

Broadening the Scope for Advanced Case Management

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Phone: +1 800.345.3638
Website: www.ibm.com/software/ecm

Process used and survey demographics

The survey results quoted in this report are taken from a survey carried out between 15 February 2013 and 08 March 2012, with 246 responses from individual members of the AIIM community surveyed using a Web-based tool. Invitations to take the survey were sent via email to a selection of AIIM’s 70,000 registered individuals. 70% of the respondents are from North America and 18% from Europe. They cover a representative spread of industry and government sectors. Results from organizations of less than 10 employees and from suppliers of ECM products and services have not been included, bringing the total respondents to 207.

About AIIM

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About the author

Doug Miles is head of the AIIM Market Intelligence Division. He has over 25 years’ experience of working with users and vendors across a broad spectrum of IT applications. He was an early pioneer of document management systems for business and engineering applications, and has produced many AIIM survey reports on issues and drivers for Capture, ECM, Records Management, SharePoint, Big Data and Social Business. Doug has also worked closely with other enterprise-level IT systems such as ERP, BI and CRM. He has an MSc in Communications Engineering and is a member of the IET in the UK.

© 2013
AIIM
1100 Wayne Avenue, Suite 1100
Silver Spring, MD 20910
+1 301.587.8202
www.aiim.org

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IBM
3565 Harbor Blvd
Costa Mesa, CA 92626 USA
+1 800.345.3638
www.ibm.com

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Introduction

The terms “project”, “process” and “case” are not generally interchangeable. In business we have a tendency to associate collaborative activities with projects, and repetitive tasks with processes, and we service them with different IT toolsets – project management systems for the former, and workflow and BPM for the latter. When it comes to managing “cases”, it is easy to think in very narrow terms such as healthcare, social care, or criminal investigation. Yet almost any project or collaborative activity which has a beginning, an end, and an outcome, can be considered to be a case. Equally, any process which involves multiple interactions, diverse communications and multiple potential outcomes can also be a case. All of which raises the question as to what kind of IT support is most appropriate for a collection of tasks that:

- Need to comply with a set of rules, but which may or may not follow a pre-defined sequence or path
- May involve multiple persons inside or outside the organization
- Are likely to produce multiple documents and content types, whose primary connection is “the case”.

Early case management systems focused on this concept of a case folder, mimicking the time-honored paper-based procedures. Each member of the case team would need access to all or part of the folder, but restrictions would exist for any wider access. The case folder would also become the longer term record of how the case was handled for future reference and for audit.

However, these early systems did not take account of essential project management needs such as action prompts and alerts, and the important monitoring and reporting tools that are needed to ensure timely progress. Attempts were made to create fixed workflows, but they were almost always too prescriptive for most case work - and yet conformance by case workers to process stages, verifications, and business rules is often mandated in order to show auditable compliance. Integration with communications channels, help desks, CRM systems and, increasingly, social channels is also a vital aspect so that each employee interaction with the customer, client or citizen is able to reflect a homogenous view.

These shortcomings can be overcome by broadening case management to become “advanced”, “adaptive” or “dynamic,” and creating a much more flexible, integrated, business-friendly tool. This extends the applicability of case management to a much wider range of otherwise “problem” processes – including those which have previously been too complex, or too variable for conventional workflow mapping and BPM. Of late, the term “smart process applications” has also been applied to such processes.

In this report we explore how the limitations of existing document management systems and conventional case management tools create problems for case-oriented business teams. We look at the importance of flexible workflows, action-setting, progress reporting, and integration with other systems and we consider the wider application of “advanced case management systems.” We also look at the issues, priorities and ROI for implementation.

Key Findings

Characteristics:

- Case-based applications dominate many businesses. For 61% of responding organizations, more than half of their processes involve a case file.
- Project Management, contract/bid management and help-desk are the most prevalent case applications in our survey, followed by incident management, claims management and legal cases.
- Cases tend to involve very variable content, they usually need to be archived for compliance, and it is important to monitor progress. Multiple paths to a variety of outcomes is also a characteristic.
- Cases can involve many different administrators, departments, professionals and subject experts. Nearly half of respondents report five or more will be involved in a typical case. For 13%, ten or more may be involved.

Drivers:

- Pressures on case workers are increasing. 53% of respondents are under pressure to reduce costs, 51% struggle to cope with the information deluge and 49% are more conscious of the consequences of errors and mistakes.
- Casework applications are subject to high levels of regulation. 54% of respondents need to comply with industry or government regulations, and 50% are subject to legal requirements, including protection of sensitive personal data.
- The biggest business drivers for improvement of existing case management capabilities are overall productivity and more effective collaboration. Faster case resolution and a higher quality customer experience are also important.

Case Content:

- Active case-related content is likely to be held on file-shares (19%) or paper (19%). 26% store them in a general ECM or DM system. Only 10% have a dedicated case management system.
- Archived cases are likely to be scattered across emails, paper and file-shares (42%) or not archived at all (7%). 17% declare them as records into their ECM/DM/RM system, and 12% use the archive of their dedicated system.
- 27% of organizations need their case-workers to have access to case-content when they are on customer or client sites. 24% need access at home, and 18% need mobile access when they are travelling between appointments.

Management Issues:

- The biggest business issue reported is the difficulty of collecting documents and key data into a case file and making it available to all those involved in the case. Collaborative access is particularly difficult.
- The biggest process issue is the ability to monitor progress and manage timely actions and deadlines. Dynamically managing exceptions and ad hoc processes also causes problems.
- Action prompting and workflow tends to be somewhat ad hoc for most, with 49% relying on emails and task flags. 28% have a case-specific workflow or a customized ECM/DM system, with 10% using a general purpose ECM/DM workflow.

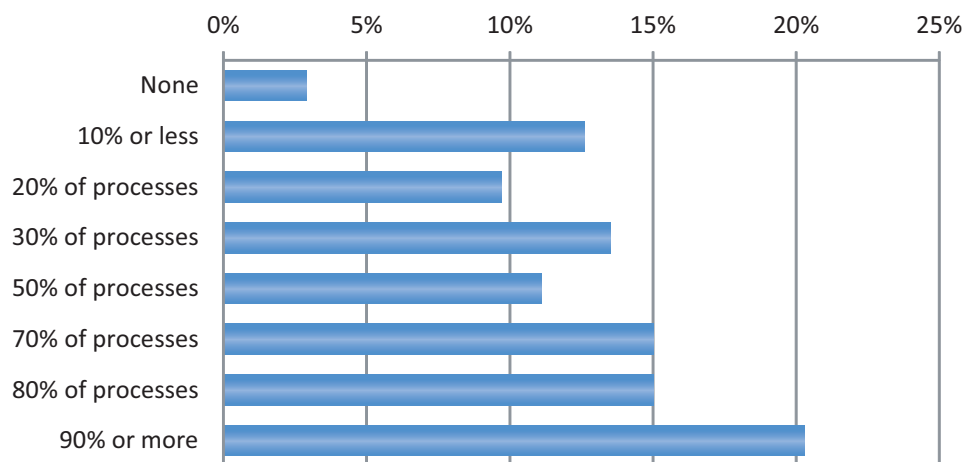
Case Management Systems:

- Over half (56%) of responding organizations are using a mixture of paper and email, or an ad hoc collection of file shares and content repositories. 28% are using case files and workflow, but only 9% have flexible and adaptive systems.
- Accessing content across multiple systems and pulling in emails, forms, etc., are the biggest technical problems reported for existing systems. Changing workflows on the fly and creating multiple-relationships with case workers is also reported as an issue.
- Automated capture across multiple incoming communications streams and a single view of the customer/patient/client on one screen are the most important system features. Then flexible workflows and comprehensive monitoring and alerting.
- 42% of users with an advanced or adaptive case management system report a payback period within 12 months. 83% within 2 years.

Characteristics of Case Working

As we have said in the introduction, there are common operational characteristics that suggest a case-orientated process. Within any one organization, these characteristics may apply to a high number of core processes or they may be more incidental, or spread across general line-of-business tasks. For those who have opted to take part in our survey, 61% consider that half or more of their processes involve a case file.

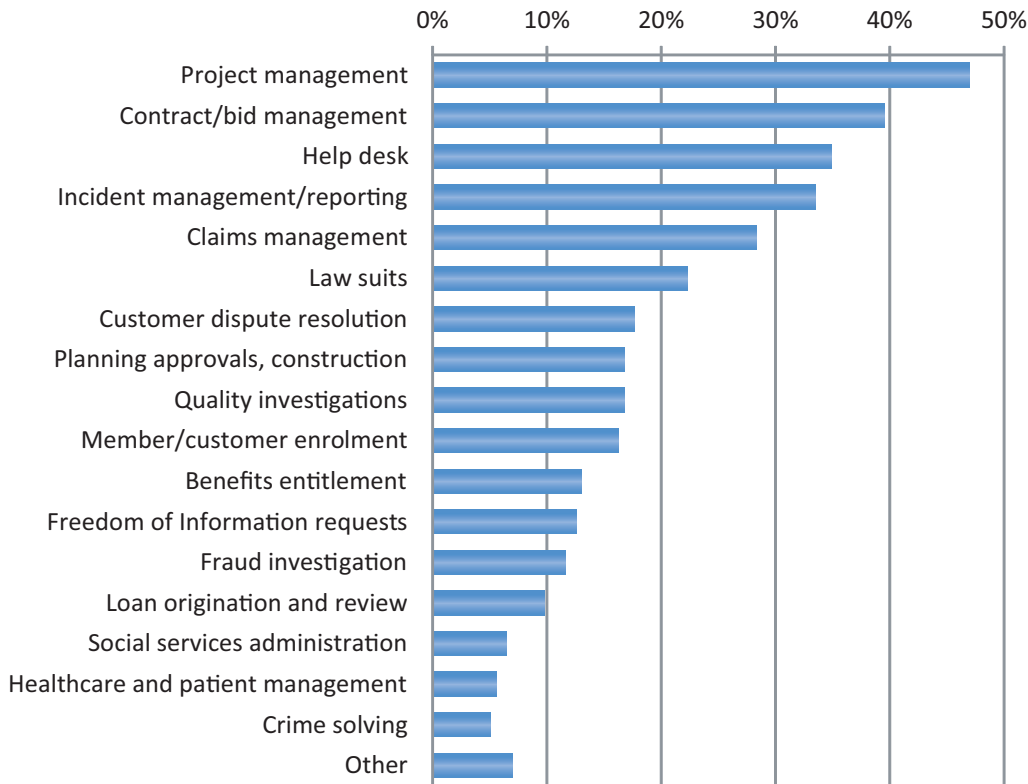
Figure 1: What proportion of your main line-of-business processes would you say involve a case file, claim file, proposal, bid, incident report, service ticket, etc.? (N=207)



When we breakdown the process types in Figure 2 we can see that some of these case-orientated applications are obviously industry-specific, some are much more generic (multiple choices were allowed). On this basis, project management comes out as the most prevalent application and crime-solving as the least – although still picking up around 10 of our respondents. This in itself illustrates the fact that although the first applications that come to mind for “case-related processes” are crime, healthcare and social services, these are all at the bottom of the table. Some others such as law suits, benefits entitlement and fraud investigation are closer to the middle of the table, as they affect a wider range of businesses.

It is the more horizontal applications of contract or bid management, helpdesk, customer dispute resolution, and incident management that take the top places, along, of course, with claims management, which is a classic crossover application. Some claims processes can be readily mapped to standard, repetitive workflows, but many involve exception procedures, and most involve external agencies and professionals.

Figure 2: How would you categorize your most prevalent or important case application(s)?
(N=197)

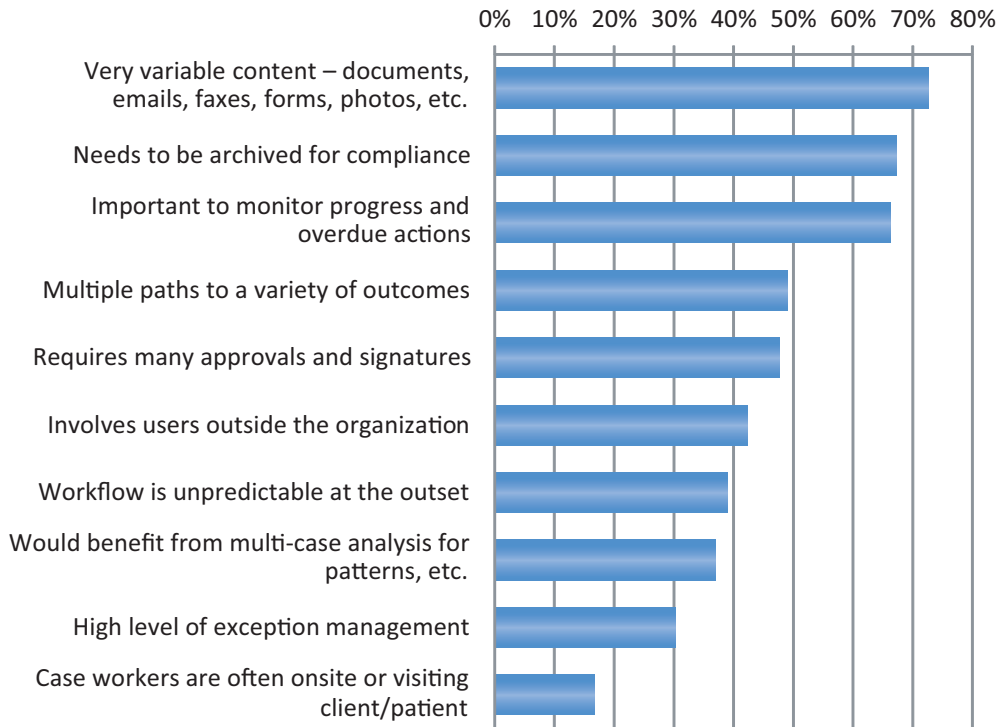


So when we look at the key characteristics of a case-management environment in Figure 3, a number of common threads appear:

- A case is likely to involve multiple content types, including electronic documents, scanned documents, emails, faxes, forms, photos and so on.
- In the majority of organizations (67%), the case will need to be archived in a compliant and procedural way.
- By their nature of being opened, processed and closed, cases have a timeline that must be monitored for progress, and for overdue actions.
- There may well be multiple paths through the process (49%) which result in different outcomes, and these workflows may be unpredictable at the outset (39%) and may involve high levels of exception management (30%).
- The workflow is likely to require many approvals and signatures (48%) and may well involve users outside the organization (42%).

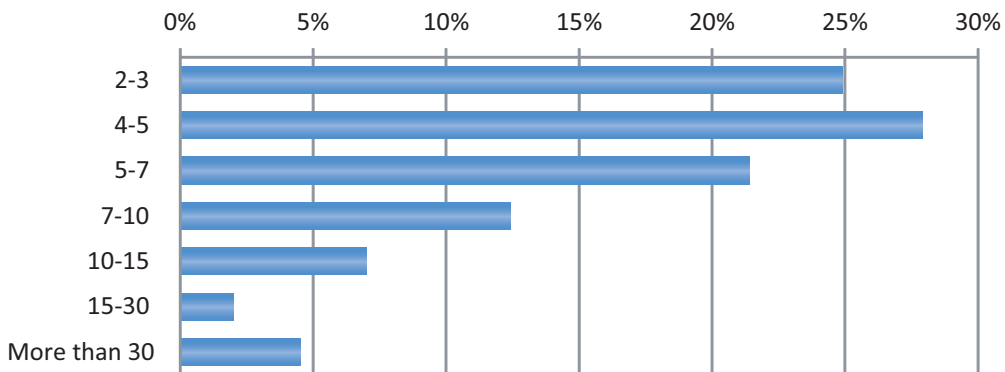
For a third of our respondents, there would be benefit in multi-case analysis to see patterns perhaps for diagnosis or trend analysis, but also for fraud detection. This can form the elements of a big data or content analytics system.

Figure 3: Which of the following would you use to describe key characteristics of your case management environment? (Check all that apply) (N=197)



A key case characteristic is that it may involve a number of interested or participating parties, some of whom may be external agencies or professionals. We asked respondents how many different administrators, departments or subject experts might be involved in a particular case. Nearly half (47%) of organizations will regularly have 5 or more involved, which if we are talking about departments or external organizations is likely to require a fair degree of coordination. 13% report an average of 10 or more.

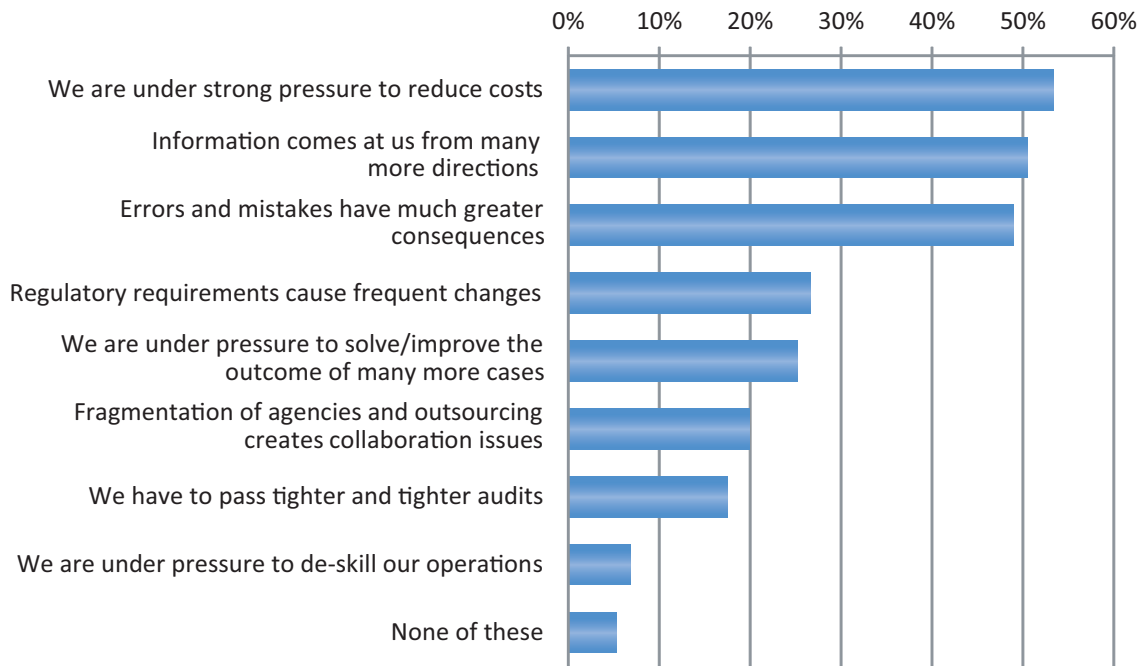
Figure 4: How many different administrators, departments, professionals or subject experts are involved in a typical case? (N=208)



Drivers

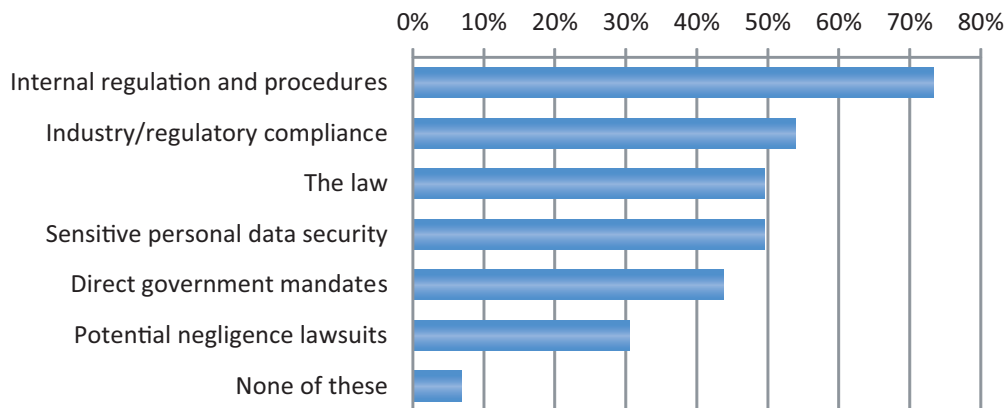
All business processes are subject to scrutiny for effectiveness and efficiency, but case-related environments can be under particular pressures right now due to government-spending cutbacks, outsourcing arrangements, financial market regulations and so on. As well as the inevitable pressure to reduce costs, our respondents feel somewhat overcome by the information deluge that arrives across multiple incoming communications channels. They are also very conscious that in this increasingly litigious, social, 24-hour-news age, errors and mistakes can have much greater consequences, and reactions need to be much faster.

Figure 5: Which three of the following pressures would you say most apply to case management in your environment nowadays? (Max THREE) (N=206)



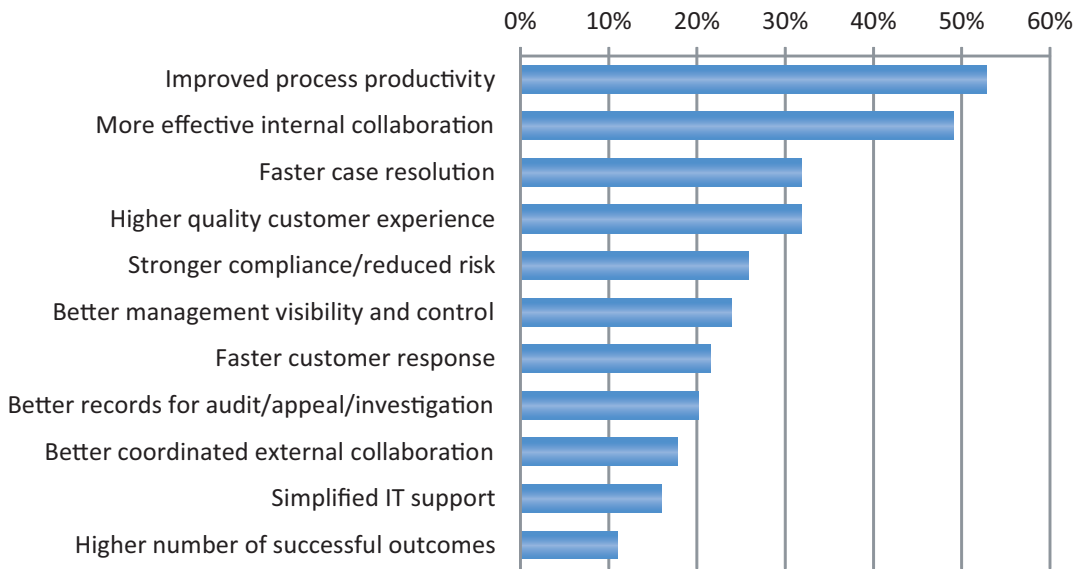
As we might expect from some of the case applications in Figure 2, compliance is important. More than half of our responding organizations are subject to both industry regulations (54%), and the law (50%), particularly where they involve sensitive personal data or are part of direct government mandates. Negligence lawsuits are a potential compliance hazard for nearly a third. Even where direct external compliance is not required, 73% need to comply with the procedures and regulations of their own organization.

Figure 6: Is your case management process subject to audit or compliance for the following? (Check all that apply) (N=206)



Turning these pressures into demands for improvements in case-handling capabilities within the organization, we see that improved productivity, better collaboration, faster case resolution and a higher quality of customer experience are the top drivers. Following on are the day-to-day management requirements of better visibility and control, faster response and better compliance and auditability.

Figure 7: Which THREE of the following are the biggest business drivers for improving your case management capabilities? (Select top 3) (N=161)

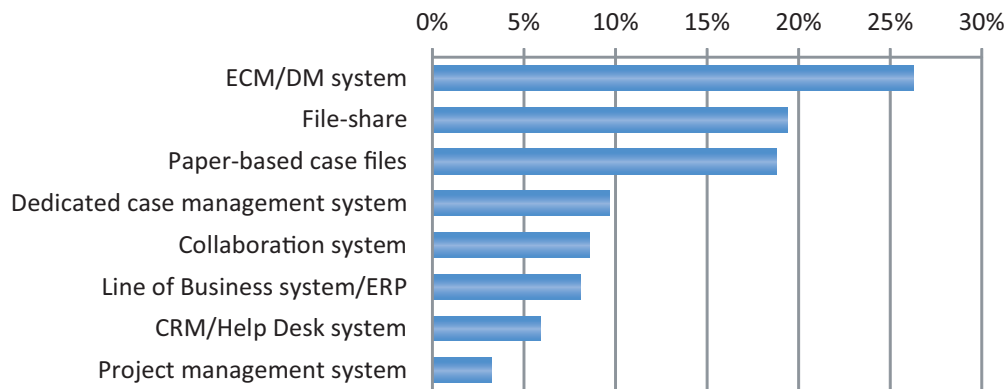


Case Content

In addition to conventional text documents and forms, a modern-day case file is likely to contain emails, faxes, scanned images and photo images, and may also need to hold audio files, video clips and social messages. This in itself can cause issues with many older systems, but as we will see later, the ability to automatically flow incoming content into the case-folder is a key requirement for users.

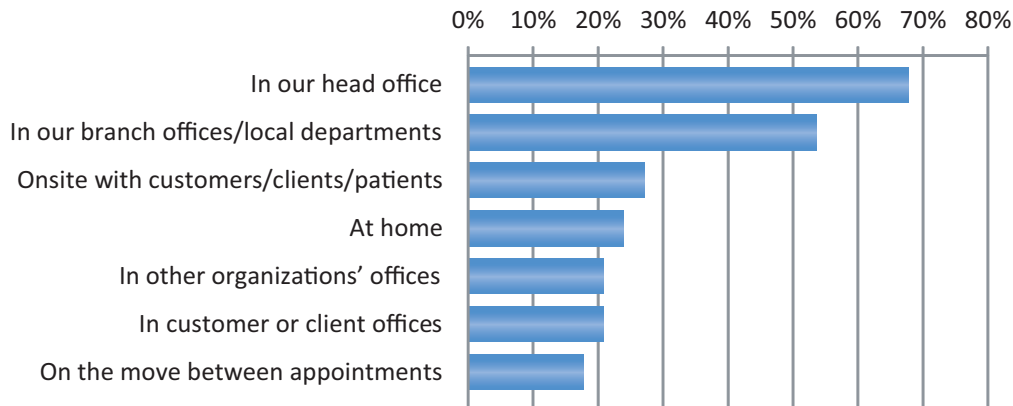
So when it comes to the storage system for active case files, a modern ECM or document management system is a good starting point. 26% of our responding organizations do this, and 10% go one stage better with a dedicated case management system. A further 26% use a mixture of collaboration systems, line of business systems and CRM systems, including 3% who use project management systems – a low number in view of the predominance of that kind of application given in Figure 2. The remaining 38% either use file shares (19%) or still rely on paper files (19%).

Figure 8: Which of the following best describes where your “live” case-related content and documents are held? (N=199)



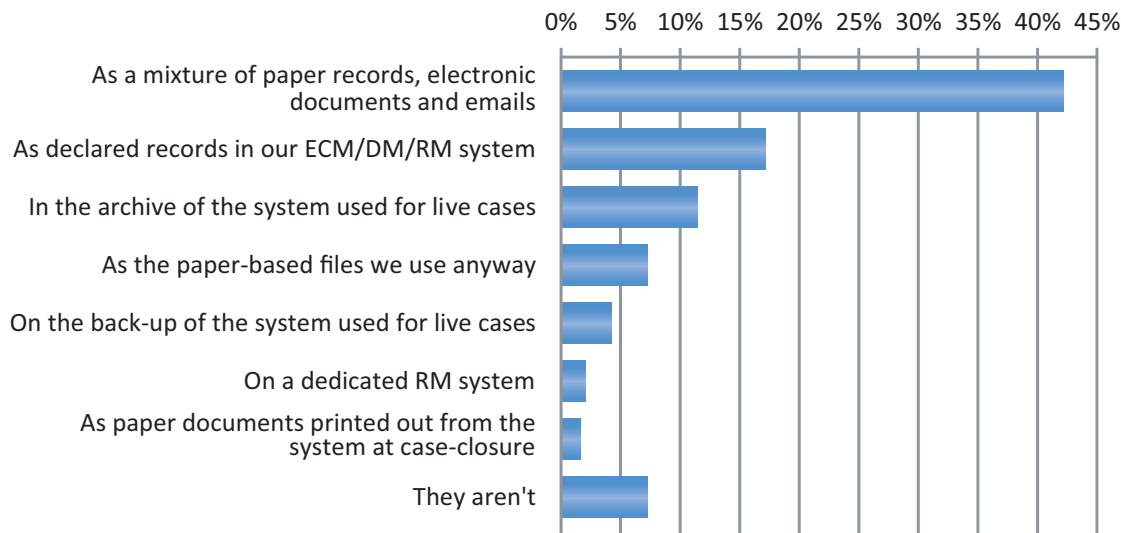
A key aspect of the active case-file management system is accessibility, particularly when it comes to remote access. In many cases this will be in branch offices, and increasingly from home, either as home-workers, teleworkers or during travel disruption. Due to the nature of case-work, it is not surprising that 27% need to access documentation and records when they are onsite with customers, clients or patients. If access is not available, paper copies will inevitably proliferate, and notes, corrections and additions will need to find their way back to the original documents somehow. For field-workers, this updating of documents back-at-base can be a big productivity issue and the ability to access documents using mobile devices while on the move between appointments is important for 18% of organizations.

Figure 9: Where are those involved with the case likely to be located when they generate or need access to case-content? (Check all that apply) (N=192)



Given the compliance requirements that many case-based operations have to work to, a secure and retrievable records archive is vital. Yet 42% admit that their closed cases are likely to be archived across a mixture of paper records, electronic documents and emails. Only 31% of organizations can point to a records management system or a case-file archive that contains a complete electronic record of the case – along with the 9% who either use paper throughout the case, or print everything out from the system at case closure. A worrying 7% do not archive their closed case-files at all.

Figure 10: How are your closed case folders generally archived? (N=192)



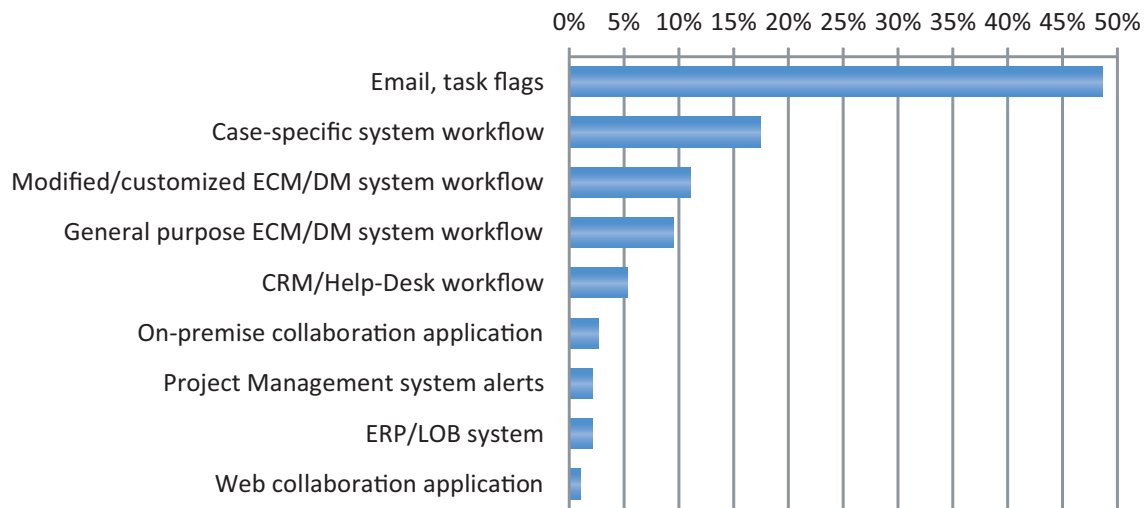
Management Issues

Given the list of case-related applications in Figure 2, it seems likely that all of our responding organizations would already have some level of management procedures in place for case-communications, progress reporting and team performance monitoring. However, we found that there are management issues in these areas for most of our respondents, and ways in which productivity and success could be improved considerably.

Workflow Issues

Although not necessarily following pre-defined tasks, there will be milestones associated with any case-based process, and those involved in the case will be set tasks and actions. However, it would seem from Figure 11 that email requests and task flags are the most common workflow prompting or process management tools for 49% of organizations. Given the personal nature of email clients, this is not a good omen for transparency, and for monitoring by case managers. 28% are either using a case-specific system that includes workflow (17%), or have customized a general purpose ECM or DM system (11%).

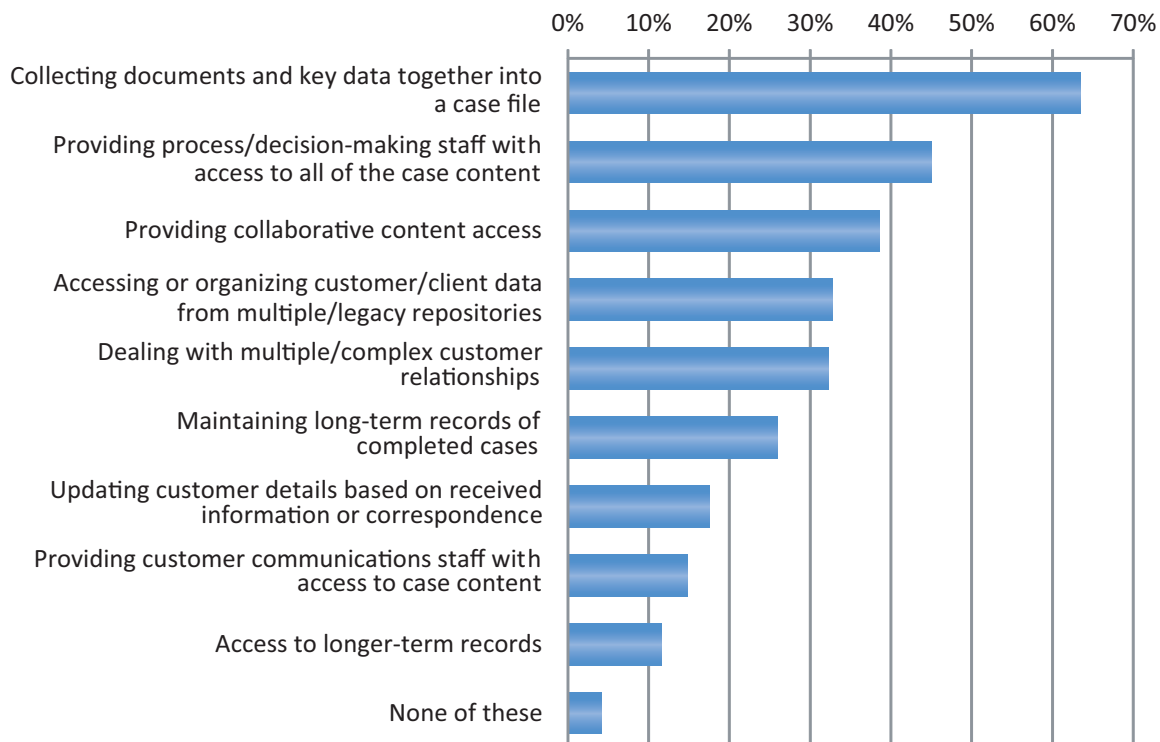
Figure 11: Which of the following systems do you mainly use for action-prompting, workflow or process management of cases? (N=189)



Business Issues

We found earlier that case-content is likely to be spread across multiple systems, and the biggest business issues in managing this content are collecting all of the documents and key data together into a case file, and providing all of those working on the case with access to this complete set – and in particular, allowing them to collaborate on the content. Legacy repositories create part of the problem, as does dealing with multiple or complex customer relationships which may require more selective access.

Figure 12: Which THREE of the following business issues do you most have in managing case content? (Check the top 3 that apply) (N=189)

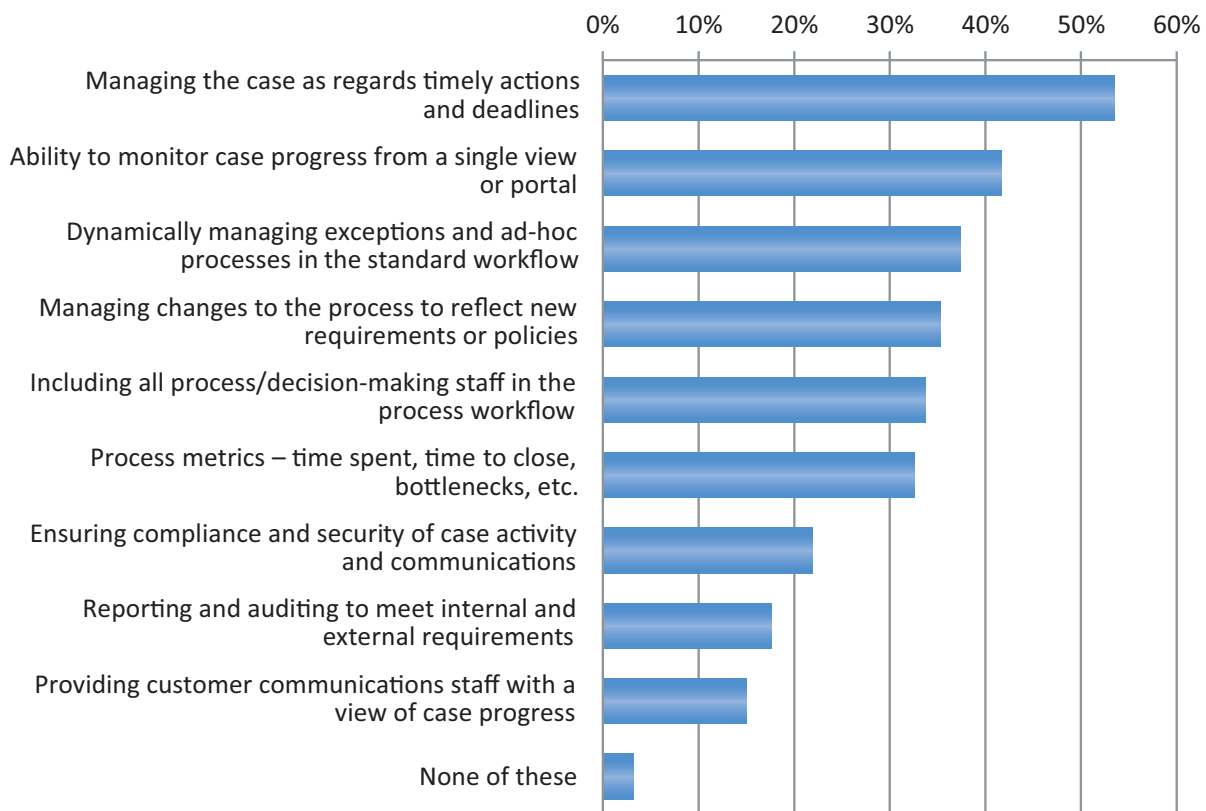


Process Issues

Visibility of case progress is vital, and with the ad hoc tasking and milestone flagging described above, this is going to prove difficult – or at least time-consuming for all, as more and more progress reports and timesheets are called up to ensure that deadlines are met. The ability to monitor the case from a single view or portal becomes even more important when other departments or agencies are involved in time-critical tasks. Further issues with the process itself crop up when exceptions and ad hoc workflows are needed. Users need to be able to amend the workflow in an approved way, not fight it or work around it.

Respondents were limited to three choices in this question (Figure 13) but those issues further down the table are still important – making changes to the process to reflect new requirements or policies, including all process and decision-making staff in the workflow, and collecting process metrics were all relevant issues for at least a third of respondents.

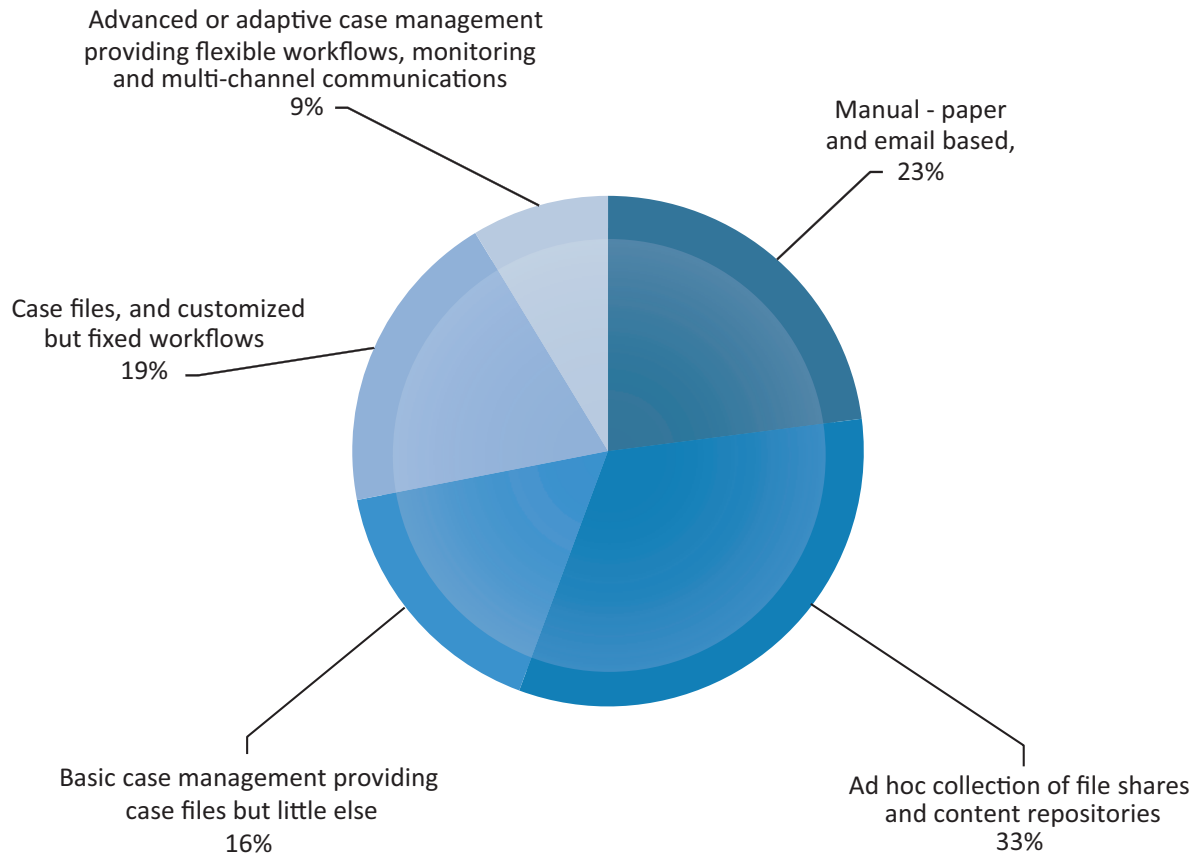
Figure 13: Which THREE of the following business process issues do you most have in managing a case? (Check the top 3 that apply) (N=187)



Case Management Systems

If we now look more closely at the IT systems requirements for case management, we see in Figure 14 that more than half (56%) have no system at all and are using either manual paper-based processes, or an ad hoc collection of file shares and content repositories. 16% have the ability to create case files but little else. Of the remaining 28%, two thirds (19%) have case files and customized workflows, but they are fixed workflows rather than adaptive. Only 9% would describe their system as in any way “advanced” or “adaptive”, providing flexible workflows, built-in monitoring, and multi-channel communications. Quite a high proportion (27%) of these advanced systems have been developed in-house.

Figure 14: How would you best describe your current case management system?
(N=196)



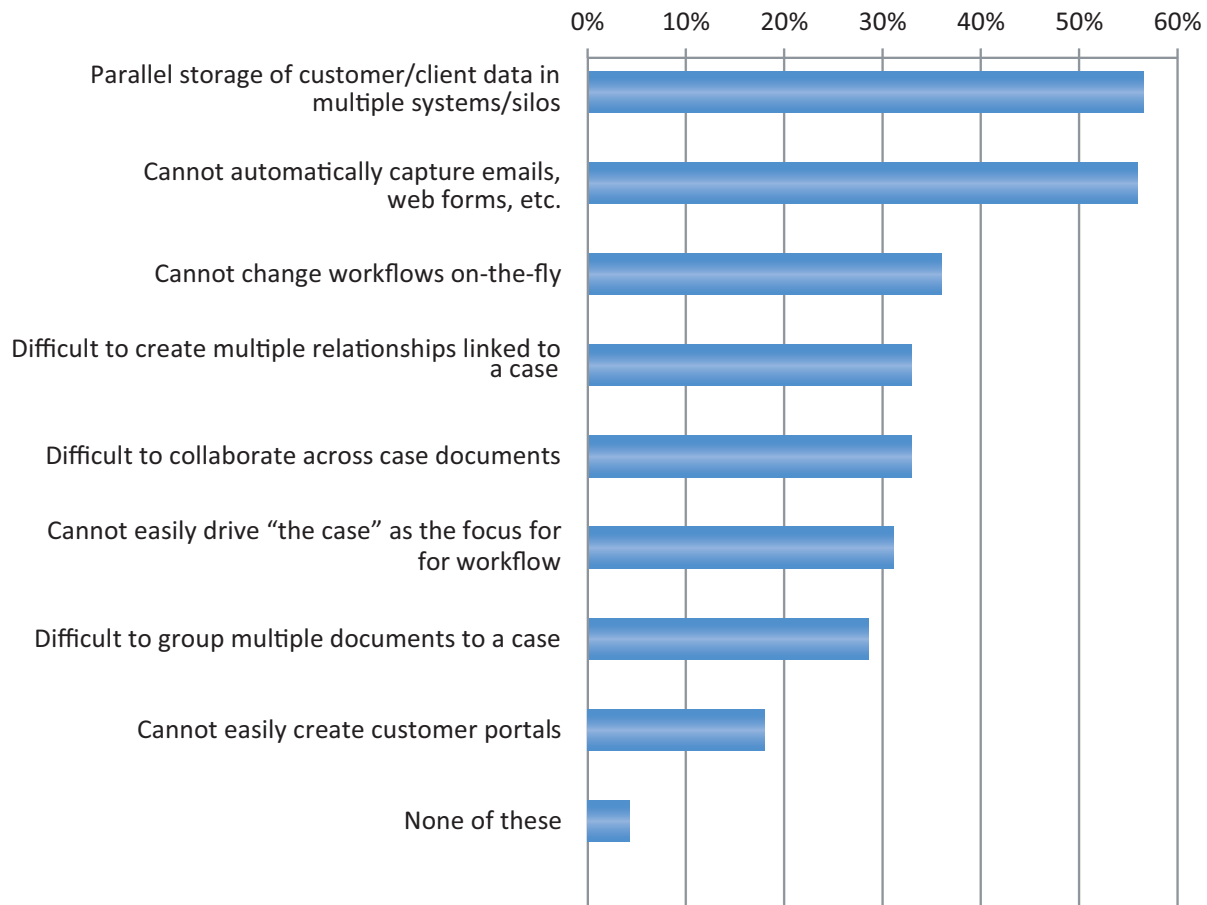
Accessing content across multiple systems and repositories, and automatically capturing emails, web-forms, etc., are the two biggest technical issues for our respondents with their current way of working, and these reflect the increasing use of multiple and concurrent communications channels, particularly for consumer or citizen interactions. The PR department may be monitoring social communications and contacting dissatisfied customers, but unless they also have immediate access to incoming emails from that customer, a copy of any web transactions, and notes from any recent conversations with the call-desk, they will be unable to defuse the complaint.

For those using ECM or DM systems to drive their case workflows, changing workflows on-the-fly will be an issue – in fact in some legacy systems, changing workflows at all is a major task, let alone within the duration of a single case. Assigning a case-number and driving the case as the focus for the workflow may also be difficult in a standard ECM system. In addition, collaboration functionality may be limited, particularly for comments and suggestions related to a given document.

For those using a CRM or call-desk system for case-work, the difficulty of creating case-specific relationships between the professionals and independent assessors for the duration of the case or project, and then resetting the relationships for another case can be considerable.

Many public sector operations involving applications and approvals are also required to publish case progress and possibly selected content to a web portal, which is often difficult with legacy systems.

**Figure 15: Which of the following technical issues do you have in linking people, communications and documents to a case?
(Check the main ones that apply) (N=161)**



Reflecting these current limitations, we asked potential (and existing) users which features would be the most important to them for an improved or modern case management system. As we would expect from the drivers and issues mentioned previously, automated capture of multiple incoming communications and a single view of the customer/patient/client from one screen are the two most highly rated features, followed by flexible workflows within the case. Comprehensive monitoring and alerting are also high on the list, followed by mobile access to the case file. Even better would be secure process interaction from mobile, in particular sign-off approval.

Optimization of case data for pattern detection and exception analytics comes some way down the list - not surprisingly given the importance of the core features – but is cited by 19% as an important requirement, and is certainly likely to be a key differentiator for the Big Data age. The initial use cases are in fraud detection, crime solving and healthcare, but there are many more potential applications.

**Figure 16: What would you consider to be the four most important features for you in an improved or modern case management system?
(Max FOUR) (N=162)**

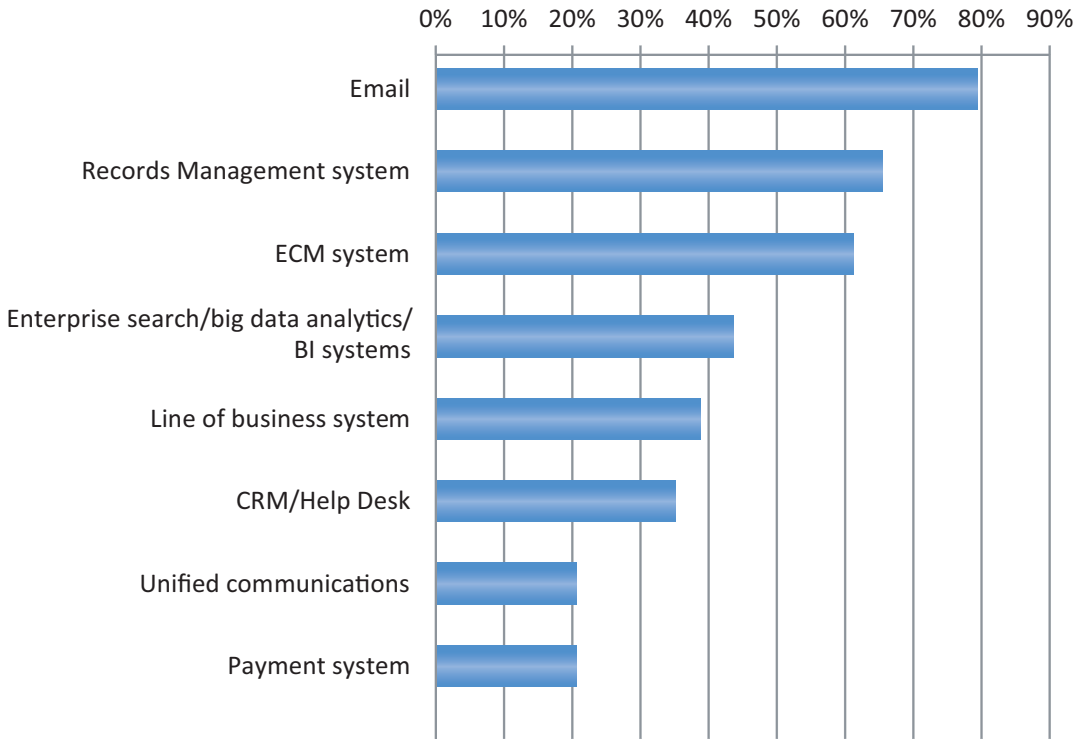


Existing users of advanced or adaptive systems agree with automated capture of inbound communications as the top feature, but they rate pre-case inclusion of process workers and professionals as the second most important.

Integration

Email integration is inevitably going to be the top integration requirement, followed by direct connection to the records management system. If using a dedicated case-management application, it needs to integrate with the ECM system. Next comes integration with enterprise search, big data analytics and/or BI systems. Existing advanced users place a higher priority on line-of-business integration, and this may reflect early adopters with claims or loan applications which need to sit alongside more transactional systems. Payment system integration reflects a similar need in healthcare and legal applications.

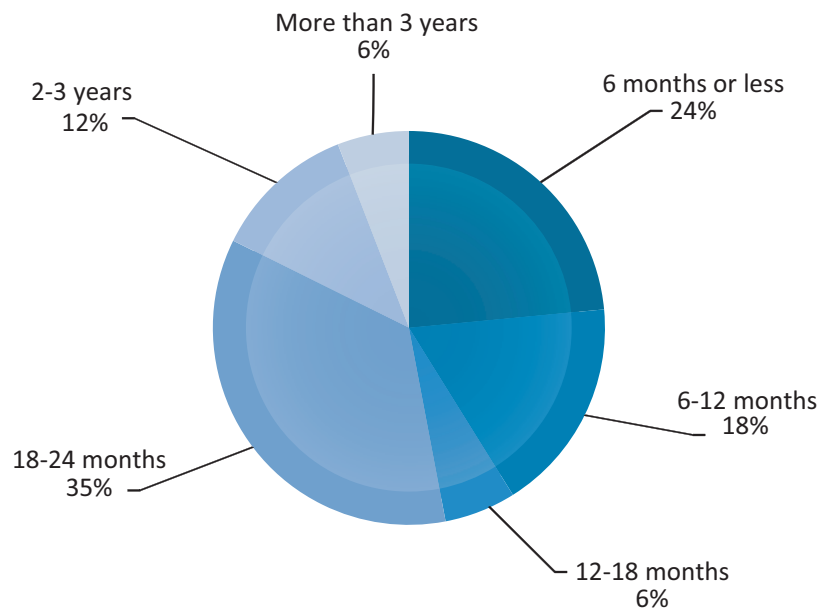
Figure 17: Would it be useful if your case management system integrated with any of the following systems? (Check all that apply) (N=165)



ROI

Although the sample size of those using advanced or adaptive case management systems is quite small, the majority (83%) reported ROI payback within 2 years, with half of those (42%) seeing a return within 12 months – quite dramatic for a system that needs to be introduced to a diverse and frequently dispersed set of users. Of course, if we look back at the drivers of reducing costs, improving outcomes, and avoiding compliance failures, then if these systems are effective, the rewards are likely to be considerable.

Figure 18: What payback period would you say you have achieved with your advanced/adaptive case management system? (N=14)



Conclusion and Recommendations

As we have seen, case management has a broad range of applications beyond the conventional healthcare, crime and social administration. Project management, contract and bid management and incident management top the list, along with help desk, customer disputes, claims processes and, of course, law suites.

We have seen throughout the report that case workers need the ability to include many different content types into a case file, and to automatically capture inbound communications such as email, fax and web forms. The workflow within the case and the allocation of case-workers to the workflow needs to be flexible, and comprehensive monitoring and progress reporting structures are then needed to keep the process on track.

Looking to the future, case workers tend to be somewhat mobile and are increasingly dispersed across outside organizations and agencies, therefore remote access outside the firewall, and in particular mobile access, is important, but always within the requirements of security and compliance – as also reflected in the need for a solid and robust records management capability for closed cases. Again, with a view to the future, the ability to interrogate the case records for big data analytics in order to detect trends and patterns is important.

Only a small proportion of our survey (9%) have what they consider to be a truly advanced or adaptive case management system encompassing these features, but nearly half of these (42%) report a payback within 12 months.

Recommendations

- Take a broad view of the potential applicability of case-based applications across different departments and processes in your business.
- Map your processes against the characteristics described in this report to see if they are indeed case-based, with a beginning and an end, with variable paths through the system, different participants, and different potential outcomes.
- Ask the case workers involved in these processes how well their IT tools match the needs of their job.
- Pay particular attention to completeness of information access, flexible workflows, and “single-view” of the case, customer, citizen or client.
- Find out if productivity could be improved if case-workers – internal and third party – had remote access to the case file while mobile or working with the client or customer.
- Ask those who are responsible for the effective management and progress of the caseload if they have the monitoring tools in place to spot overdue actions and to organize resources.
- Audit your current processes for compliance with procedures, regulations and legal requirements. Are workflows and exception handling consistent or is each case - or each case-worker - following different processes?
- If challenged, how difficult is it to pull up all of those documents, forms, emails, images, etc., that constitute a closed-case record.
- To what extent are you able to leverage past cases to solve future problems using analytics and pattern detection?
- Consider how a modern and adaptive system could improve productivity and compliance.
- Do not confine your thinking to improving the call-desk or CRM system, building out the line-of-business system, or customizing your existing DM or ECM systems. It may well be that an advanced case-management product underlying these systems, and integrated with them, could best satisfy your needs.
- Build a business case based on the findings of this report.

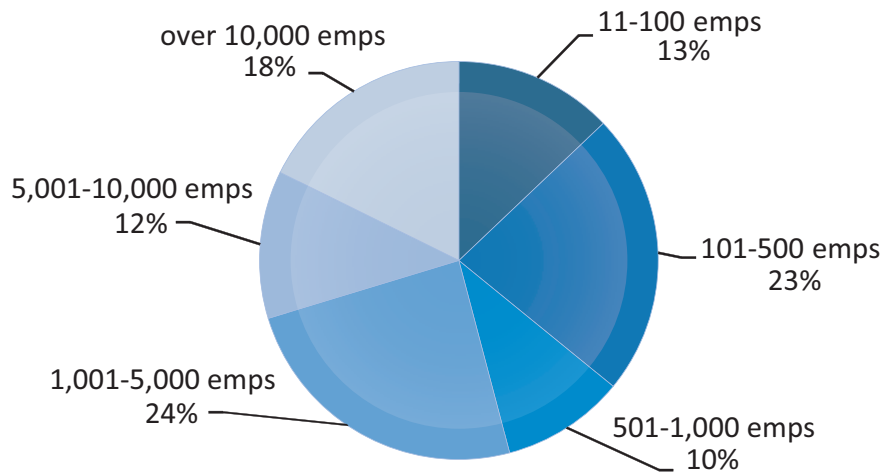
Appendix 1: Survey Demographics

Survey Background

The survey was taken by 207 individual members of the AIIM community between 15 February 2013 and 11 March 2013 using a web-based tool. Invitations to take the survey were sent via email to a selection of the 70,000 AIIM community members

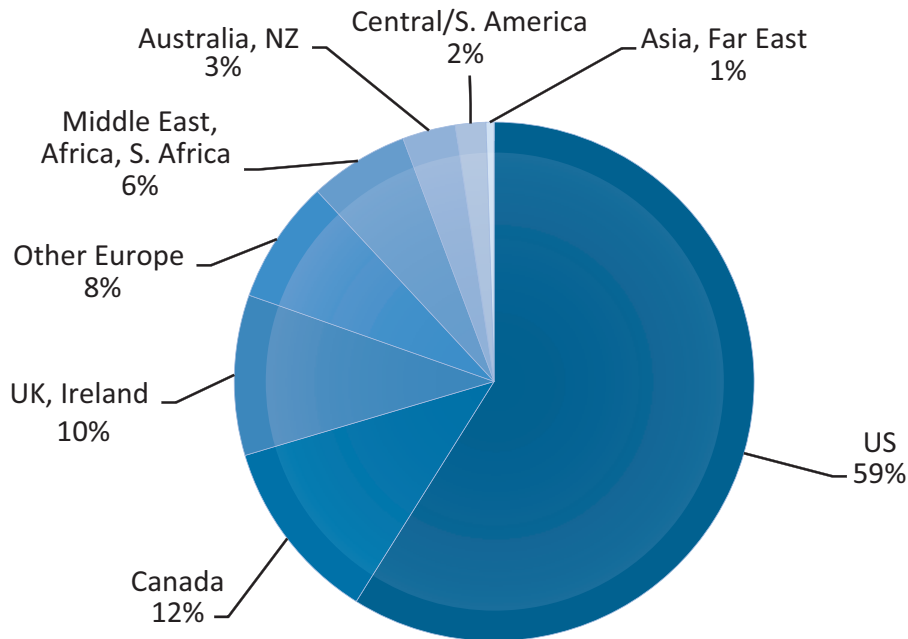
Organizational Size

Organizations with less than 11 employees are excluded from all of the results in this report, as are suppliers of ECM products and services. On this basis, larger organizations (over 5,000 employees) represent 30%, with mid-sized organizations (500 to 5,000 employees) at 34%. Small-to-mid sized organizations (10 to 500 employees) are 36%.



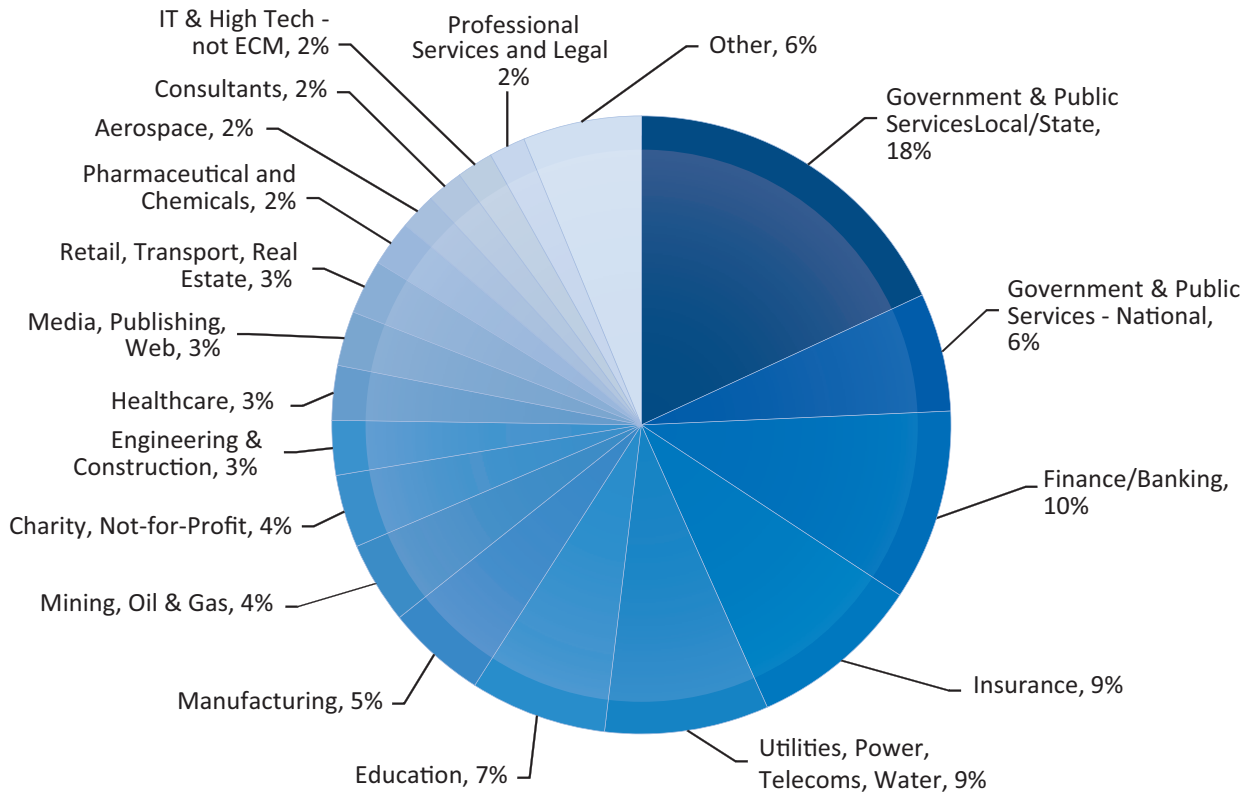
Geography

The survey was international, with US and Canada making up 71% of respondents, and 18% from Europe. We found only minor differences between US and European responses.



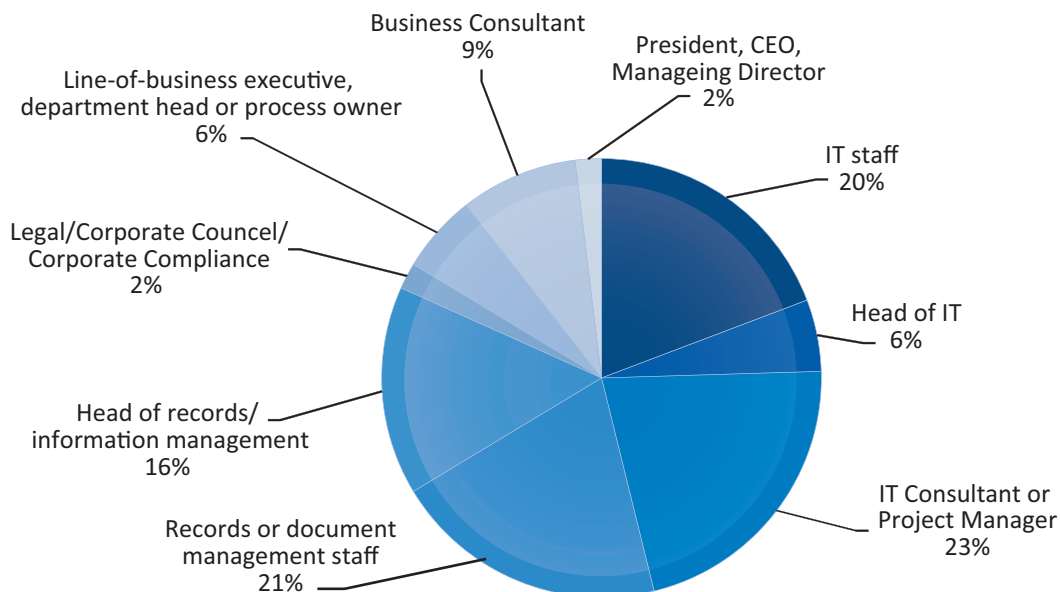
Industry Sector

Local government and public services represent 18% and national government 6%. Finance, banking and insurance represent 19%. The remaining sectors are evenly split.



Job Roles

49% of respondents are from IT, 37% have a records management or information management role, plus 2% from legal or corporate compliance 15% are line-of-business managers.



Appendix 2: Open ended comments (selective)

“Do you have any general comments to make about your case management system?”

- We recently switched to a web-based (cloud) document management system that is case-based. We have seen huge benefits from it. We can focus on the content more than the servers. We have mobile access, critical to many staff.
- It is very ad-hoc and each dept. has its own process for managing cases.
- I struggle with balancing improved automation derived from standardized processes, and flexible workflows based on real world/complex business processes. Where is the balance between “Do it THE COMPANY WAY” so that the automation is easier and more efficient, and “Allow variations because it is more personalized to the customer or end person”?
- The challenge for small organizations is finding a comprehensive cost-effective solution; our current system is primarily a time-capture and billing system and is OK as a document repository and has some CRM capability, but little workflow or case management.
- It is pretty ad-hoc at this point. Part of the problem is that we have multiple administrators (project managers) who need to collaborate across campuses and departments.
- It suffers from poor integration across systems.
- All bespoke systems, so a high cost to build, operate and maintain. But they give huge functionality.

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AIIM
1100 Wayne Avenue, Suite 1100
Silver Spring, MD 20910
301.587.8202
www.aiim.org

AIIM Europe
The IT Centre, Lowesmoor Wharf
Worcester, WR1 2RR, UK
+44 (0)1905 727600
www.aiim.eu