Mapping the Way Toward
Records Compliance

Blair Maurer

When senior leaders support records management implementation, the organization is strengthened and the results clear. The initial success of a records management initiative at the University of Washington (UW) provides convincing evidence of that.

Four years after Vice President of Human Resources (HR) Mindy Kornberg and her management team saw the need to bring records management best practices to its 160 HR employees and established a cross-departmental HR Records Management Group to accomplish that, its vision – that "records management practices are adopted by the whole campus. They become a habit, part of our muscle memory" – is beginning to become a reality.

The roadmap this group created in its drive to realize its vision can be followed by other organizations with the same goal.

Starting Point: Create a Cross-Departmental Team

The team that was assembled by UW's director of HR Business and Finance, Evelyn Harris, includes seven other members that represent their departments: Benefits, Compensation, Campus HR Operations, Medical Centers HR Operations, Information Systems, Labor Relations, and Professional Development.

For a mentor and ally, the team reached across the aisle to consult with UW's director of Records Management Services, Barbara Benson, who serves as advisor and regularly attends its meetings.

Will Chase, an analyst representing Information Systems, commented on how the team has gelled: "We work together amazingly well. There's a myriad of strengths independently brought to the team, whether it's expertise in abstract policy or effective writing skills. Leadership is great; Evelyn keeps us on task and is fully committed."

Describing the team's mission, Chase continues, "We are here to promote and enlighten people on records and information: its uses, its proper application, and storage. And to convey why it's important. The goal is to maintain data effectively."

Mile Marker 1: Check for Clear Direction, Top Support

"When the group formed, the management team provided a clear directive on what they wanted us to accomplish," Harris said. "As the team moved forward in its work and delivered its first products, Mindy [Kornberg] was so pleased that she extended the mandate. At that point, the team's charter went from the macro view to the micro, and the team became a permanent improvement initiative for HR. Watching this develop has been exciting."

Kornberg's support of the mission is palpable. She reinforces the need for each HR employee to take action. She also funds and attends the annual April event marking National Records & Information Management Month and has her managers attend with their staff.

The responsible mindset is clear from the top: documents at the state-supported university are subject to the Washington state Freedom of Information Act and considered public records, they are valuable to the enterprise, and they should be managed properly.

Mile Marker 2: Make the Trip Fun

Creativity is in high demand in order to achieve compliance across UW Human Resources (UWHR). The HR Records Management Group devises an annual project and communications plan that guides its outreach and publication schedule for the academic year. Sub-committees identify pain points and prioritize best practices, and the effort to produce tools, trainings, and events is open and collaborative.

The team devises innovative ways to instill records awareness. It's top of

mind for the members that their topic hits people as a bit…dry. They also know they need to set a sense of urgency to call it a win. The team gently lowers the bait with training mixed with some humor and expects results from each department.

For example, the team is currently holding a contest called "The Biggest Loser" that encourages all to downsize their Outlook inboxes, specifically promoting compliance with the retention schedules and avoiding the common scourge of overstorage.

The contest's marketing material is tongue-in-cheek, showing the notorious, almost-full, red horizontal bar on an Outlook file tab as a thought bubble asks, "Does this status bar make my inbox look fat?" It urges folks to "drop the most gigabytes" and win a prize. (See Figure 1: "Biggest Loser Promotion.")

Bingo was the name of the game at the April 2012 Records & Information Management Month event. It featured a bingo table where staff played rounds with the side benefit of learning a few best practices.

The event also featured a scavenger hunt where employees were handed a sheet of questions and then directed to various screens or posters displaying possible answers. One question posed: How many e-mail messages does UW receive daily? Answer: 1 million (and this is from a prior year). Prizes were awarded, and staff commented on how much they learned in this energizing exercise.

The spring event was not without creative theatrics. The team's representatives from Benefits and Compensation acted out two skits: one showing the nightmare of having a disorganized employee quit without reviewing e-mail with a supervisor, another portraying the smooth exit of an employee whose key e-mail had been forwarded to the appropriate coworkers per the group's "E-mail Separation Checklist."
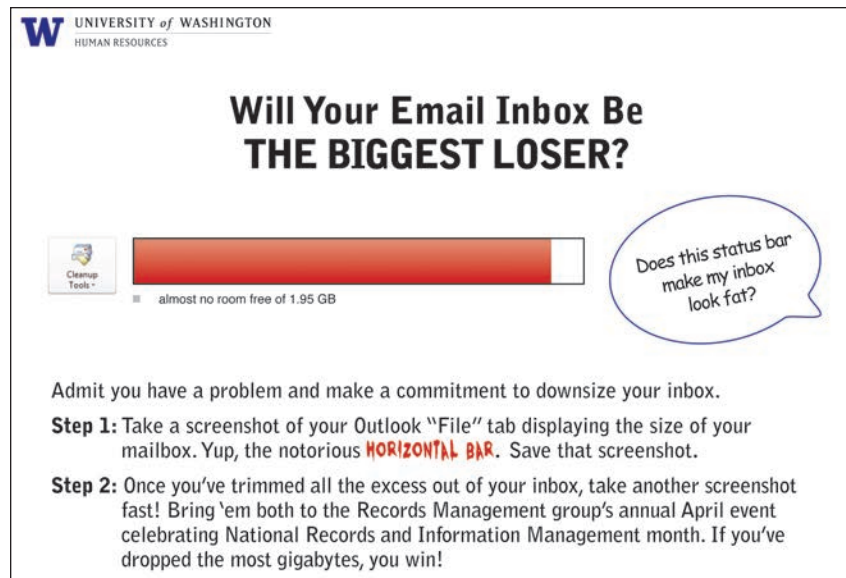

Figure 1: Biggest Loser Promotion

Mile Marker 3:
Provide Training, Tools

Group member Chase held a recent collaborative training that covered the many available tools in Outlook. He demonstrated how to use them in conjunction with the one-page "info sheets" on e-mail management the team has rolled out teaching staff how to remain in compliance with retention schedules and reduce the amount of e-mail in their Exchange account. (See Figure 2 "Junk Mail Rules" on page 44).

"We remotely logged people in so they were working in real time and could see results in their own e-mail accounts," Chase said. "One of the most useful tips we covered was the ability to view messages as conversations, using the 'clean up' function to remove redundant e-mails whose content is included in other messages. Another was using rules and quick steps, found in the Outlook ribbon, to either automatically or manually sort and respond to messages."

Standardize Lists

The team had two early successes setting up standards for HR with administrative files. To promote compliance with stated policies, they developed the "Administrative Records Retention List," a high-level inventory of records kept by HR units extracted from the UW General Records Retention Schedule.

The list categorizes documents, indicates how long departments should keep them, and acts as a snapshot of the overall guidance published by UW's Records Management Services office.

Share Simple Tips

Another early success was developing and distributing the "Five Best Practices for Records Management," which are simple tips that nearly everyone could put to immediate use:

1. **Keep it simple.** When creating a file management system, reduce before you file, as only a small percentage of documents needs to be preserved. In addition, select the best method (alphabetical, chronological) for filing specific records, and start with general categories and move to more specific ones.

2. **File immediately!** Once a document has been acted on, read, or processed, file it.

3. **Create and maintain a file name inventory and map of file cabinet contents**. This helps avoid

Junk Mail Rules!
(Or not)

Intro
Every day, we receive dozens of unsolicited email messages. Whether you are getting messages from that Nigerian Prince who needs your bank account number or advertisements from legitimate vendors, these emails can be annoying and take up a lot of space in your inbox. It can feel like an impossible task to keep up with this constant inundation. What are some strategies to keep junk mail under control?

Examples:
- Spam and Phishing emails
- Unrequested newsletters
- Sales and/or "special offer" advertisements from vendors you regularly do business with
- Work-related reminders that don't directly apply to you
- Unsolicited professional development and/or affiliation materials
- Co-worker's "joke of the day"

Retention guidance:
No need to maintain. Delete immediately.

Useful tools:
Junk Mail filter: Use IT's junk email (spam) filter setting to reduce the number of unwanted messages in your email inbox. The tool will allow you to modify and fine-tune your junk mail filter.
http://www.washington.edu/itconnect/email/spamfilter.html

Block Sender: To add someone to your blocked senders list, right click on the email from your list of messages. Select "Junk" from the menu that appears, and then "Block Sender." When blocking a sender, you may get a warning pop-up indicating that the junk email filter is not available. This is because the junk mail filtering is happening on the exchange servers rather than your local machine. The sender will still be added to your blocked senders list once you click OK.

Safe Sender: If legitimate emails are inadvertently being filtered into your junk mail folder, you can add them to your safe senders list. By right clicking on the message, you can reach the "Junk" options, where you will be given options to never block the sender, the sender's domain, or a particular group/mailing list.

ACTION REQUIRED

With 5 minutes you can:
When you see an email in your inbox that is junk, click on it to find related messages, or sort to find all messages with the same subject or sender for mass deletion.

With 10 minutes you can:
Look through junk mail folder for messages that should not be there, and move them back to your inbox.

With 10+ minutes you can:
Create a habit of checking your junk mail folder on a regular basis to delete the messages and modify your filter settings. Once you get a handle on filtering and adding to the block senders list, little effort will be required.

August 22, 2012 - Info Sheet 3/14 - *https://lmhr.admin.washington.edu/teams/RecordsMgt/WebPart%20Pages/Email.aspx*

Figure 1: Junk Mail Rules

folder duplication and makes it easier to find a document.

4. **Find a simple way to indicate disposition (destruction).** Color-code or date the folder or file cabinet to indicate the year of disposition. This eliminates the need to sort through individual documents for retention periods.

5. **Maintain consistency in naming conventions between electronic and hard copy records.** This makes documents easier to find and destroy at the end of their retention period.

Develop Checklists

A sampling of the more recent tools and standards this team has implemented includes the "Official UW Personnel File Checklist," which names the items needed in a personnel file. The goal of this checklist is to achieve employee file consistency and reduce duplication across units.

To decide what elements needed to be included on the checklist, the team first reviewed documents kept in personnel files in Campus HR Operations and Medical Centers HR Operations (UWHR's two staffing units) and prioritized the essentials.

Glancing at the checklist, an HR administrator sees that a nurse's license and certifications sit in this file, as well as the nurse's current job description and employment history: salary changes, promotions, and transfers. The checklist delivers a quick, one-glance inventory, and for administrators, it organizes an essential task.

A related standard the team put together is a "Checklist for Transfers & Separations." The team knew there was a lack of communication among HR units when it came to employees transferring between HR operational units and among other Washington state agencies, as well as when they resigned from UW.

The team first identified inconsistencies and overlap, and then it pub-

lished the checklist instructing managers to retain necessary documents. To fill the next need, the team went on to develop a rehire checklist for reestablishing personnel files.

Group member Jennifer Mallahan commented on the efficacies: "When I was in Campus HR Operations, the checklists allowed us to work not only with the other HR units, but to streamline our own processes as well. This was especially helpful in training new people; everyone was on the same page, whether they'd been here for 15 days or 15 years."

Review Retention Schedules

Next the team tackled the existing general retention schedules. Team members completed a group-wide records inventory by first creating a list of records and databases for all HR units and identifying which unit is responsible for holding the original copy of the record and which unit, if any, holds the copy.

They initiated and completed reviews of the UW-approved retention schedules and developed a process for regularly scheduled reviews.

In sum, these tools have had a larger net effect than originally expected because they can be used in other units. In fact, Harris has been contacted by other departments who wish to leverage what's been achieved across HR.

Mile Marker 4: Motivate with Practical Information

A major project for the HR Records Management team members this year focuses on electronic records. They've undertaken the arduous task of showing staff how to better manage e-mail.

With so many employees improperly maintaining behemoth inboxes, the team has flexed its prioritization bicep and realized it needs to roll tools out in a cadenced rhythm, starting with easier actions leading to more complicated tasks.

Provide 'Cautionary' Advice

The group carefully planned several easy-to-digest, one-page info sheets to provide to staff. One of the first sheets covered what to do with meeting-related e-mails, encouraging employees to first sort by icon in Outlook then bulk delete these types of messages.

Mid-way through the 13-sheet rollout, "Cautionary Tales: Complying with Retention Schedules" appeared to sound the alarm of poor file management and subsequent legal action. "Cautionary Tales" cites the high-profile case *Zubulake v. UBS*

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Warburg, which involved an individual who sued her former employer with charges of gender discrimination and blocked promotions.

When the defendant claimed that supporting e-mail was inaccessible, the judge proclaimed the missing files would have been damaging, and the plaintiff won $29.3 million. This decision cast a rather glaring light on just how e-mail and other electronic records can be cited as evidence in federal courts.

Emphasize Others' Responsibilities

The group is not shy about the role of managerial accountability; in fact, on the heels of rolling out "Cautionary Tales," the team's next article conveyed to managers: It's your turn. Create a local inventory and file plan for the business documents critical to your department. We've given you the guidance and tools, and your own teams expect you to instruct them on which files they need to store on a shared drive in order to be accessible to others and

which nonessential files to keep in Outlook.

"We all need to make documentation searchable and sharable," the article quotes team member Chase as saying. "As a manager, you know the business processes of your individual department. The more organized the important documents are in your department, the easier they become to maintain."

Destination: Keep Looking Ahead

With the thoughtful planning of communications, training, and events, the HR Records Management Group is poised to continue its success. There is certainly more work to be done.

Commenting on future efforts, group leader Harris is confident: "HR is just breaking ground with changing the records management culture. It's exciting and encouraging seeing records management implementation in venues where it hadn't been considered in the past – in process improvement efforts and by Information Systems as they develop new databases and reports.

"We know we need to continue to be resourceful and that our methods need to be relevant and easy to implement and sustain. The team is committed to educating HR staff about records management – to convey that better processes make our work more efficient and effective." **END**

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