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THE CHALLENGE OF EMAIL MANAGEMENT AND WHAT YOU NEED TO SOLVE IT

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EMAILS NEED TO BE MANAGED JUST LIKE ANY OTHER TYPE OF DOCUMENTS OF RECORD.

Decisions, transactions and other important business matters are so regularly performed using emails that a significant portion of an organization's records are indeed email messages. So, the need for email management is not up for debate. But how to succeed in the best way for your organization is.

THIS EBOOK, THE FIRST IN A THREE-PART SERIES, WILL COVER THE CHALLENGES INFORMATION MANAGERS FACE WHEN ATTEMPTING TO PUT IN PLACE AN EMAIL MANAGEMENT STRATEGY AND THE OPTIONS THEY HAVE TO SUCCEED.

5 INDUSTRIES THAT RELY ON EMAIL MANAGEMENT BEST PRACTICE

When you consider that 80% of important records in an organization are emails, yet only 5% of business emails are records—the rest often forming part of the noise of today's increasing volume of information—classifying these records in a way that ensures correct storage and easy retrieval is a daunting task for information managers in any industry.

In specific industries, emails are more likely to be documents of record, making strong email management strategy essential. Let's take a look at these specific industries...

01

STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

State and local government face unique challenges when it comes to the management of information and data. Many emails that government workers receive day-to-day and week-to-week contain information that is considered public record, meaning citizens can request to view it and the agency must comply. It's essential that this information is archived correctly, made easily accessible, and retained to ensure compliance with federal, state, and local regulations. An inability to maintain such emails securely and consistently and to store them in a centralized location, leaves agencies more susceptible to non-compliance as well as poor customer service.

02

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

For organizations in professional services, like accounting firms, financial advisors, advertising firms, etc., email is at the center of the workday. Streams of emails come in daily and handling them effectively can be a real challenge. A sophisticated and easy-to-use system needs to be in place to ensure workers can find the information they need to be productive, data regulations are met, and information is stored correctly for future use.
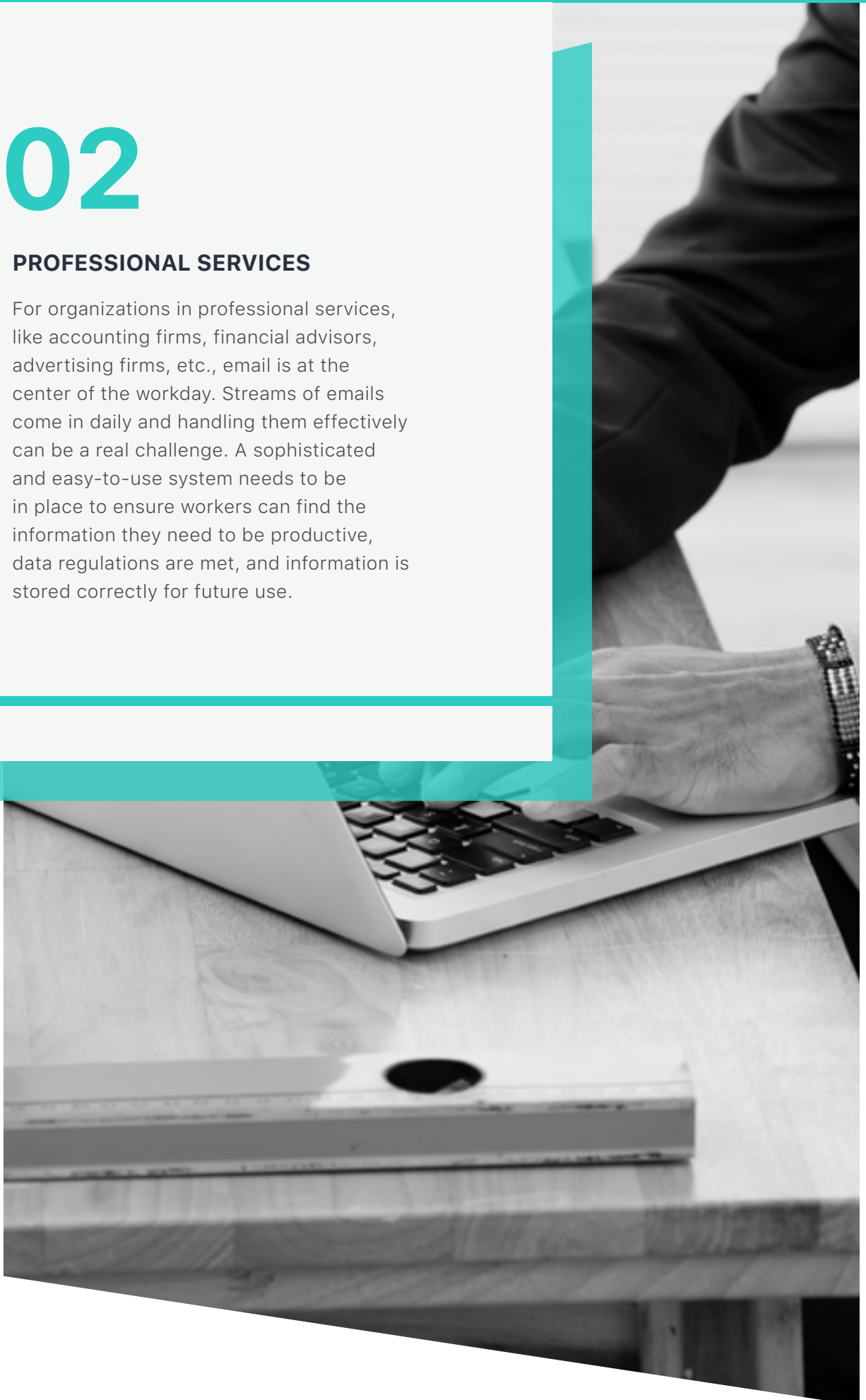
03

MANUFACTURING

In manufacturing, the inability to locate an email that is, in effect, an acting warranty for a piece of machinery that breaks, means that the owner of the machine (i.e. the organization) may have no recourse to claim compensation and will have to 'eat' the cost of repair or purchase a new machine.
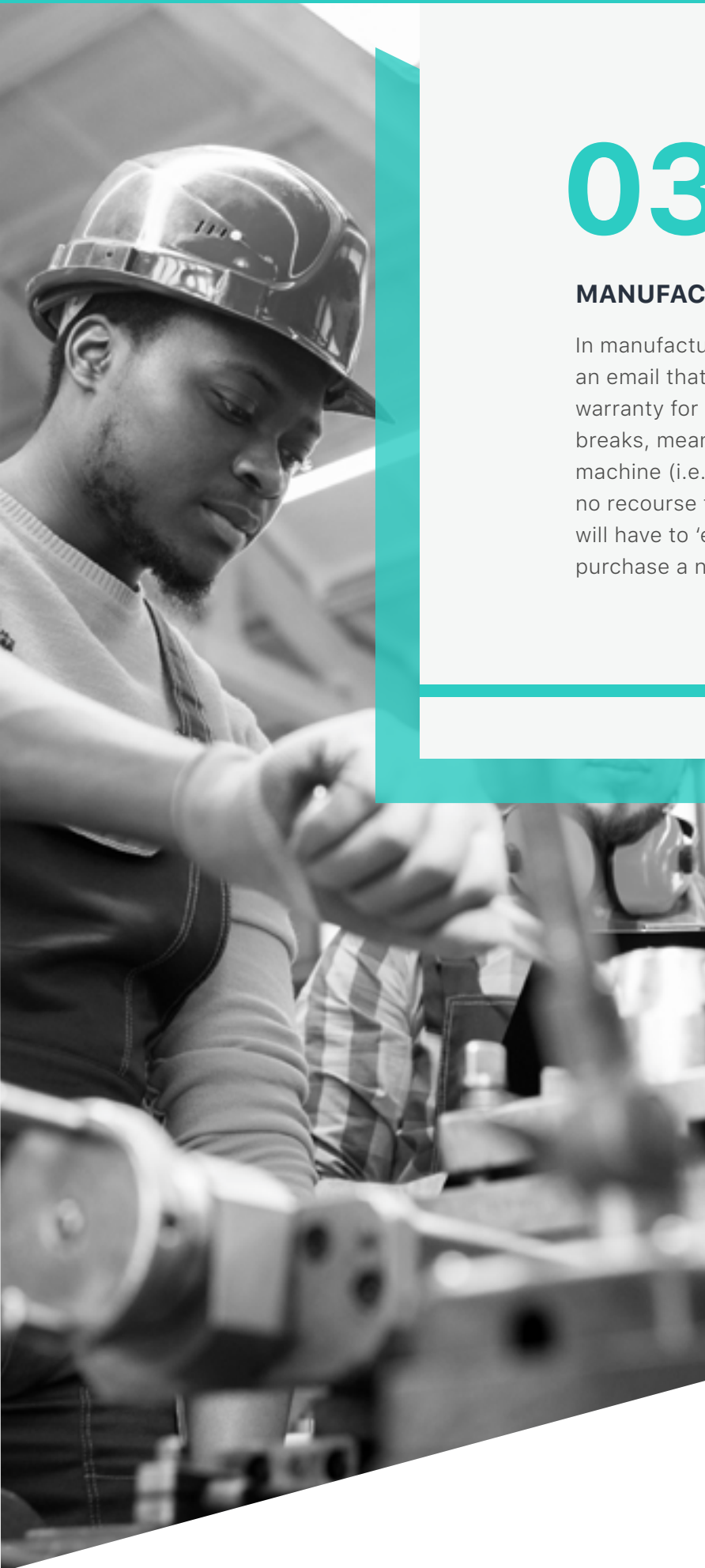
04

CONSTRUCTION

Email plays an essential role in the successful running of projects in the construction industry. A typical construction project is made up of multiple moving parts across the supply chain and involves several companies. Projects are often run on tiny margins so delays or other mistakes can be extremely detrimental to a project's success. The last thing any worker on a construction project wants is to waste time searching for emails, or to find out they are working with outdated documents and data. A sophisticated email management strategy can make sure this doesn't happen.
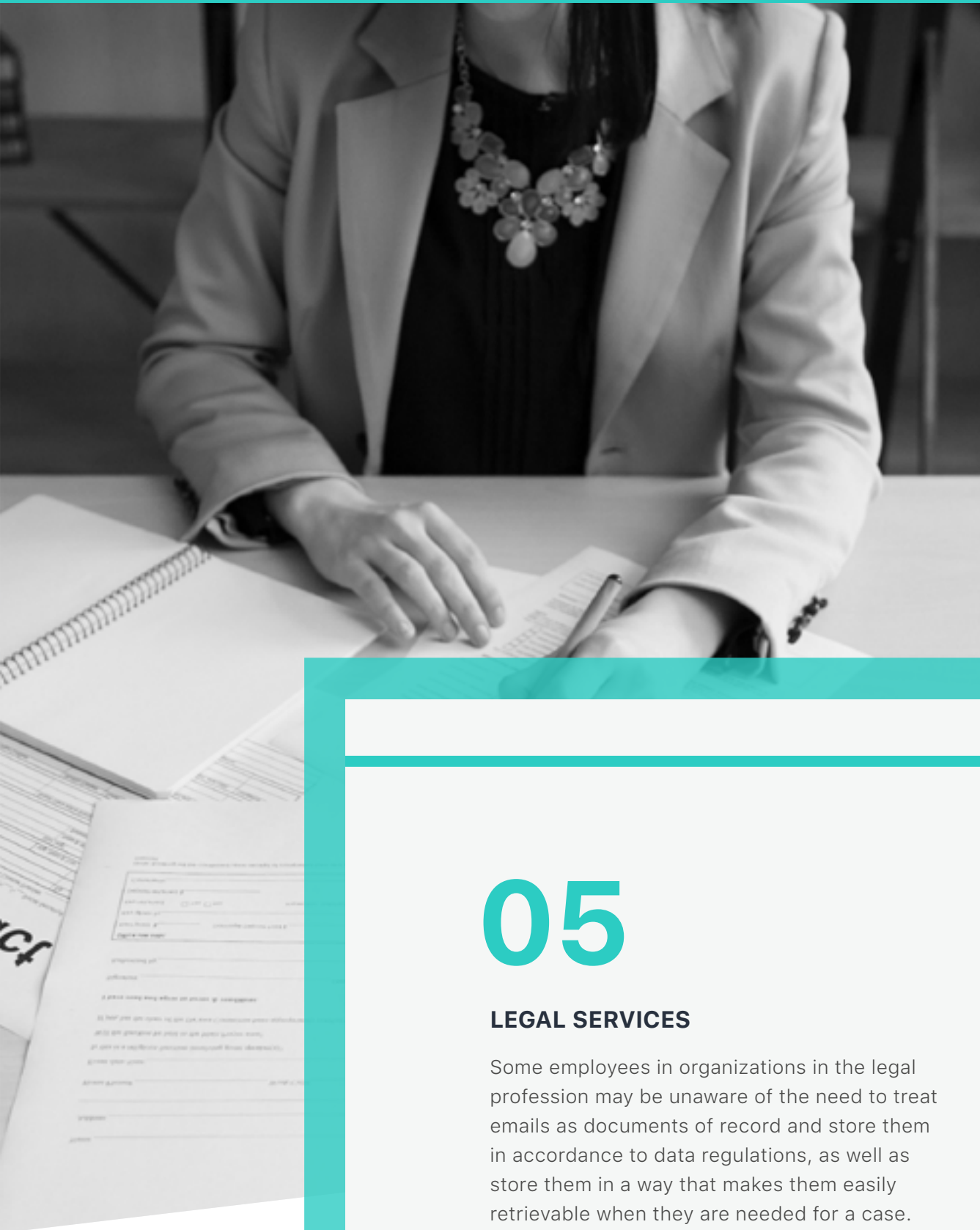
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LEGAL SERVICES

Some employees in organizations in the legal profession may be unaware of the need to treat emails as documents of record and store them in accordance to data regulations, as well as store them in a way that makes them easily retrievable when they are needed for a case. Like construction, services in the legal world often involve multiple departments and many moving parts. The right email management strategy is essential for these organizations to function adequately.

80% OF IMPORTANT RECORDS IN AN ORGANIZATION ARE EMAILS YET ONLY 5% OF BUSINESS EMAILS ARE RECORDS

UNDERSTANDING THE REQUIREMENTS AND CHALLENGES

When it comes down to managing emails correctly, your organization needs to be able to consistently:

- Capture the relevant emails

- Delete all the others (either immediately or over time)

- Classify emails accurately – so they can be found later

- Discover emails and records when needed

- Execute a record lifecycle policy (i.e. a retention and disposition strategy, eventually deleting emails of record)

WHAT IS AN EMAIL OF RECORD AND WHAT IS NOT?

As we've already said, 80% of documents of record are emails, but only 5% of emails are records. The challenge for organizations is capturing the relevant emails as records and deleting the rest. However, it's not as simple as that in practice. Consider an organization of 1,000 employees—in this case, everyone is both creating and receiving emails of record and not of record, each with their own ideas of what a record is and an inconsistent approach to saving emails will lead to document chaos.

Often, the solution is not to prescribe strict guidelines around what constitutes an email of record, but rather encourage users to decide which emails have value. While that might seem like a way of increasing your store of emails even further, the volume isn't an issue once the emails of record are managed correctly. Your users often have the best sense of what needs to be kept or not, so enabling them to make that call is important.

A NEEDLE IN AN EMAIL STACK

When emails of record are managed inconsistently, it makes them hard to find (especially since the volume of information is simply too great)—if they still exist at all. Not being able to find the right information at the right time during a financial audit, client inquiry, or legal action, for example, can lead to significant fines and a loss of reputation.

There have been a slew of fines levied over the years to financial firms who have failed to properly retain important emails and other record-keeping violations. For example, in December of 2018, the Southridge Investment Group LLC Chief Compliance Officer was disciplined for failure to establish a system for review of electronic communication. This is on top of fines in 2016 to several financial firms amounting to almost $15M for failure to preserve broker-dealer and customer records in an appropriate format.

Client management, for instance, is often conducted primarily through email. If key emails cannot be found, there is potential for conflicting responses to clients, missing emails that suddenly introduce liability, as well as mistakes with contracts, designs, etc.

DELETION IS IMPORTANT TOO

It is important to remember that a good email management strategy isn't only about saving emails but about deleting them too. After a certain period of time (which depends on your retention policy), it's best practice to delete emails of record. There are certain emails that you don't want in your archive after a certain point. For instance, think of a government agency whose past correspondence may introduce unnecessary complications during an ediscovery. Or consider the example of Sony Pictures, who was hacked and the contents of old emails (that had passed their retention lifecycle) were published, much to the embarrassment of the company.
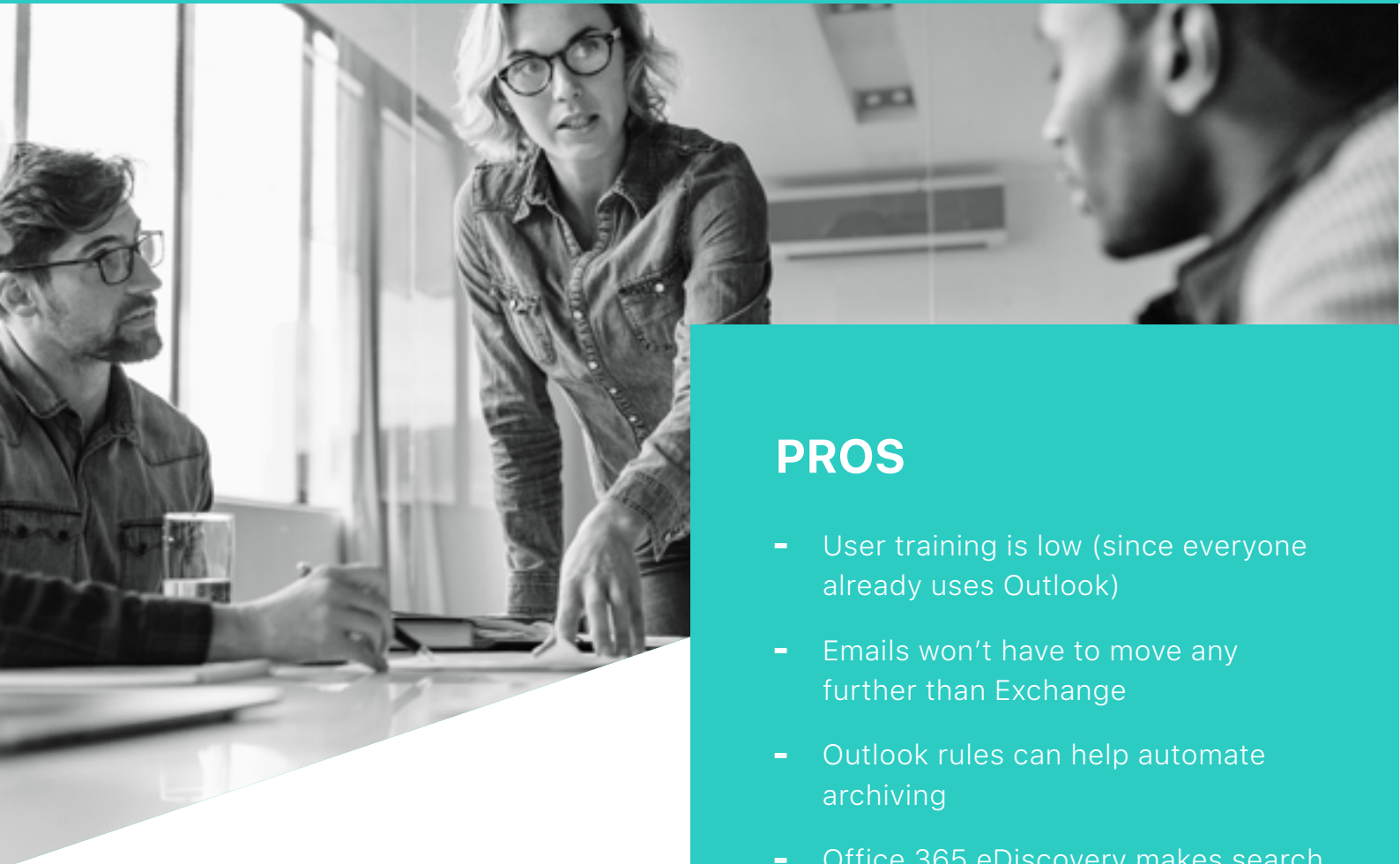
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IN TODAY'S DAY AND AGE, YOU NEED APPROPRIATE TECHNOLOGY AND BUSINESS PROCESSES TO IMPLEMENT AN EMAIL MANAGEMENT INITIATIVE.

YOUR OPTIONS IN THE AGE OF INFORMATION OVERLOAD

It's clear that an inability to capture, classify or even delete emails of record can lead to significant consequences. So, what are your options? In today's day and age, it's clear you need appropriate technology and business processes to implement an email management initiative. There are many trade-offs to the different approaches, but in general, you have three options in terms of selecting a technology framework; they are:

- Use Outlook and Groups to store email records, and a combination of SharePoint, OneDrive and Teams to store document records

- Use SharePoint as a central repository for both email and document records

- Buy a dedicated third-party solution

PROS

- User training is low (since everyone already uses Outlook)

- Emails won't have to move any further than Exchange

- Outlook rules can help automate archiving

- Office 365 eDiscovery makes search across email and documents feasible

CONS

- Emails are stored separately from documents

- No classification of emails makes finding related-information impossible

- Mailbox storage capacity is an issue

- Data silos make finding information difficult

- Users can't save attachments as records

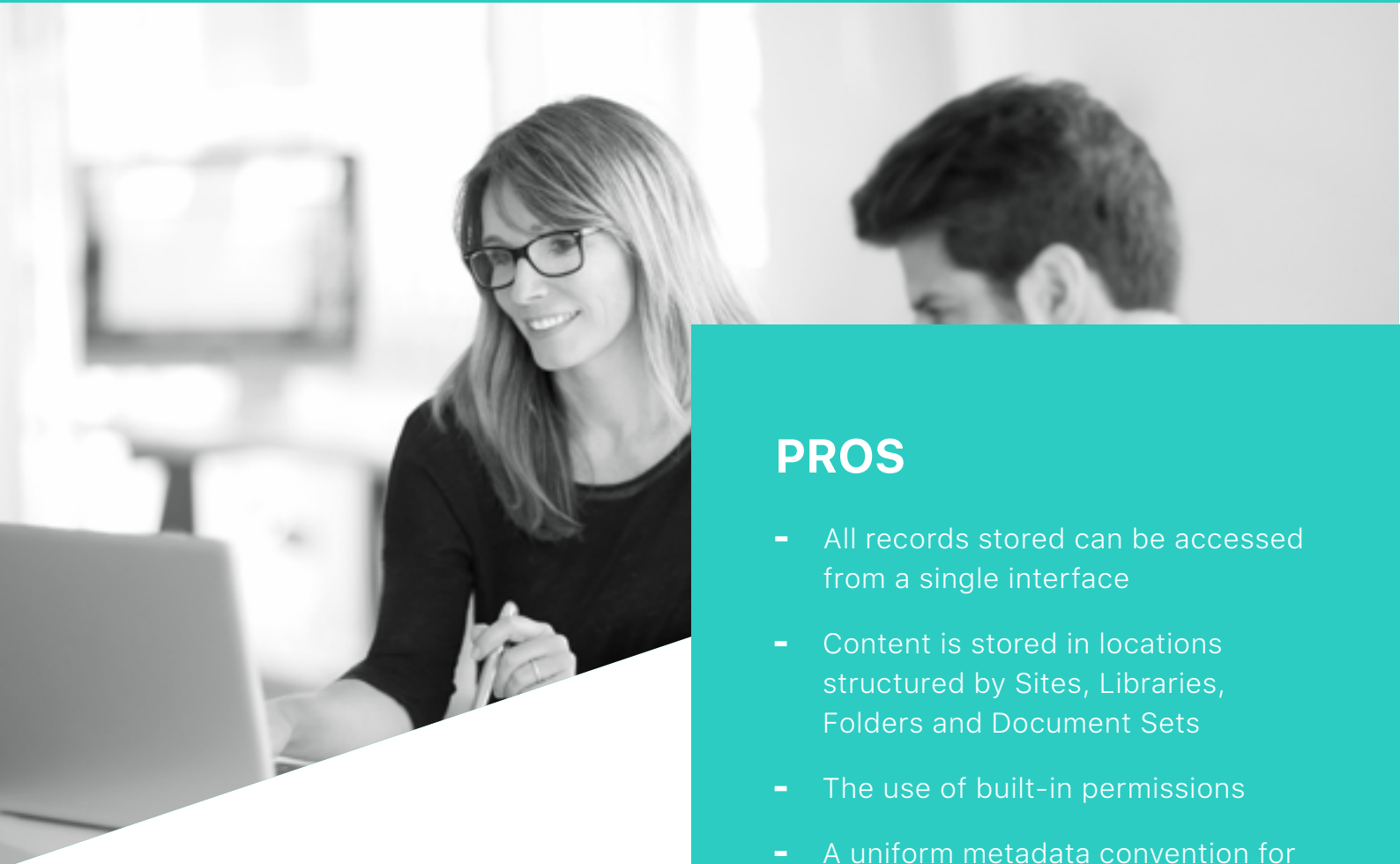# USE OUTLOOK, GROUPS, SHAREPOINT, ONEDRIVE AND TEAMS

You can use Microsoft tools 'out of the box' for email and document management. In this case, workers can use Outlook to organize their emails through a structure of folders, and emails can thusly be stored in Exchange. Documents meanwhile can be stored in SharePoint, OneDrive, and Teams. Alternatively, you can use group mailboxes to store the emails.

PROS

- All records stored can be accessed from a single interface

- Content is stored in locations structured by Sites, Libraries, Folders and Document Sets

- The use of built-in permissions

- A uniform metadata convention for all records

- All records are subject to the same retention/disposition policies

- Email threads can be combined to a single record

- eDiscovery (i.e. Search, Filter, Views) captures all records with the same process and procedures

UTILIZE SHAREPOINT AS A CENTRAL REPOSITORY

Using SharePoint, you can upload emails of record as well as documents to the platform, storing email and document records in one location.

CONS

- Manual upload and the need to apply metadata to make emails discoverable might make adoption of this process a challenge

PROS

- Powerful functions since the solution is custom-built for email management

CONS

- Expensive

- Duplicates capabilities of the Microsoft products you already own

- Potential integration issues with exisiting infrastructure

- Often, more than you need to fulfill your business requirements

- An additional vendor/product to maintain, service and train employees

OPT FOR A DEDICATED THIRD-PARTY SOLUTION

A dedicated solution is also a viable option for an email management strategy. The appropriate solution can provide information managers with the right answer to many of the challenges we've seen in this eBook... provided you pick the correct solution.

WHAT IS RIGHT FOR YOU?

The next installment in this series goes further in-depth about the trade-offs of the different email management approaches and helps guide you to choose the right email management solutions for your organization.

+ 1 800-624-6946 (USA)

+44 1494 358340 (UK)

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