MANAGING GOVERNMENT **EMAIL**

HELLO!

I'm Scott Larson, MPA

Records Management Analyst for Wright County

1.

THE STRUGGLE IS REAL

What once made email great has now become what makes it challenging

SYMPTOMS AND CAUSES OF EMAIL FRUSTRATION FOR END USERS

Symptom:

We're bombarded with email all day long!

Cause:

Too much reliance on email as the primary means of communication. Using discussion boards, organizational blogs, and instant messaging can replace email for many internal communications that aren't records.

Symptom:

We don't have time to manage the deluge of daily emails along with doing our jobs.

Cause:

Along with over-relying on email as the primary means of communication, subscribing to unnecessary vendor email lists and professional message boards. Changing the frequency of update emails from message boards and unsubscribing from vendor email lists can considerably reduce email volume.

SYMPTOMS AND CAUSES OF EMAIL FRUSTRATION FOR END USERS

Symptom:

But I might need that! There was this one time where….

Cause:

Paranoia and ineffective communication. Email is often kept as an insurance policy for problems that never occur or as informal meeting minutes. Eventually, these emails build up in anticipation of problems and never get cleaned up. If minutes are required for meetings, they should be managed as a record in an appropriate repository.

Symptom:

This is all too confusing to me- I'll never remember what to do.

Cause:

Complicated manual email retention policies. The best email retention policies are simple, intuitive, and automated wherever possible.

EMAIL PRESENTS UNIQUE CHALLENGES FOR RECORDS MANAGERS

They're Countless

Emails are easy to create and send, so much so that they've all but replaced interoffice mail, letters, and phone calls.

They're Hidden

Emails rarely leave Outlook, meaning that they're only available to the recipient and not easily discoverable or manageable.

They're Fragmented

Group email threads frequently branch off when "Reply" is used instead of "Reply All." This creates versioning issues.

They're Mixed

Not every email is created equal. Only about 10% of emails actually contain records.

KEY CONCEPT

Email is **not** a type of record. It's a format for data, the same as a sheet of paper or a DVD. It's important not to get hung up on the **format** of data when discussing records.

HOW TO DETERMINE IF AN EMAIL CONTAINS A **RECORD**

Record Emails

Contain data **created** or **received** in an official capacity by the county in connection with the transaction of public business.

Must be managed according to their respective retention schedule.

Non-Record Emails

Reference material, convenience **copies** of records, **unsolicited** vendor advertisements, **personal** files and periodicals **not** directly documenting county business.

Can be deleted when no longer needed.

ACLU of Montana sues Cascade County Sheriff's Office over data request

Posted: Apr 12, 2017 4:51 PM CDT
Updated: Apr 12, 2017 5:01 PM CDT

By: David Sherman - MTN News   CONNECT

Clark County Park District sued for failing to provide public records...again –

June 22, 2016 · 2 Comments

THE **DANGERS** OF POOR RECORDS MANAGEMENT

STATE   FEBRUARY 24, 2017 8:10 PM

Martin County slapped with big public records fine

...ers Pierce County to pay $118,000 in Lindquist text message case

Judge hits Mesa with budget-breaking penalty for Public Records Act violations

Wendy Culverwell
Tri-City Herald   May 11, 2016   (1)

Everett To Pay Citizen $35,000 For Public Records Request Failure

August 7, 2016   Everett, Everett Government

THE STANDARDS FOR RECORDS MANAGEMENT

MN Government Data Practices Act

▸ Chapter 13 of the Minnesota Statutes regulates government data

▸ Assumes all data are public unless classified otherwise

▸ Establishes criminal penalties for misuse

MN Administrative Rules

▸ Chapter 1205- Data Practices, aids government entities in implementing the MGDPA

▸ Establishes role of Responsible Authority

Federal Laws

Codes of Federal Regulations are written to establish laws regarding privacy of individual's information

THREE IMPORTANT BENEFITS OF AN EMAIL MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Liability

By implementing email retention, emails are disposed of on-time automatically unless they are moved to an approved repository.

Cost

When emails are properly managed and disposed of, less server space is required and repositories can be consolidated.

Productivity

End users have access to all record emails, reducing the time spent searching for them during daily work and data requests.

2.

A SOLUTION FOR MANAGING EMAIL

Although there is no perfect solution, doing nothing isn't an option

WRIGHT COUNTY'S APPROACH TO ENTERPRISE EMAIL MANAGEMENT

Instead of allowing email to be managed by personal preference or data backups alone, we chose to keep all email for a minimum of **three years**. This matches the **Correspondence** record retention schedule.

We started by setting a retention policy of **one year** for inboxes. This policy was intended to create a sense of urgency that **encourages** end users to move county records that don't fit the definition of "correspondence" out of Outlook and into an approved records repository.

The end result is that an email was deleted from Outlook after a year, but was still kept for 3 years in the archive to maintain **legal compliance**.

WHAT SHOULD AN APPROVED RECORDS REPOSITORY LOOK LIKE?

Records are saved by topic

Project-related emails should be saved with project files, budget-related emails should be saved with budget files, etc.

Avoid saving emails to personal folders- it provides no context and they'll never be cleaned up.

Permissions are based on record classification

Public records can be viewed by anybody. Non-public records should be shared only with those needing access.

File/folder permissions should be logical, not **emotional**.

Retention is managed automatically

Whenever possible, **automated** retention policies should be used to ensure old records are purged on time.

Shared drives do not have this capability- consider using SharePoint or OnBase.

HOW WE **ACCOMPLISHED** IT:

Research

Before deciding on a retention policy, we researched best practices at other agencies for email retention.

Buy-in

Before announcing the email retention policy, we introduced it to all department heads to gage their response.

Communication

We announced the new retention policy to all employees several times using different channels.

Training

A training page was created on SharePoint focused on identifying records and how to use and manage email effectively.

Phased Roll-out

The retention policy was rolled out in phases over 9 months to allow users time to evaluate and move their emails.

Constant Contact

We responded to all users who asked for help in creating repositories for email or assistance in recovering emails from the archive.

CHALLENGES WE ENCOUNTERED:

Longer retention for managers

Setting a longer email retention policy for managers would be difficult to manage and only encourage bad habits.

Elected officials

Because elected officials' emails are permanent, their inboxes are excluded from the policy. Retention and transfer to the State Archives is handled manually.

Personal archives

To ensure that emails containing records were not stored locally in .PST files, we disabled them in Outlook.

Important non-record emails

Users are encouraged to save important, non-record emails to SharePoint so they could be used by all.

Access to archives

Deleted emails are still available in the archive. End users can access the archive via the Outlook Web App (OWA).

Important personal emails

All employees have a 1GB personal network drive to keep important personal work-related emails and files.

WHAT WE LEARNED

We All Lived!

Although we expected significant backlash from our users, we were surprised to hear that the response was far more positive than negative.
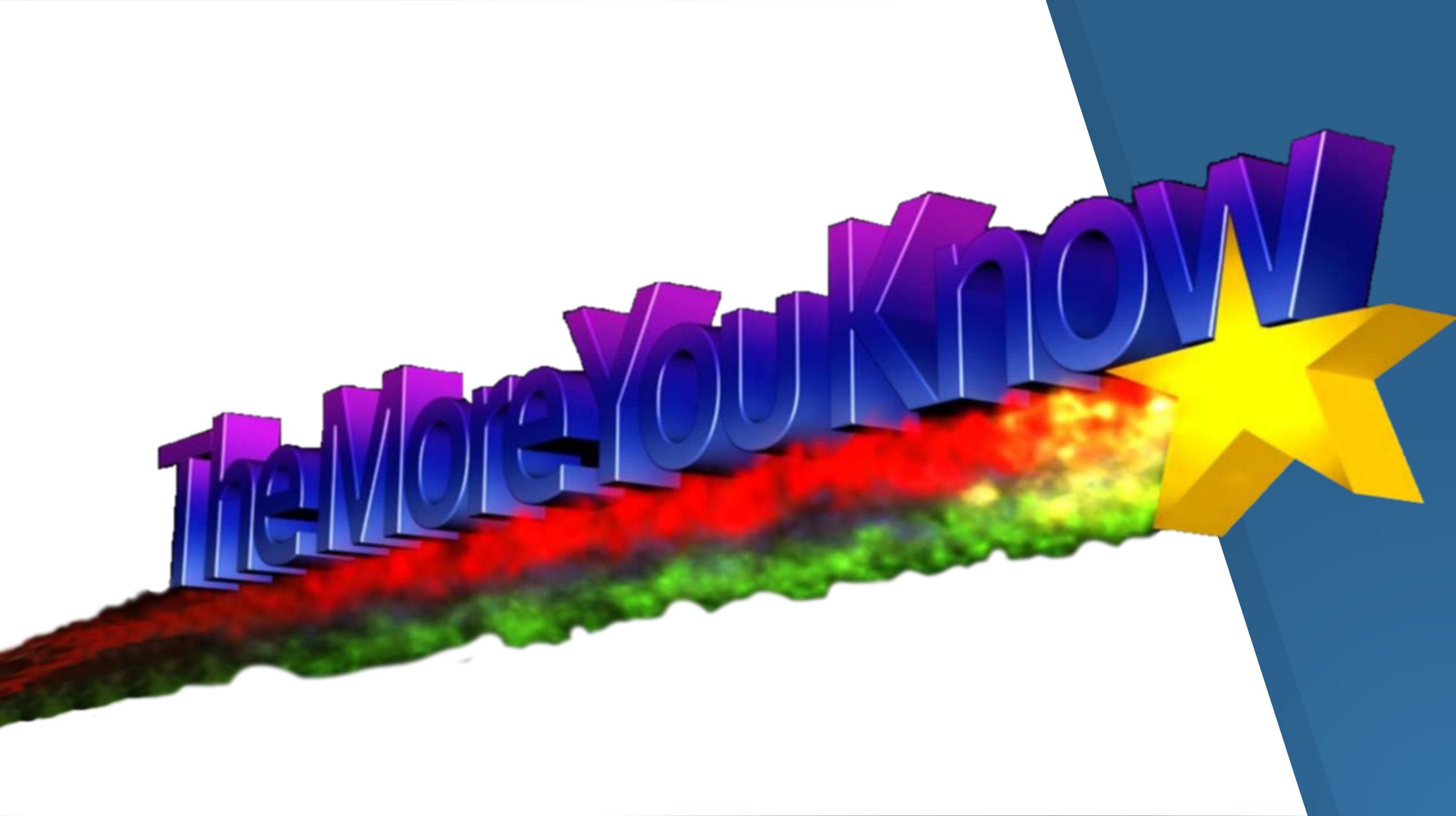
There Are Other Options

Using instant messaging, discussion boards, blogs, and announcements in SharePoint is more appropriate than email in some cases.

We're More Prepared

By reducing our archive volume, we were more prepared for our migration to Office 365 and we're able to handle data requests in a more timely manner.

ANY QUESTIONS?

Feel free to contact me at **scott.larson@co.wright.mn.us**