White Paper

Methodology for Successful Records Inventory

a white paper prepared by
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ABSTRACT

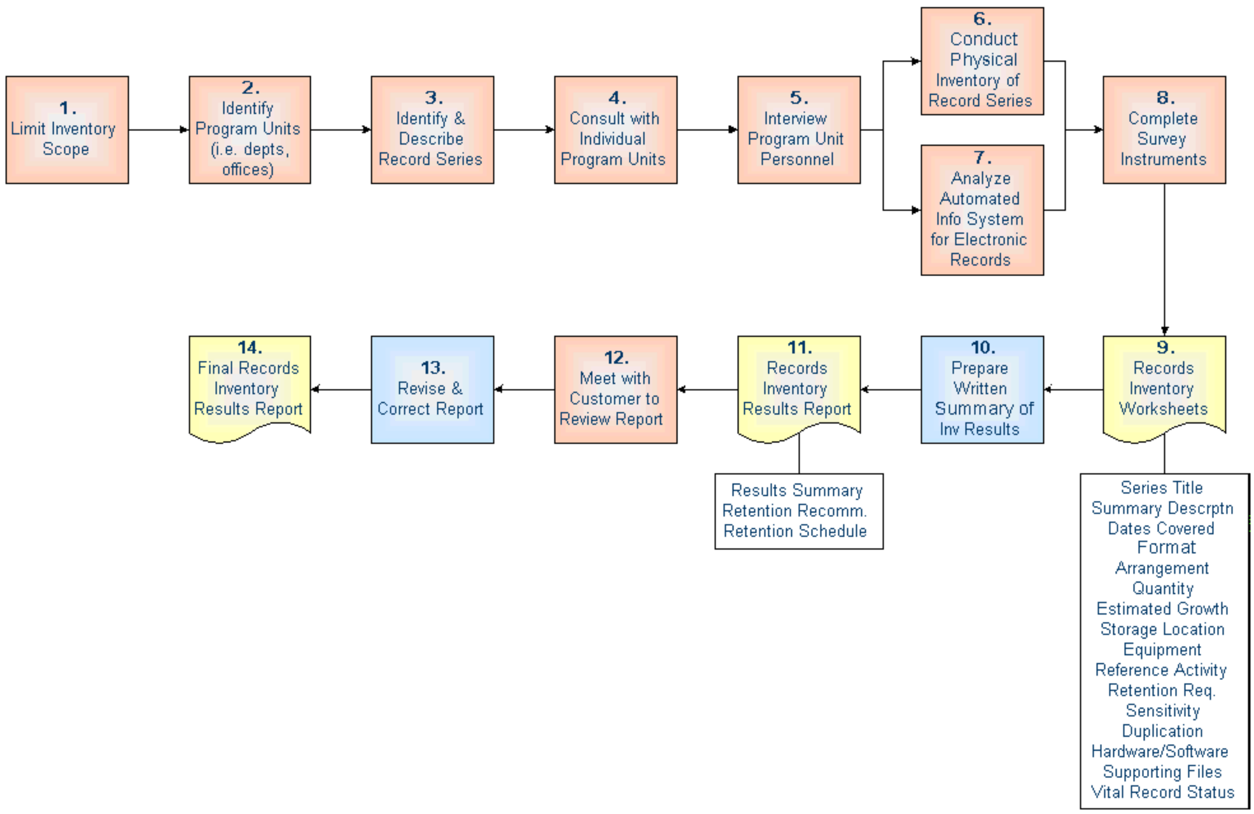
SyTech Solutions, Inc. is familiar with the challenging task of performing a records inventory. Through extensive experience, SyTech has developed an efficient methodology for completing this responsibility. This white paper focuses on SyTech's 14-step records inventory method. By following these guidelines, organizations can begin to address their document management problems and be on their way to becoming a more productive business.

14-Step Methodology

Organizations too often allow records to build over time, and when left unaddressed, organizations quickly find themselves overwhelmed with how to deal with amounting records. Where do you start?

SyTech Solutions has developed a straightforward methodology that allows any organization to efficiently perform a thorough records inventory. The chart below outlines a complete records assessment methodology. This 14-step methodology, utilized by SyTech in all of its records inventory projects, has proven to be the best method for identifying records. By completing this process, organizations can begin to move forward in their records management efforts, which have become an important issue in most organizations today.

Records Assessment Process



Step 1: Limit Inventory Scope

The quantities of records that need to be identified and organized are usually much greater than can be handled in one inventory process. Therefore, the first step is to limit the inventory scope to the most vital and high priority records. Initially, SyTech works with the customer to finalize the scope. In addition to clarifying any issues pertaining to the project, SyTech discusses any recommended changes to the inventory assessment form. Our expectation is that a short meeting with committee staff, or designated customer contact person, is sufficient. This meeting also acts as an opportunity to introduce the SyTech team. This phase typically takes less than an hour to complete.

Step 2: Identify Program Units

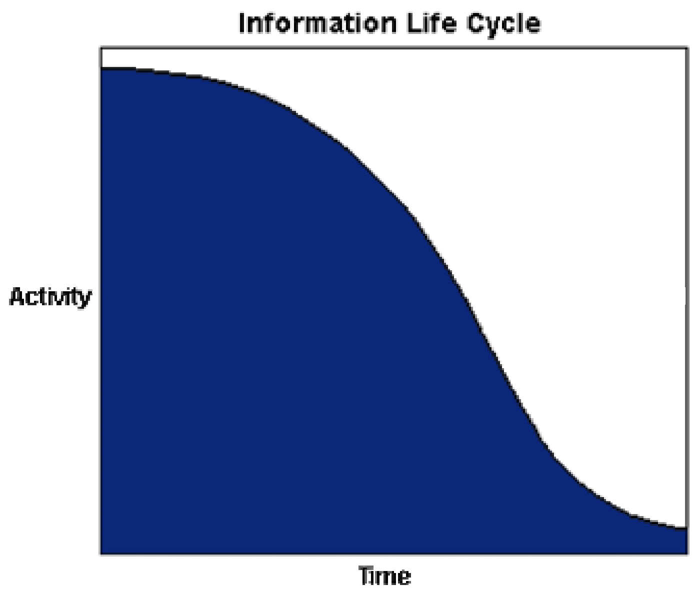
SyTech works with the customer to create a list of each record storage area and the designated contact. Meeting dates and times for the surveys are arranged with the customer.

Steps 3 to 8: Identify Records Series to Survey Completion

The remaining top half of the assessment process, steps 3 to 6, take place during actual interviews. Many records series must be identified and described through an interview process. The customer may want to consider the completion of a simple pre-interview form by each department head (or designated record custodian) to identify known record series. This often increases accuracy, organization, and reduces actual interview time. A pre-interview form is provided if desired. To address electronic information, SyTech project leads work with IT and program staff to identify electronic record series.

Steps 9 to 10: Records Inventory Worksheet to Records Inventory Results Reports

In the record inventory report phases 9 to 11, SyTech compares the records match survey information to the adopted retention guidelines. Additional issues are considered such as series duplication, missing files, and business process requirements for non-permanent records. The Information Life Cycle diagram illustrates the decreased usefulness of records. Except for permanent records, most records dramatically decrease in usefulness as time passes. An important part of the inventory process is to identify records that have outlived their usefulness and recommended destruction guidelines.



Steps 11 to 14: Records Inventory results to Final Records Inventory Results

In the final phases of a project, a written deliverable is drafted, reviewed, and completed. In addition to completing each of the process steps' independent deliverables (as described in the Records Assessment Process diagram), a final written "Records Inventory Results" document is produced. This document includes the following:

1. Results Summary
2. Retention Recommendations
3. Retention Schedule
4. Records Inventory Worksheet

The final deliverable is complete after the last step is finished and the final Records Inventory Results document is approved by the customer.

SUMMARY

Through SyTech's unique business methodologies and commitment to success, results-based solutions are delivered to help customers realize their goals. The 14-step methodology for performing a records inventory is designed to help organizations easily identify their records. This is the first step towards efficiently managing important records. Once a records inventory is completed, priorities can be assigned to record types that may need to be converted electronically and managed in a system.

For more information on SyTech's records inventory services, please call (916) 381.3010, email reply@sytechsolutions.com, or visit www.sytechsolutions.com.