

Written by

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In recent times everybody endlessly repeats that "**cloud computing**" is the future of information management, and therefore also of electronic documents and records management. Large multinationals with the largest market share in ECM applications also seem to have embraced the "cloud computing" as the driver of their future developments and services. Is the case of EMC, launching [EMC on Demand](#) or Alfresco presented their new version 4 with the slogan "[the connected cloud platform](#)".

When I read and heard the predictions for the future on this issue always thought they were a bit far from the reality of the document & records management projects in which I am currently working on. I could not imagine any of my clients making the decision to move their document & records management in the cloud, losing "control" of the servers where the information is stored. However, a conversation with **John Newton of Alfresco** at the event to launch their new version in Madrid, made me think about how and for what the cloud could be used in document & records management projects. I think nowadays, two different levels or approaches could be established :

- The first and most radical, perhaps in which I had always thought of as unique, offering document management platforms in the form **SAS (software as service)**. In this case, the software is offered in servers in the cloud which are accessed through the network and organizational documents and records are filed on servers in the cloud by the organization providing the service. The undoubted advantages of reducing maintenance costs and the ability to access documents from anywhere (especially in organizations with circulating employees or working from their homes) are not sufficient to overcome the "fear" of not having control over the documents & records. This fear is strengthened by news like the closing of Megaupload and customers explaining in the media they have "lost" their files.

- The second would be using the cloud as a **replica** of what the organizations have on their own servers. With an immediate

ynchronization

service, organizations obtain some advantages that should not be neglected:

1. It would eliminate the tasks related to the **"backup"**, since there would always be a copy of the document repository immediately in the cloud.

2. It would solve many problems of **access** to corporate documents & records from outside the organization, as employees with the adequate permissions could always work directly in the cloud when they are out of the office. As synchronization acts in both senses all the work done by these employees would be reflected immediately in the local repository. Furthermore, with tablets and smartphones applications (another trend predicted for the future) accessing documents & records in the cloud, it would have solved one of the limitations of these devices to be used as complete working tools.

3. It would provide opportunities to **share** documents with suppliers, customers or other stakeholders, which would proceed directly to the cloud, in a natural and logical evolution of "extranets" of organizations.

Actually, this second option without more sophistication than the file server, has been widely **adopted by many professionals and small businesses**

, among which I am. In my case, I can share files with my collaborators in a natural way and calm me down from hardware failures, which we have had two important in the last nine months. At the same time the solution automatically runs the backup policy, freeing us from the related tasks. Following this way perhaps the cloud is the option to make available and affordable the document & records management features to any kind of organization.

Document & records management in the cloud: personal perceptions

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