVESTIGATING EDMS DISSATISFACTION

IS DOCUMENT CONTROL A JOB OR A PROFESSION?

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

EDITORIAL

This month, we focus on subjects around EDMS and users rights.

Indeed, although EDMS solutions are just tools to Document Controllers, they take a growing part in our daily work lives, and in the questions that we see arising in the Document Control forums and social platforms.

Some of the common questions include "what is the best EDMS" and "what to do when the EDMS we are using is not satisfactory". In this issue, we wanted to tackle this subject, especially: What are the steps to be taken when users are not happy with their EDMS. The solution is not to immediately decide to change EDMS and find a new one: there are questions to be answered before that.

We also propose a method to allocate user rights to the EDMS, and we gathered best practices on user access rights. Those are very sensitive subjects that should be discussed as early as possible.

One of the main topic of this issue #19 is controversial: is Document Control only a "job" or is it a "profession". We strongly believe that Document Control should be recognized and considered as a profession, a career path, and not just a job.

At Consepsys, we strive at building the Document Control discipline and to gather the Document Control community. We hope that you enjoy this new issue of the Document Control Tribune. If you like it, share it, send it and talk about it!

* EDMS = Electronic Document Management Software

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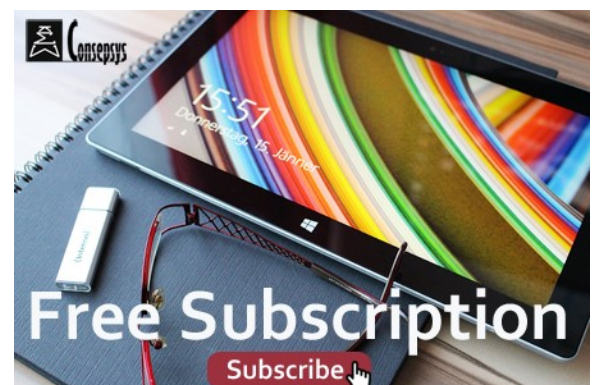
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GOOD PRACTICES FOR USER ACCESS

One of the responsibilities of the Document Control team is to ensure the integrity of "Controlled Documents" (see a definition of controlled documents).

Maintaining the integrity of controlled documents means that we work to avoid any uncontrolled modifications, and any unauthorized access.

Integrity of controlled documents

When we provide consultancy to companies on Document Control, it is not rare to see that important files are not necessarily protected against uncontrolled modifications. For instance:

- Cases where the whole team (including authors, reviewers, engineers, users, etc.) has a direct access to important files, with the right to modify, update, revise without going through a controlled gate. These cases are causing harm to basic control of documentation, revision control, traceability, auditability, accountability and of course ultimately safety.

- Cases where the comments are archived but where the author of those comments can come back on it months or years later and modify what he/she said at the time. These cases are causing harm to traceability and eventually liability of the company.

- Or cases where documents are sent outside the company without going through Document Control first, causing harm to traceability and to the liability of the company.

These cases are not rare but more often than not they are the result of 'not thinking' about the access rights more than the result of an actual desire for documents to be in danger of uncontrolled modifications or unauthorized access.

And it is true that talking about access rights can seem a bit "dry" to most people and, we have seen that, at the beginning of a project for example, management feels at first that it is a secondary issue that can be dealt with at a later stage.

Unfortunately it is not a subject that should be pushed to a later discussion. First because, very often, that discussion actually never happens. But most importantly because the lack of anticipation and definition of access rights can have very severe consequences that can harm the whole project.

This striking story was given to us by a Document Controller who had to face that situation: The project just started and everyone was just fire-fighting with a lot of problems and issues. The Project Manager had given the go ahead to create the folder structure in the EDMS for this new project, but did not want to spend time on access rights right now (having so much to do already). So when the DC asked about access rights, the manager just said "let's give them the same as for the previous phase of the project". Unfortunately, the previous phase was an internal phase, involving only internal users. The new phase was a phase involving several contractors and suppliers. In the heat of the start of the project, nobody really thought about the impact that this would have on access rights and filing structure.

The surprise was huge when after a couple of weeks the Project Manager received a letter for unlawful disclosure of information from a supplier who was not happy to see that other suppliers had access to sensitive and contractual information through the EDMS. Indeed, everybody had been given an access to everything, even external companies.

So what should we do to tackle this access right subject?

The first step is to sit down with management and to define:

- Typical roles and what they need to be able to do in the EDMS (for example, a simple user will just need to read documents, but an engineer may need to create, review, etc)

- Groups of users who should have the same access rights

- Sensitive information, where it should be stored in the filing system and who should (and should not) have access to it.

- Access right levels for each group of users against each folder / node in the filing structure

- Clear definition of what is considered a controlled document in the company, with definition of the process to manage them and guarantee their integrity.

The earliest this process is started, the better, and it is actually recommended to do it even before EDMS access is given to users.
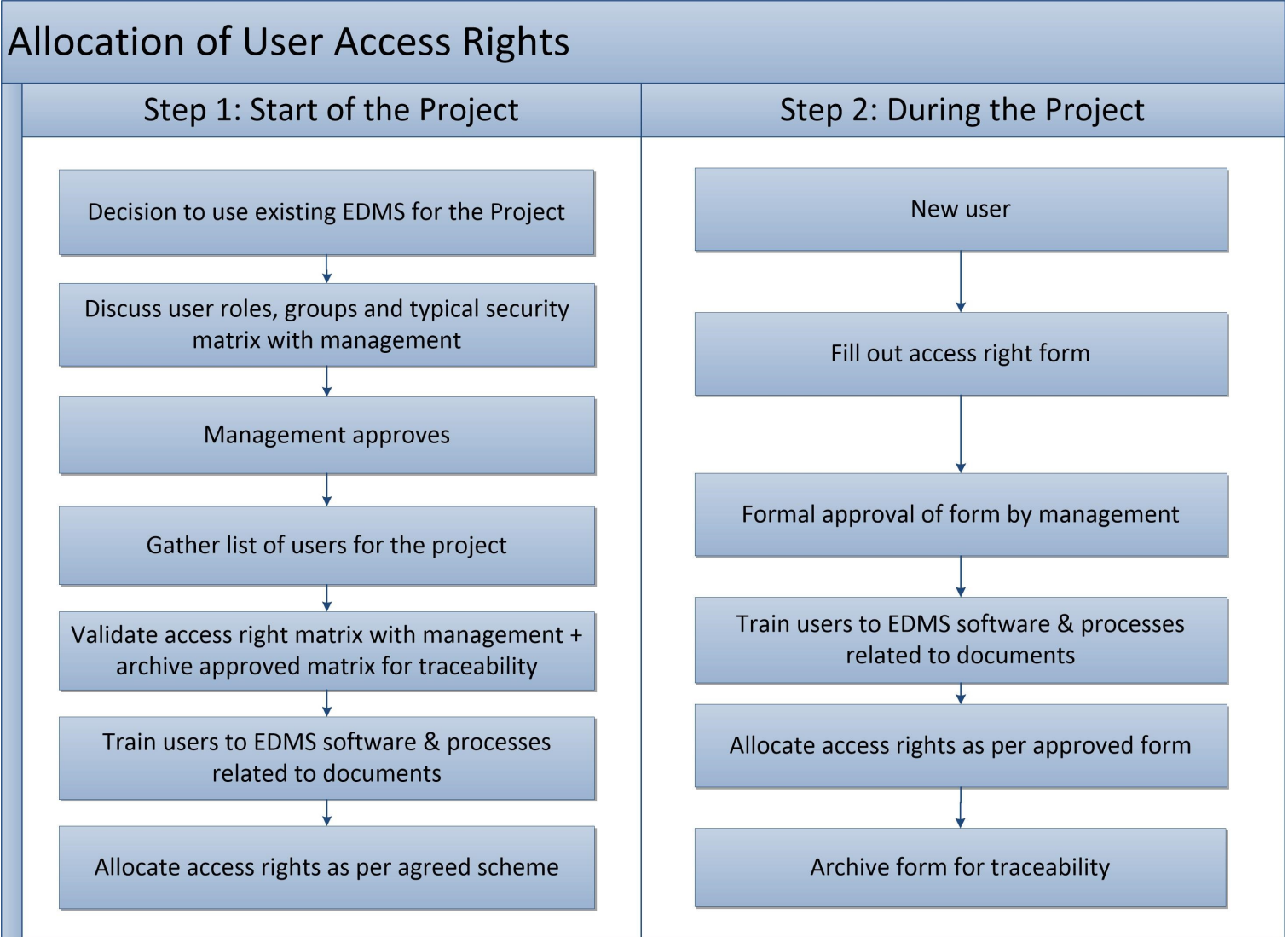
USER ACCESS RIGHTS: STEP BY STEP

When is the best moment to discuss & define access rights, and what are the steps to be taken?

The below chart shows a step by step approach that can be used as a starting point (although of course it needs to be customized based on the processes of the company/entity it is rolled out in).

Allocation of User Access Rights

Step 1: Start of the Project	Step 2: During the Project
Decision to use existing EDMS for the Project	New user
Discuss user roles, groups and typical security matrix with management	Fill out access right form
Management approves	Formal approval of form by management
Gather list of users for the project	Train users to EDMS software & processes related to documents
Validate access right matrix with management + archive approved matrix for traceability	Allocate access rights as per approved form
Train users to EDMS software & processes related to documents	Archive form for traceability
Allocate access rights as per agreed scheme	

New

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IS DOCUMENT CONTROL A 'JOB' OR A PROFESSION?

We sometimes come across comments on social media saying "Document Control is a job, not a profession" or "Document Control is not something you do as a career".

However, although those comments sometimes come from Document Control professionals who mean well and are actually a bit frustrated with their work place at a certain moment in their career, we would like to emphasize on why we truly believe that Document Control should be considered as a profession, and not just as a job.

Difference between a job and a profession

But first things first: what is the difference between a "job" and a "profession".

A **job** is a task or activity, that one does temporarily, for the sole purpose of earning money and paying living expenses. Although it is part of one's career, it is not a career path and it is likely that, if unhappy with your job, you would move on and find another one, which may or may not be in the same field.

A **profession** however is a vocation based on specialised training and requires a specialized skillset, that you learn as much in theory (via training course or education) as in practices (throughout your career). A career will consist of, most likely, several positions in the same profession, and one may move on to another work opportunity, but usually in the same field.

What about Document Control? Is a job or a profession?

There is no doubt that some people who are employed as Document Controllers at the moment have started in Document Control as a simple 'job'. Many Document Controllers were doing other jobs before, such as assistant, receptionist, or even engineer. When presented with the opportunity of a Document Control job, they were brave and took it, although at first they might have wondered: what is really expected of me, here?

Although this is a case that we very frequently see, we can also witness every day that many of those who started in Document Control as a "job" to pay the bills have developed a real passion for it, and have actually discovered a true vocation, the career that makes them 'tick'.

Once that step is taken, these individuals will be on a path of becoming a professional: developing their understanding of the tasks and the "why" behind every task and requirement, ensuring that they are working as per the best practices, always striving to learn more and to develop their skillset to the next level. They will also think about the Document Control profession in terms of career and look at developing their knowledge in different industries, work environments, levels of seniority, etc.

Why should we think of Document Control as a profession

One of the commonly used differentiator between a "job" and a "profession" is: "Does it makes a difference, within its environment and within the society?". And here, we would really advocate that true professional Document Control definitely makes the difference.

It helps saving lives every day on operational sites, constructions sites, yards, plants, planes, ships, etc. By ensuring that people work with only the latest approved documents.

Examples are countless where Document Control made the difference, but also where Document Control saved a company from bankruptcy during an investigation by providing the audit trail of decisions and discussions, or where Document Control helped save the reputation of a Company by stopping a confidential document that was just about to be divulged externally, or where Document Control provided the latest information instantly and allowed engineers to find a solution in a very time-sensitive case for example in a hostage situation, or in a space shuttle emergency.

Of course, if we want to be considered and recognized as professionals, there is a lot for us to do and undertake. The recognition will come as much from ourselves as from our interfaces.

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"Hanging in there" with D. Ceecee - the Document Controller　　by Tuffmee

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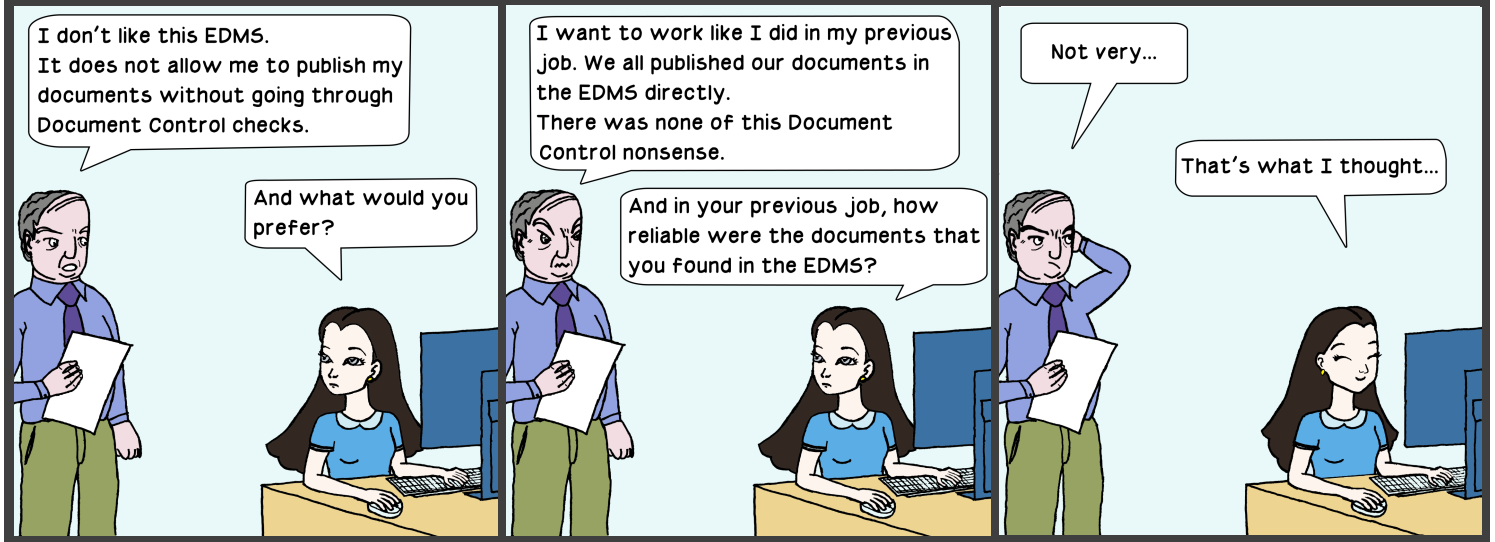
Panel 1:
- I don't like this EDMS. It does not allow me to publish my documents without going through Document Control checks.
- And what would you prefer?

Panel 2:
- I want to work like I did in my previous job. We all published our documents in the EDMS directly. There was none of this Document Control nonsense.
- And in your previous job, how reliable were the documents that you found in the EDMS?

Panel 3:
- Not very...
- That's what I thought...

Follow D. Ceecee on Consepsys and on f

INVESTIGATING EDMS DISSATISFACTION

We meet hundreds of Document Controllers every year, coming from over 50 industries, over 80 countries and 6 continents, and one of the most common topics discussed is the dissatisfaction of Document Controllers (or of their users) with their EDMS (Electronic Document Management Software Package).

The most common reasons for EDMS dissatisfaction can be classified in 4 main categories:

#1 Missing Capability

One of the reasons commonly discussed is the fact that the EDMS software used in the company is missing a key capability. A couple of examples:

- Capability to differentiate between a working document and an official revision validated by DC

- Capability to create transmittal sheets directly from the EDMS

But sometimes, perhaps worse than a missing capability, is the case whereby the capability is here but not satisfactory. One example is that company that invested in an EDMS for its integrated capability for engineers to review documents and annotate documents with their comments directly within the software. At first, they thought their requirement was covered. But they later realised that it was impossible to extract those comments and annotations from the EDMS, for example into a nice clean PDF file that could be sent back to a contractor or supplier. The comments were logged into the software but if the recipient did not have access to the software then it was not of much use.

#2 EDMS perceived as "slow"

One of the most common reasons, especially coming from non-Document Controller users is that the EDMS is slow, and that it slows them down when trying to do an effective job.

Anytime the word "slow" is mentioned,

it is actually recommended to take a step back, and to determine answers to the following questions:

- What does "slow" mean?

- What are the users' expectations in terms of speed for the most common tasks (opening a document, validating a document, etc)?

- Are those expectations fair?

- Do they mean that the software is slow (for example, I click on a button and nothing happens for the next 30 seconds) or that the process is slow (for example, when changing processes from a manual process to an automated software one, some actions may seem to have extra steps than before).

#3 Not "user-friendy"

This is also a very common comment about some EDMS solutions. Users find it "not user-friendly". It can be for different reasons, for example some software suites require too many clicks to obtain results that the user perceives as "basic" (for example, to obtain a report on late documents, or to create a document).

Sometimes the problem can also come from resistance to change: Humans are creatures of habits and sometimes changing software or using a different one than the one previously used in another company, can cause a first reaction of rejection. If it is the case, putting efforts on more education for the users to use the software, better training material, more inductions, etc can definitely help going through the first phases of rejec-

tion, and hopefully getting the users to love their EDMS.

#4 Other reasons

There can be of course other reasons, not necessarily linked to the software itself, or the IT infrastructure, but much more linked to lack of clear processes and procedures, lack of definition of clear roles and responsibilities, lack of understanding of risks associated with uncontrolled documentation, or benefits associated with controlled documents.

What steps should we take to investigate & fix the dissatisfaction

The first thing to do should not be to immediately go and look for a new EDMS. The problem may not come from the software itself (and therefore may recur with another EDMS), but moreover there are extra steps to be taken to understand and quantify the problem as well as trying to find fit-for-purpose solutions.

Consepsys has produced a **high-level workflow** to show some of the steps that can be taken to investigate and fix the most common causes of dissatisfaction. It is available on our website (free) here:
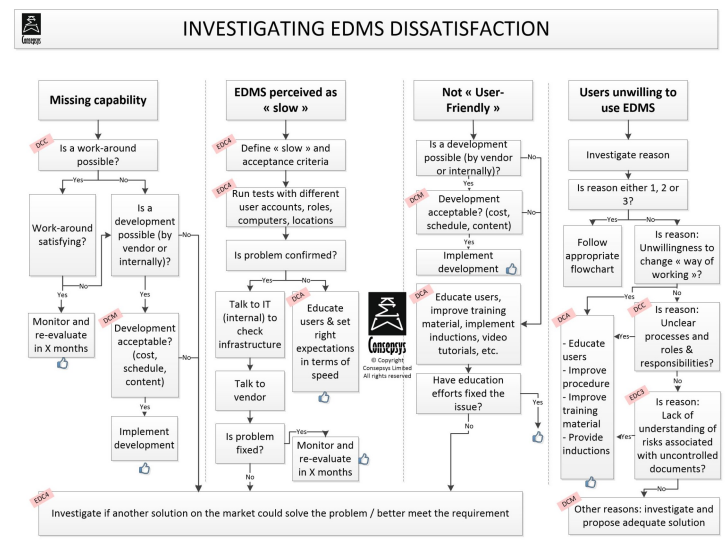
INVESTIGATING EDMS DISSATISFACTION

PORTRAIT OF A DOCUMENT CONTROLLER

VICKI BEAR

Document Control Supervisor
at Universal Orlando, Florida, United States

Vicki attended the Certified Document Controller and Certified Lead Document Controller courses in 2018 in Houston, Texas.

Can you tell us a bit about you?

My name is Vicki Bear and I am 48 years old. I have been married for 27 years to my wonderful husband.

We have 2 children, 2 grandchildren and 2 dogs. I was born and raised in Orlando Florida; I have lived in Orlando for 44 of my 48 years.

I have been working at Universal Orlando for 29 years. In my spare time I like to go to the movies, play bingo and relax.

What is your current role?

I am currently the Document Control Supervisor for Universal Orlando but have worked all the positions here in Document Control.

I supervise 5 full time team members and an occasional temporary person.

One of my roles is to implement procedures and processes that work for Document Control as well as our end users. I am also working on helping establish policy and procedures for new project documentation.

I am known by some as the "keeper of the knowledge" since I have been in Document Control for 22 years and with the company for 29.

Can you describe your professional experience?

I started in Document Control 22 years ago as a clerk and with absolutely no experience. My co-worker at the time had many years' experience and taught me "the rules" of document control.

I have always been detail oriented and somewhat mechanically inclined so I was able to grasp the Document Control concepts quite easily.

"The classes were very beneficial in reinforcing the fundamentals of Document Control and that what we are doing is right on track with industry standards"

Which Consepsys course did you attend and when?

I completed all five of the e-learning modules in the early part of 2018.

I went to the Certified Document Controller course and the Lead Document Controller course in Houston in September 2018.

What did you think about the course? How did it help you in your

current role and career development?

The classes were very beneficial in reinforcing the fundamentals of Document Control and that what we are doing is right on track with industry standards.

Julie is a great teacher with her knowledge and experience.

It was an added benefit to have Luis in the class as it was good to hear the engineering side of Document Control.

It was an awesome experience to talk with the wide range of people in the class from all over the world and we all spoke and understood the same language….Document Control.

If you attended one of our courses and would like to apply to be featured in one of our upcoming issues, drop us an email at:

DEVELOPING INFLUENCING SKILLS

First of all, what are influencing skills and why are they useful for Document Controllers?

Influencing skills are a set of skills that allow you to convince other people and to obtain a true "buy-in" from them.

It is the ability to bring someone to your way of thinking and gaining their support without force or coercion.

Why should Document Control professionals develop influencing skills?

Basically because it makes their job easier. Indeed, a large part of our day is spent explaining rules and making sure that people follow the rules related to documents.

But it becomes so much easier when the other party (let's say an author, or a supplier) understands the reasons why it is so important to follow the rules and not to deviate from the process.

For example, you will not be able to stop the behaviour of someone who consistently sends documents to the client without any quality check and without going through Document Control, if that person is not convinced that it is more risky and cumbersome for them to act like that than going through the proper channel.

So influencing skills are very useful to Document Controllers, but **how to develop them?**

The truth is that it is not a set of skills that you acquire overnight. It is a set of skills that you need to develop throughout your career, by taking every opportunity to learn and exercise.

The roadmap is to develop skills such as:

- Awareness of one's own behaviour
- Awareness and understanding of other people's personality traits, characters, motivators, etc
- Understanding of the big picture (why are we doing that?) and how Document Control relates to the big picture and to each stakeholders
- Speaking in public
- Assertiveness
- Emotional intelligence
- Communication skills
- Negociation skills
- Cultural awareness

The idea is to develop those skills every day, relentlessly and to never lose an opportunity to try. It takes time and practice to perfect those skills but it allows to become incredibly more effective when we have them!

Share your experience and let us know your tips to develop influencing skills at dctribune@consepsys.com

Best stories and tips will be published in next issues of the Document Control Tribune.

JULIE TCHAO

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