

Taking Efficiency to the Next Level with Tracking Software

How do you keep track of future tasks, responses due and upcoming events? Do you make note of the outcome of a meeting and agreed upon next steps? Were any documents presented that should be kept as a record?

While electronic calendars and Blackberrys can provide a list of meetings and reminders, they fall short with providing a history of what actually happened. Instead, you may want to consider a simple document tracking system. These systems can track complex contract agreements and the action items associated with the performance of the contract including milestones, deliverables due, bond expirations and payments. The same system can support sales tracking for potential customers, including ongoing support and orders. Perhaps you have a project or event which requires planning and follow-up. With a document tracking system, any of the above or similar activities can be easily managed.

Most document tracking systems have an 'action item' or 'tracking item' capability. Each of these action items may have an item description, detail notes, due dates and completion dates with reports that will list items due soon or past due. The software typically allows you to attach documents to the action item for historical reference, such as the actual contract in PDF, an Excel file with statistics, agendas or any other documents that are associated with the action item. These action items provide a quick way to both plan an upcoming event and to review what happened in the past.

Consider a contract - do you know when the contract expires? How do you track any change control agreements? What are the milestones and deliverables? When are they due and were they completed? Are the notes and handouts from meetings stuffed in a file cabinet? Could you quickly recreate the events leading up to critical decisions? If you used a document tracking system, all of these could be logged as action items under the contract, with detailed notes and dates maintained for quick reference and planning.

What about an in-house project with multiple team members? Do you know who was assigned what task, when the task is due and if it was finally completed? By using document tracking, you can assign each team member their own action code identifier for each action item and quickly know who is responsible for a task along with the task status.

Some tracking systems provide electronic signatures for items that need proof of approval or review. This feature is helpful in adhering to Sarbanes-Oxley regulations. Even without electronic signature approvals, a document tracking system can be made available to multiple individuals in a company. Implementing a web or network version allows others easy access to see the status of a contract or progress of a project. Senior management can review project activities without managers having to continually produce new status reports. Document tracking provides the opportunity to have a centrally located, easy to access reference for any contract, project, sales prospect or other similar activity.

Maintaining a document is easy! After initially entering a document identifier and general contact data, each event is then entered as an action item. For completed actions, the item is edited and any detail notations related to issues discussed, decisions, contacts and follow-up are entered. Relevant documents are attached and completion dates logged. This takes little time and provides a more reliable historical reference than scribbling notes on paper and putting the packet in a folder or drawer.

Document tracking software is not just a tool for organizing your future, but also an accurate record of the past. Keep a history of sales calls, contract issues, project tasks and milestones. Anything with multiple events or tasks can be better managed using simple document tracking software. You'll improve your personal (and team) efficiency, save time and streamline your operations – and vastly improve operating performance by taking this step forward.

GG-One Software has been providing document and insurance certificate tracking software since 1994. Their Fastrack Insurance Certificate Tracking and Document Management product is available in Web and Windows versions. Visit their website to learn more.

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