7 Considerations for Implementing a Global Information Management System
Extending information services across the globe is a top priority for many organizations. But given limited resources, how can knowledge management professionals and corporate information managers meet the around-the-clock information needs of a geographically-diverse workforce?

This is an increasingly common challenge, and at the Otsuka Pharmaceutical group of companies, it is Blanca’s responsibility. Here’s her story.

Blanca Chou is the director of the Information Resource Center at Otsuka America Pharmaceutical, Inc., which is part of a Japan-based global group of companies with over 45,000 employees in 28 countries.

Her task? To implement enterprise information systems that ensure effective information delivery, utilization and management.

Globalizing an information management system is a massive undertaking. Blanca started by addressing the following 7 areas:

1. **IT Infrastructure**

   SAML SSO? Mobile VPN? Access on the go?

   Two things were certain:
   - Users were frustrated by barriers to entry.
   - They wanted 24/7 access to data and information sources from anywhere on any device.

   Blanca began by assessing the different technologies and infrastructures currently being used in different regions. From there, she determined the best universal option moving forward for her organization.

   “Many users who travel frequently had a strong need for information access anytime, anywhere, from any device. My team worked with our IT group to implement a mobile VPN and developed a customized mobile app that provides access to all our e-journals, databases and e-books available for iOS systems. Today, we have hundreds of users and they find it very beneficial.”
2. **Language, Culture & Time Zones**

Working with teams from around the world, Blanca had to accommodate the intricacies of different cultures, working styles and time zones. Some don’t typically reach agreements at official meetings. Some are punctual. Some avoid conflicts. Managing time zone differences to organize effective meetings and engage conversations is also crucial.

“When dealing with different cultures, you need to be a mind reader. If they say this, they may mean that.”

On top of the nuances of culture, word choice itself can pose problems. You must find a solution that’s translatable from language to language, not to mention characters and symbols that are meant to be read from left to right or right to left.

3. **User Adoption Readiness**

Embracing new technology, especially when it’s being mandated by a team thousands of miles away, can be daunting. “It requires strategy to target regions and affiliates that are ready to move forward. It is important to demonstrate success, establish quick wins early and recruit advocates to gain more buy-in.”

In a global system, local customization is key.

Bring together a team that incorporates different regions and affiliates to create both in-person and online training courses, workshops and demos. This will allow all users to onboard at a similar pace, with the same understanding of how the tools work and how they will benefit from their use.

4. **Regulations**

Regulations vary from country to country, and each of these complex regulatory systems requires compliance.

Before you begin, create a checklist of the current requirements for each region, and how your information system will help users comply with them.
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“Business Functions

The best universal solutions must be scalable and customizable to accommodate a variety of ever-changing business needs.

For Blanca, her colleagues in one region focus on clinical development. They need a system that incorporates shared libraries, component-based authoring, and easy review processes.

In another region, her organization’s researchers are focused on discovery. Their main priority is faster access to content on-the-go.

And then of course, there are departments like executive management, human resources and business development each with their own set of informational needs.

Blanca needed an information management system that could fit them all.

“We talk to a lot of different departments and affiliates to try to better understand their workload. How can we better help them streamline their workflow?”

“Systems and Workflows

Your organization may have tried to implement information management systems in the past without success. Common frustrations range from piecemeal systems that never properly integrate to fatigue at applying a single system to the huge backlog of existing files.

Blanca found that the human element was just as important as the technology itself in making an information management system stick. Her team drew from every department — and nearly every continent — to make sure that each group’s needs would be met.

“We ask what other existing information systems and databases employees are using in their regions. We want affiliates in different regions to keep the workflows that make sense for them.”

Upon implementation, the team members went back to their local groups as knowledgeable advocates for adoption of the new system.

“It’s important to request local feedback and buy-in regularly, so you can ensure all needs are being met.”
Financial Systems

Invoicing and chargebacks are handled differently based on the region where work is being done.

“It's critical to understand user requirements prior to implementation, so the system will have the right usage reporting to satisfy each affiliate.”

RIGHTFIND IN ACTION AT OTSUkA

CCC's RightFind® content workflow solution is Otsuka's first truly global system used by all six divisions of pharma and other industries worldwide. Otsuka's U.S. team has been using RightFind since 2009, but once the solution was introduced globally, it was adopted by all Otsuka affiliates in less than 24 months. Thousands of employees at Otsuka now use RightFind to gain quick access to vital information, saving the company money, increasing efficiency and simplifying copyright compliance.

In the next two years, Blanca would like to see other key functions of RightFind be widely utilized to maximize the value of this enterprise information system and streamline literature management globally.

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