

NEXTpage®

# GOVERNING SHAREPOINT

GRANT THORNTON CASE STUDY >

## GRANT THORNTON CONTROLS COST AND RISK WITH SHAREPOINT + NEXTPAGE

When Grant Thornton LLP, one of the world's top accounting organizations, undertook the task of managing millions of documents created by its numerous employees, they needed a solution that would reduce both cost and risk. By bringing the Microsoft SharePoint and NextPage Platform together into an innovative solution, they're on track to save 1.5 million dollars in the coming years.

Customer Size: **6,000 employees**

Region: **51 offices across United States**

**Grant Thornton LLP provides its clients with a complete range of auditing, management, consulting, corporate finance and risk management services.**

### BUSINESS NEED

Controlling Documents on the Edge

As a large accounting firm with a de-centralized workforce and thousands of client engagements, Grant Thornton was struggling to control and manage the hundreds of thousands of documents its 6,000 employees created and worked on every year, especially those stored at the "edge" of the organization on individual hard drives, removable storage devices and in e-mail inboxes.

"Traditionally, we've done a great job of creating information and a horrible job of getting rid of it," said Mike McClain, Director of Information Technology for Grant Thornton. "It's extremely difficult to motivate people to sift through information and delete unnecessary documents after every engagement—especially in an environment where there's pressure to move quickly from one engagement to the next."

This situation had serious implications for the firm's e-discovery efforts. "Whenever we get involved in a litigation matter,

we basically gather all the information we think might be relevant and hire outside counsel to sift through it all," said Ivey.

He continues, "Because we typically had thousands of extra documents sitting around on hard drives—documents that should have been deleted as soon as the engagement ended—it was taking our legal team many times longer than it should have to review all that extra information. In fact, we estimate that up to 90% of the documents we were collecting for e-discovery should have been deleted. Of course, that translated directly into unacceptably high e-discovery costs."

Unmanaged documents were also having a major impact on the company's information governance efforts. "We've always had sound written document retention policies in place," said Ivey. "But we didn't have good visibility into what documents were being created and where they were ending up. We did a decent job of finding and archiving final work product, but the thousands of early drafts and other peripheral documents were creating serious problems."

## SOLUTION

To address these document challenges, the Grant Thornton compliance team initially explored the option of adopting a large, centralized enterprise records and document management system—and then forcing everyone in the organization to manage all their documents inside that system. “We quickly realized there was heavy resistance to this approach,” said McClain. “Culturally, it was much too risky, and we realized our chances for success would be very low.”

After rejecting the centralized approach, McClain and his team began searching for a solution that would leave most existing work processes intact, minimize change management issues and make compliance with document retention policies easier and more natural for end users. They found their opportunity in an unexpected place—an upcoming planned deployment of Microsoft SharePoint.

“We realized that bringing people together on SharePoint also presented us with an opportunity to solve some of our biggest document problems,” said McClain. “Everyone was already sold on the need for a centralized workgroup collaboration system. People wanted it, they were anxious to start using it, and that provided us with a very natural way to bring people into a centralized location to do their engagement work.”

Of course, this new centralized workgroup collaboration solution didn’t address the issue of people e-mailing documents, saving them to hard drives or passing documents around on USB drives. “We knew we could track centralized copies of documents inside SharePoint,” said Ivey. “But we still needed visibility into all those ancillary copies on the edges of our organization.”

To provide that visibility, Grant Thornton turned to NextPage, which specializes in Information Governance, In-Place.

“NextPage works with our SharePoint sites in a way that’s totally invisible to users,” said McClain. “Every document that enters the SharePoint system automatically gets ‘tagged’ with the document equivalent of an RFID tracking chip.” This allows NextPage to track every copy and version of tagged documents and show the relationships between them, regardless of where they’re stored. As a result, NextPage gives Grant Thornton complete visibility into every document—without any noticeable impact on end users.

When an engagement is complete, the NextPage system sends users a simple email notification reminding them to archive and clean-up relevant documents. A simple link produces a simple NextPage dashboard with a list of every document they’re responsible for—including all the copies stored on various hard drives, in e-mail inboxes and on USB memory sticks. With a few clicks, users can select the documents they’re required to archive and automatically delete the rest, moving records management repository.

## BENEFITS

Although Grant Thornton is still in the early stages of deploying this combined workgroup collaboration and document management solution, they are already experiencing promising results.

The company expects to save a total of around \$400,000 in 2011, with that number growing to \$1.5 million in coming years. Initial rollouts show a remarkable 90% compliance rate with published document retention policies. And the company expects an 80% reduction in storage costs.

“It’s still very early,” said McClain, “but we are already seeing impressive results and a strong ROI.” On the IT side, Grant Thornton is anticipating a significant reduction in storage and backup costs. The ability to provide legal counsel with a much smaller set of data will have a significant impact on e-discovery costs. And the ability to track documents and improve visibility into where files are stored will transform the company’s compliance efforts.

“WE’RE JUST GETTING STARTED,” SAID MCCLAIN. “BUT WE’RE SEEING COMPELLING EARLY RESULTS, AND WE’RE ALL INCREDIBLY ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT THE COMING YEAR. THANKS TO NEXTPAGE, WE’RE ON THE VERGE OF SOLVING OUR BIGGEST DOCUMENT PROBLEMS ONCE AND FOR ALL.” >