

How to Clean File Shares

File Shares pose unique records and information management challenges as they are collaborative in nature, have numerous stakeholders and limited metadata. Management of this environment blends communication, change management and record management principles. To ensure files are being managed appropriately, it is important to make use of approaches that will support your organization's information governance policies.

You may wish to establish a project team that includes the key stakeholders in your organization to help you clean the file shares. Have a plan with key milestones identified for achieving the plan along with a clearly outlining the primary dependencies and assumptions, which will impact the project.

Step 1: Inventory Your Information

Complete an inventory of the information being retained in your organization's file share along with its content owners. This will allow you to identify which content has business value as well as any information that may be subject to legal holds or regulatory requirements.

In addition, if your organization has already developed a file plan and has identified a retention schedule for the file plan, it's a good idea to become familiar with both of these to find records you need to retain and for how long. For example, if the retention on "meeting minutes" or "company communications to employees" have dates which exceed the retention period of when they were created this content would not need to be part of a migration but could be documented and deleted.

AIIM Tip

Inventories are never fun! However, it is necessary to inventory your information to get a clear picture of what your organization retains and feels is important for conducting its business. This involves looking at existing file shares. Don't forget to review physical records as this may be a good time to identify records that should be converted to electronic format for ease of use and access. This is also an excellent time to take a look at the processes you have in place and possibly revise them to be more efficient and paper free.

For more information:

- [Carrying out a Records Inventory](#)
- [8 Myths About Information Governance](#)
- [Inventorying Electronic Records Part 1](#)
- [Inventorying Electronic Records Part 2: Approaches](#)
- [Network Shared Drives: How to Clean Up Files for Better Information Management](#)
- [Turn Your Shared Drive Nightmare into a Centralized, Efficient Dream](#)

Step 2: Determine Your Future State and Environment

Identify what you want your future state and environment to be. Consider whether your information is to be managed in place or migrated to another system and what that new system would include. Review the inventory and determine what information is in scope. Now is a good time to take a look at the processes in your organization and update classification structures, retention schedules and file plans as necessary.

AIIM Tip

Interview people in your organization to ensure you know how they use information and what they feel is important to them in completing their tasks. Try to understand how they find the information they need and use that knowledge as you design your future state.

For more information

- [Focusing Too Much on the Future](#)
- [What's the Duration of Your RIM Strategic Plan?](#)
- [Get Organized: How to Clean Up Sloppy Servers](#)
- [Solving Shared Drives: 10 Tips for Cleaning Up, Organizing, and Migrating Content in Shared Network Drives](#)
- [Solving Shared Drives: 10 Tips for Cleaning Up, Organizing, and Migrating Content in Shared Network Drives – YouTube Version](#)
- [Organizing and Maintaining Shared Drives](#)

Step 3: Develop Your File Plan or Folder Structure

Create a structure on the file share that mimics the retention schedule or existing file share. Determine a naming convention for the information going to the new location. Renaming the files on the file share may depend on the type of information being stored. Some common naming conventions include date, file name, title and revision number. Consistency is important across the organization, so consider creating lists of abbreviations and technical terms, and implement a standard format for dates.

AIIM Tip

Use the information you learned about how information is used while you were conducting your information inventory. Don't be afraid to consult the various stakeholders of your organization as you are drafting the file plan to make sure it will be easy to use and understand.

For more information

- [File Plans Simplified](#)
- [Principles of Creating a Top-Down Filing Plan](#)
- [Legacy Information Clean-up and Defensible Disposition: What to do if you do not have a filing plan?](#)
- [Cleaning Up a Large File Share](#)
- [How to clean up your shared drives](#)

Step 4: Pilot with a Test Group

Once your policies and procedures have been reviewed and you have inventoried your information, pilot the cleanup activity and new file structure with a group of end users. Feedback from the pilot will allow you to address any issues prior to release to the broader organization.

AIIM Tip

Smaller test groups are better and will yield better results than large groups. Be sure to include all of the stakeholder groups.

For more information

- [The Road to ECM Hell is paved with good intentions](#)
- [New Ways of Working After an ERM Implementation](#)

Step 5: Cleaning the File Shares

The first step is to purge the old items that have met the retention periods and then look at your processes for filtering new information.

Create a Deletion Requested or Past Due retention folder for team members to review prior to deletion. Have IT temporarily archive the items marked for deletion so they can be retrieved if needed. Be sure to include duplicates in your deletion strategy.

AIIM Tip

Focus on high volume records. Follow your information governance policy. Before you purge the first record, make sure you have researched to know if there are any current legal holds and what actions must be taken. Make sure the information being deleted is not part of a workflow.

For more information

- [Electronic Records Management Course](#)
- [Demonizing Deletion](#)
- [Cleaning Up File Shares: Keep, Move, Delete or Archive?](#)
- [Cleaning Up Your Shared Drives: Begin with the Decision Tree](#)
- [How to clean up your shared drives, Frank's approach](#)
- [Ask Unclutterer: Organizing a shared drive](#)
- [Document Management Spring Cleaning](#)

Step 6: Training

Training is Imperative to the success of managing and maintaining file shares. Include training on information management in the organization's onboarding training curriculum/process. Some areas to focus the training on include:

- What are electronic records
- What is a record
- How to declare a document as a record
- Where to share and store information

Annually update training or provide guidance through employee communications to ensure ongoing appropriate use of the file shares.

AIIM Tip

Several levels of training may be necessary since everyone does not need to know all aspects of file shares and individuals learn in different ways.

For more information

- [Designing a Training Program for ERM](#)
- [How to Achieve Organizational Readiness for Implementing New Technology webinar](#)
- [Taxonomy and Metadata Training](#)
- [Training is an Ongoing Process](#)
- [How to effectively manage a shared drive: Part 2](#)