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White Paper:
Document Management Policy Planning
for a Paperless or "Less-paper" Office

eXadox™ WIZ
Document Naming and Storage Policy Planner

A planning wizard for more effective document management

MultiCIM Technologies Inc.

Author: **Vincent Santaguida**
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Introduction

Overview

The paperless office will happen because the "less-paper" office is already happening!
Organizations should be finding it easier to achieve their paperless office objectives these days because the "less-paper" office is already the de-facto operational reality. The main reason is that electronic communications and transactions are clearly outpacing paper-based ones and this trend will continue. This is readily apparent by the fact that most organizations are being deluged daily by a steady stream of electronic documents that flow from both internal and external sources. Unfortunately, very few are prepared to diligently manage this ever-growing burden because when it comes to electronic document management, a "laissez-faire" attitude often prevails. However, there is hope! By being proactive and investing a little time, potential problems can be alleviated. A basic solution can be as simple as following best practices for electronic file management by instituting document management policies for the various business activities or departments in the organization. Once established, these policies could and should be followed by all stakeholders either manually or with the help of document management tools.

Electronic document management policies are used to ensure that all electronic files are properly classified and stored as per the operational requirements of the organization to facilitate fast and precise retrieval. The proper classification of the applicable electronic files can be easily achieved by categorizing, indexing, and storing them in designated folders. The most common methods of Indexing are done by naming files and folders as per established naming rules/conventions, as well as through the use of metadata keywords.

The major challenge in creating a practical document management policy plan is the actual planning of the folder structures and the folder/ file naming conventions; the other is documenting the policies so that they can be shared and adopted by all stakeholders. The eXadox™ WIZ document storage and name planning wizard that is featured in this White Paper is a software tool uniquely positioned to assist specifically with the planning and documenting of storage and naming policies.

Planning tools for document management

To assist organizations in establishing document management policies for their electronic information assets, MultiCIM Technologies Inc. has been providing free file naming and storage policy templates on Microsoft Excel spreadsheets through the www.exadox.com website. Although this resource has been well appreciated, there was significant room for improvement. There was a need for a more elegant and a user-friendly approach to help plan and document file naming and storage policies. Hence, the eXadox™ WIZ planning wizard was developed and is now being made available for this purpose. This is the only software planner ever developed whose sole purpose is to help any organization instantly create, rework, document and share folder/file naming and storage policies. This wizard comes with basic templates that can easily be personalized and also enables the creation of new document management plan profiles from scratch. The resulting eXadox™ WIZ profiles can easily be shared with anyone in the organization or in the global community.

White Paper Scope

The purpose of this white paper is to sensitize productivity-driven leaders about the importance of instituting document management policies as an operational necessity; and provide some basic direction in the planning and documenting of filing policies. Although the policy planning and documenting process will be discussed on a general level, the main purpose is to illustrate how the eXadox™ WIZ document management planning tool can be used to simplify these tasks. References will also be made to how the eXadox DT document management tool can be used to automate the adherence to these policies.

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Document Management Policy Planning

The need for document management planning

Establishing a basic document management policy partly consists of planning and documenting: the folder/file naming convention, the storage folder hierarchy, and optionally the metadata structure for each business activity or department. A filing policy for electronic files is very important because most files in the organization are considered electronic information assets. These electronic assets are essential for operational purposes and can at times be mission critical, and therefore extremely valuable. However, the reality is that *regardless of their perceived value, if they are buried and can not be found they may be of no value at all*. Therefore, special care must be exercised in the management of electronic information assets. If one does not have a dedicated system in place to manage electronic files or documents they should, as a minimum, have a document management policy in place. This would encourage all stake-holders to name and store all pertinent files according to the established policy. This fundamental strategy works because it is based on the simple premise that *if everyone names and stores their files as per the prescribed document management policy, everyone will be able to identify/retrieve the applicable files.*

Document management policy planning benefits

Once an electronic document management policy has been properly planned and documented, a common set of guidelines will be available that everyone could follow to ensure proper storage and naming of documents. Assuming that all stakeholders have agreed to make a concerted effort to consistently adhere to the policy, the benefits can be enormous to both the individuals and the organization.
Some of the key benefits are:
1. Easier and faster accessibility and sharing of documents by team members.
2. Operational continuity in the event that any staff member leaves the organization or is absent.
3. Increased productivity because documents can be retrieved quickly and precisely.
4. Restored confidence and lesser need for maintaining personal copies of the same electronic file.
5. Reduced need for attaching documents to emails as a mechanism for internal file-sharing.
6. More reliable and manageable backups because of designated storage repositories.

The need for a document management planner

In 2007 MultiCIM Technologies Inc. introduced eXadox ™DT (Desktop), an affordable and easily deployable document management solution. It takes advantage of semi-automated structured file naming and storage as a simple strategy to index and retrieve electronic documents. One of its great strengths is that it can be fully deployed (i.e. installation, personalization and training) in just a couple of hours. However, the biggest bottleneck has traditionally been the planning of document management policies by the administrative staff for their various business activities and departments in their organization. To help expedite the planning process, MultiCIM made available on the www.exadox.com website a free Microsoft Excel spreadsheet containing several file/folder naming sample templates for various business activities. Although the spreadsheet has been much appreciated, it was just a rudimentary means to help expedite the filing policy documenting process. More recently, the eXadox™WIZ planning tool has been introduced to satisfy the need for a more user-friendly and elegant method to plan and document storage and naming policies. This new tool produces eXadox document management Profile templates that the eXadox™ DT Advanced edition can utilize; nevertheless, it is important to note that eXadox WIZ can be used to generically plan, and document storage and naming policies independent of eXadox document management applications.

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Policy Planning Basics

Document management policy profiles

Regardless of whether or not an organization intends to deploy a dedicated record /document management system, document management **policy profiles** need to be planned and documented from the onset. A document management policy profile can be established for each business activity, workgroup, department or the enterprise as means of standardizing the filing process for that specific operational entity. This would provide the essential foundation to ensure that all electronic records/documents would be properly and consistently classified and stored by all stake-holders. If the document management storage and naming policy is diligently followed, the identification and retrieval process of all targeted electronic files/records will be both efficient and reliable.

The basic components

Ideally, a document management storage and naming **policy profile** must include information on: the **entity** for which the policy is being drawn; the anticipated **source**/format of the applicable electronic files to be named and stored; the precise **destination** folders of where files must be stored; the folder/file naming convention for the purpose of **identification** of each folder/ file; and any complementary **metadata** used for possible control or supplementary identification.

A planned profile per operational entity

It is very difficult to develop a functional one-size-fits-all global document storage and naming policy to cover every business activity or department in the enterprise. Furthermore, the resulting policy could ultimately be too cumbersome to be applied practically. A more streamlined approach is to logically divide the organization into discrete operational entities. These are generally a function of how the organization operates such as: workgroup, department, business unit, project, etc…. In other words, use a "divide and conquer" philosophy when developing document management policy profiles. For this reason, it is highly recommended that a document management policy profile be established for each operational entity.

FILING POLICY PROFILE
Components

ENTITY
Which Department/Project Business activity?

SOURCE
What is the origin and type of files involved?

DESTINATION
What are the designated storage folders?

IDENTIFICATION
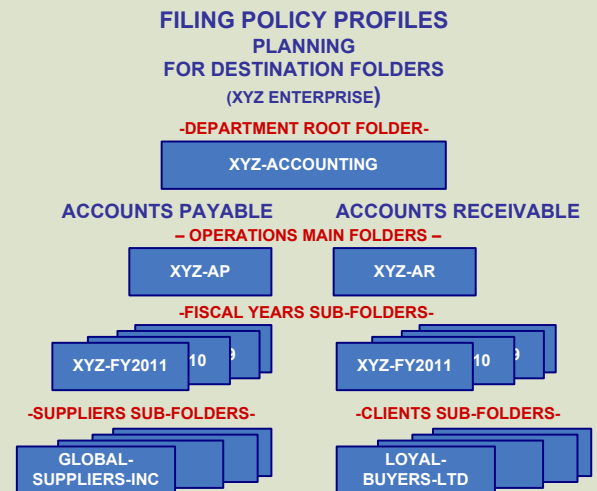How are the folders and files named?

DETAILS
What extra info is useful for identification and control?

The source of the files

When planning a filing policy profile for a specific entity, it is beneficial to be acutely aware of the source and types of files/documents that are an integral part of the operation. The focus should be on the most common documents so that appropriate provisions may be made to simplify the task of isolating them. By knowing what type of documents, how the files are either generated or received, and where they are pooled, steps can be taken as part of the filing process to harvest all pertinent files for immediate classification. One or more working-folders can be designated to temporarily pool these files so that the individuals responsible for the filing task know where to find them. A designated working-folder in a sense fulfills the role of an in-basket/work-queue for electronic documents to be filed. A simple application of this concept would be the scanning of documents into working-folders designated for individual departments such as Accounting, Sales, Purchasing, HR, etc... This would resolve the "where" and that just leaves the "what". The "what" consists of observing or having the foresight of knowing what potential types of files (e.g. invoices, shipping documents, contracts, purchase orders, letters, etc…) can be anticipated, and making provisions in the filing policy for properly classifying them.

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Destination folders planning

The document management policy profile should make provisions to designate a main storage folder for each operational entity. It should also designate sub-folders to store the applicable electronic files so as to enable a more granular categorization of all relevant records/documents. To describe this concept it is best to use a practical example:

Lets assume that the Enterprise XYZ Accounting department wishes to plan their filing destination folders and the department manages both Accounts Payable (AP) and the Accounts Receivable (AR). The adjacent diagram helps illustrates how the folders could be laid out. As depicted, the accounting department may have a root folder named XYZ-ACCOUNTING. The main folder for the Accounts Payable profile would be XYZ-AP and that for Accounts Receivable would be XYZ-AR. Like many other accounting departments they like to categorize according to fiscal year; so the sub-folder that would follow could be the fiscal year e.g. XYZ-FY2011. Subsequent sub-folders would be designated based on supplier names in the case of the Accounts Payable operation profile e.g. GLOBAL-SUPPLIES-INC; and would be based on client names for the Accounts Receivable operation profile e.g. LOYAL-BUYERS-LTD.

FILING POLICY PROFILES
PLANNING
FOR DESTINATION FOLDERS
(XYZ ENTERPRISE)

-DEPARTMENT ROOT FOLDER-

XYZ-ACCOUNTING

ACCOUNTS PAYABLE   ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLE
– OPERATIONS MAIN FOLDERS –

XYZ-AP   XYZ-AR

-FISCAL YEARS SUB-FOLDERS-

XYZ-FY2011   10   XYZ-FY2011   10

-SUPPLIERS SUB-FOLDERS-   -CLIENTS SUB-FOLDERS-

GLOBAL-SUPPLIES-INC   LOYAL-BUYERS-LTD

Record/document identification planning

The identification of electronic records/documents is the most critical component in document management policy planning because if there is no reliable mechanism to uniquely identify the corresponding electronic files, the search and retrieval process will be very frustrating and futile. Although the generic term "identification" is being used in this context, it is meant to represent the same activity as conveyed by such terms as: indexing, labelling, tagging, cataloguing, coding, naming, etc... Regardless of the term, the bottom-line intent is to assign unique identifiers for the files that are being stored so that they can be quickly and precisely located and retrieved. To satisfactorily achieve this goal, an identification scheme must be established and consistently employed by all stakeholders involved in the storage/archival of all applicable electronic files. Of course there are multiple methods for identifying files; however, the most practical method that does not require a proprietary database is by using structured folder/file naming conventions adapted for each operational entity in the enterprise. Using this method, the desired unique identification is achieved via the combination of folder/subfolder/file name or in other words, the full pathname that the native file management system utilizes to store and locate electronic files within the computer operating system (e.g.: Windows 7, XP, Vista) .

The proper application of this approach requires that folder/file naming conventions be established for each operational entity such that the folder and file name structures fulfill a dual role, that of a unique identifier but also as a means of classifying the records/documents. Both the folders and the file names can be structured with multiple elements that will help precisely identify the storage location, the specific purpose, and the content of the file. Each element will contain information relating to the record/document such that the combination of all elements constitutes a unique information-rich name that could be searched and identified instantly. This concept is discussed extensively in eXadox articles and especially in the White Paper: Semi-automated Structured File Naming and Storage.

Metadata planning

In general, metadata is "data about data" and in context to document management policy planning it is a provision for associating detailed information to a specific electronic record/document. Some document management systems rely on metadata as a sole means of classification, identification, retrieval and control. However, systems that rely on well structured folder/file naming conventions are not as reliant on metadata as a primary source of reference. In such instances metadata fulfills more of secondary or complementary role, and is therefore optional.

The actual metadata is sometimes embedded within the electronic file itself, or is stored in a record/document management system database. Metadata can be input via a document management system interface, and in most cases through the native application that is used to create or edit the electronic file (e.g. Microsoft Office, Adobe Acrobat, etc…). It should be noted that some applications automatically enter metadata (e.g. creation date, modification date, author, etc…) for each file created or modified; however it may be inconveniently awkward to introduce additional metadata. The type of data entered can be: keywords, dates, descriptions, retention directives, comments, history, and control information. Some of this metadata may be absolutely required by some document management systems to control, manage, and locate targeted electronic files.

Metadata can be useful but it may not be the most convenient means of classifying and managing electronic documents, unless it is a well supported feature of the document management system being deployed. Without the benefit of a document management system that supports metadata it can be awkward to both input and take of advantage of the resulting metadata. The same constraints do not apply when using structured folder/file naming conventions as your main filing policy strategy. Therefore, filing policies may include provisions for metadata if absolutely necessary, or if there is a convenient means of exploiting it; but it is always safer and more convenient to rely on structured storage and naming as a primary strategy.

Document Management Planning with eXadox WIZ

Document management policy planning in 5 easy steps

Just about everyone who uses computers has already done some degree of document management policy planning for storing and naming files, at least for themselves. This is quite common; however, creating storage and naming policies, and then having to document them in sufficient detail so that they could be shared and followed by other colleagues is not all that common. The thought of having to develop a utilitarian filing convention for several departments or workgroups might seem like an arduous task especially for the uninitiated, but it certainly does not have to be so. eXadox WIZ simplifies the planning and documenting of practical filing policies by guiding you through 5 easy steps. The following text and illustration are intended as a general overview of the steps. For more details and screenshots please refer to Appendix A.

**eXadox Wiz
Filing Policy Planning**

Step 1 – Manage Profiles
Create-Edit-Import
Department/Project
Business activity

Step 2 – Define Elements
Naming-Format-Content

| Folders | File Names | Meta Data |

text

Step 3 – Manage Lists
Import-Build-Edit

| Folders | File Names | Meta Data |

Step 4 – Organize Elements

| Folders | File Names | Meta Data |

Step 5 – Generate Reports
View-Print-Export

Step 1: Manage Profiles

You start by creating new document management storage and naming policy <u>profile</u> for the department or operational entity of interest. eXadox comes with profile templates for various business activities so you can start by copying one as a base and personalizing it, or you could just create a brand new one.

Step 2: Define Elements

Elements are the building blocks used for providing the information to help properly identify, classify, and store files/documents. This step lets you create/edit/delete elements to help build your desired document management storage and naming policy profile. Each element may be used to provide details about a folder level, file name or metadata. At this stage the order of the elements does not matter; it is only important to decide how many, what type of elements, and the properties required for each element. The properties define the element's format or content e.g.: optional/mandatory, hidden, fixed text, free text, date field or as per a data list. You only require a single element to represent a folder level. To define multiple sub-folders in a given folder level, it is done by assigning a list property to that folder element and building or importing a list containing for the sub-folder names. Multiple elements may be designated to build the file name structure; but be careful not to overdo it. An element must be designated for each metadata in the planned policy.

Step 3: Manage Lists

This step lets you manage (i.e. create, import, edit and save) data lists that are used to describe all the valid entries for a specific element. This step is only applicable if the property of any element was designated as having a list. A list can be used to provide the names of the sub-folders at a specific folder
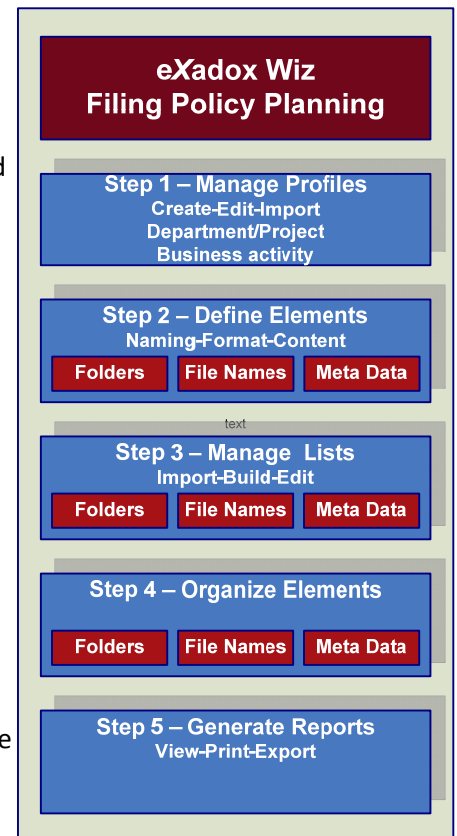
level. It can also be used to list all the possible entries associated with a specific file name element or a metadata element. In fact, a list should be used in all cases where an element can only be filled or selected using a limited choice of pre-defined valid entries. For example this can apply to pre-assigned client sub-folders for the client folder-level element; it can apply to document type (INV, LTR, QUO, etc...) in a doc-type element within the file name.

Using lists as means of defining a folder, a file name, or a metadata element helps put the focus on the structure, quantity, and quality of these elements. This helps modularize the plan. It can also be a huge time-saver because one does not have to get bogged down with specific sub-folder names, or the list of valid entries applicable in the file name or metadata elements. This is especially true if the list exists in an electronic form already. Lists can be incorporated almost instantly in the plan by simply importing any tab-delimited text file that has been exported from an existing spreadsheet, database, or application (CRM, an accounting system, ERP, etc...). The implications are little or no typing, and the possibility of easily updating your plan at any time with minimal effort. Because the list is being imported, the probability of human error is practically eliminated.

Step 4: Organize Elements

This step lets you define the order of your elements. The only elements that will appear for sequencing are those that were not designated as hidden in Step 2. For folder elements the order denotes the hierarchy of your folder levels. For file name elements the order is the sequence in which you wish the elements to appear in the file name structure. For metadata elements it is the order in which you want your metadata to appear.

Step 5: Generate Reports

The final step lets you view or print your document management policy plan in the form of a report. You are given the option of selecting the degree of detail in the report through a customize feature that also provides a means of controlling the appearance with reference to font size and color. The resulting report may be shared with staff or colleagues because it can be printed or saved as a HTML file. The saved HTML file may be instantly viewed through a web browser, may easily be incorporated into a website or sent as an email attachment.

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Action Plan for Success

Basic methodology

Having a tool such as eXadox WIZ to help develop document management storage and naming policy plans can be very useful in speeding up the implementation of records/documents management solutions; however to successfully institute an electronic document management policy, an effective action plan is necessary. The action plan that follows covers the basic methodology from the preparation to the execution of the document management policy plan for the file storage and naming portion. This is intended just as a general guideline. Some of the steps may not apply especially for smaller entities. However, it should be noted that when instituting the plan using a manual approach: training, monitoring, and rectification are major steps that should <u>not</u> be ignored. In other words the execution of a plan is useless unless there are proper safeguards to ensure that it is executed diligently. For an automated approach (e.g. eXadox DT) training is relevant but is on an operational level only; furthermore, supervision, monitoring, and rectification are intrinsically handled mostly by the software.

Preparation

1. Prepare a document management policy statement that includes an analysis of current electronic filing practices, justification and benefits for action, objectives and implementation plan.
2. Do a needs analysis for a specific a department or workgroup that is most document-intensive or that can benefit most with reference to productivity.
3. Do some general research on document management policies with reference to structured file naming and storage conventions.
4. Analyze and formulate how to generally apply a document management policy within the context of your organization or a specific department.

Getting Started

1. Download and install eXadox WIZ.
2. Start creating and building the document management storage and naming policy plan.
3. Get other participants involved and share ideas.
4. Rework and refine the plan until satisfied.

Plan approval and distribution

1. Present the proposed plan to higher management.
2. Have the document management policy officially approved, or rework until approved.
3. Distribute the resulting document management policy plan by providing a HTML copy of the eXadox WIZ report file or print it. If others have a copy of the eXadox WIZ export a copy of the Profile planning file.

Instituting the policy

1. It is important to also document filing policy adherence directives and consequences.
2. Study the implications of applying the document management policy manually versus using an automated policy adherence software tool (e.g. eXadox DT).
3. Meet with all stakeholders to initiate and start applying the document management policy plan.
4. Provide some training to all stakeholders to ensure proper adherence.
5. For a manual approach closely supervise and then proceed with regular monitoring.
6. Rectify adherence issues immediately.
7. Let everyone take pride and enjoy the rewards of their productivity improvement initiative!

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About MultiCIM Technologies

The Company

Founded in 1986, MultiCIM Technologies Inc. develops, promotes, and supports business process automation solutions. MultiCIM is the developer of the all eXadox™ electronic document management applications i.e. eXadox DT, eXadox MSO, and eXadox WIZ. It is also the developer of eXtractoflex™ automated data capture software.

Your Success is Our Objective

Our constant commitment is to ensure that our clients achieve their automation goals. We have a long record of successfully providing our clients with business process automation solutions that reduce costs, improve productivity, and maximize ROI.

MultiCIM solutions methodology

For over 20 years MultiCIM has been using a simple and effective methodology to assist clients in fulfilling their process automation needs. We are pragmatic, so we propose automation only if the implementation is feasible, and the ROI makes sense. Cost and time is of the essence; therefore we will whenever possible automate processes using existing software tools that are easily customizable before embarking in new software development efforts.

An experienced team at your service

MultiCIM resources include diverse professionals, experienced in implementing technologically advanced process automation solutions. Our experience from projects in various domains (manufacturing, hospitals, government, and distribution) means our team can quickly adapt to your particular environment.

Our raison d'être

We are predominantly a technology-based company; therefore we welcome new and difficult challenges. It is through such challenges that we can pursue innovative solutions that are financially rewarding for our clients, and also satisfy our own sense of accomplishment. We enjoy delivering on time, and offer a full satisfaction guarantee. We take great pleasure in meeting and assisting new clients by delivering our product and services, or by simply using our knowledge to provide direction. Your satisfaction and success is also ours!

About the author:

Vincent Santaguida is the CEO and founder of MultiCIM Technologies Inc. He has over 30 years of experience in software engineering and application development for business process automation and simulation solutions. He is a strong proponent of paperless office practices and also promotes increasing productivity in paper-intensive processes through the use of automated data capture.

For more information contact:

MultiCIM Technologies Inc.
101-640 Lakeshore Dr. Dorval (Montreal), Quebec H9S 2B6 Canada
Phone: 514.633.6401 1.877.MULTICIm
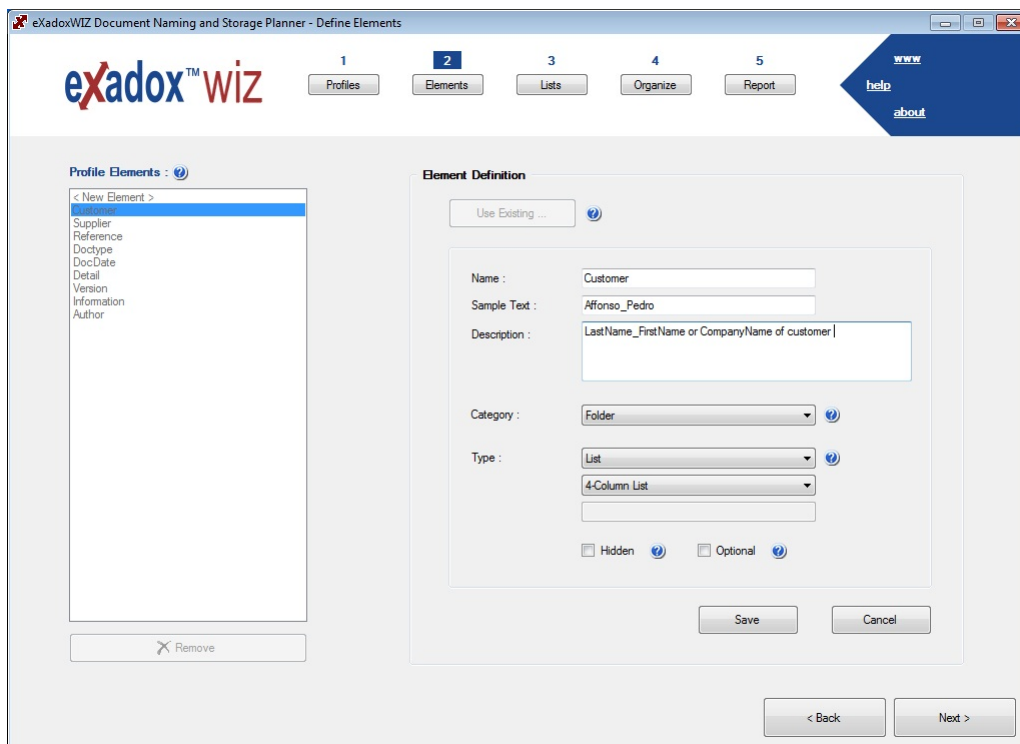Websites: www.multicim.com www.exadox.com www.extractoflex.com

Appendix – A eXadox WIZ Screenshots

eXadox WIZ filing policy planning consists of the following 5 steps:
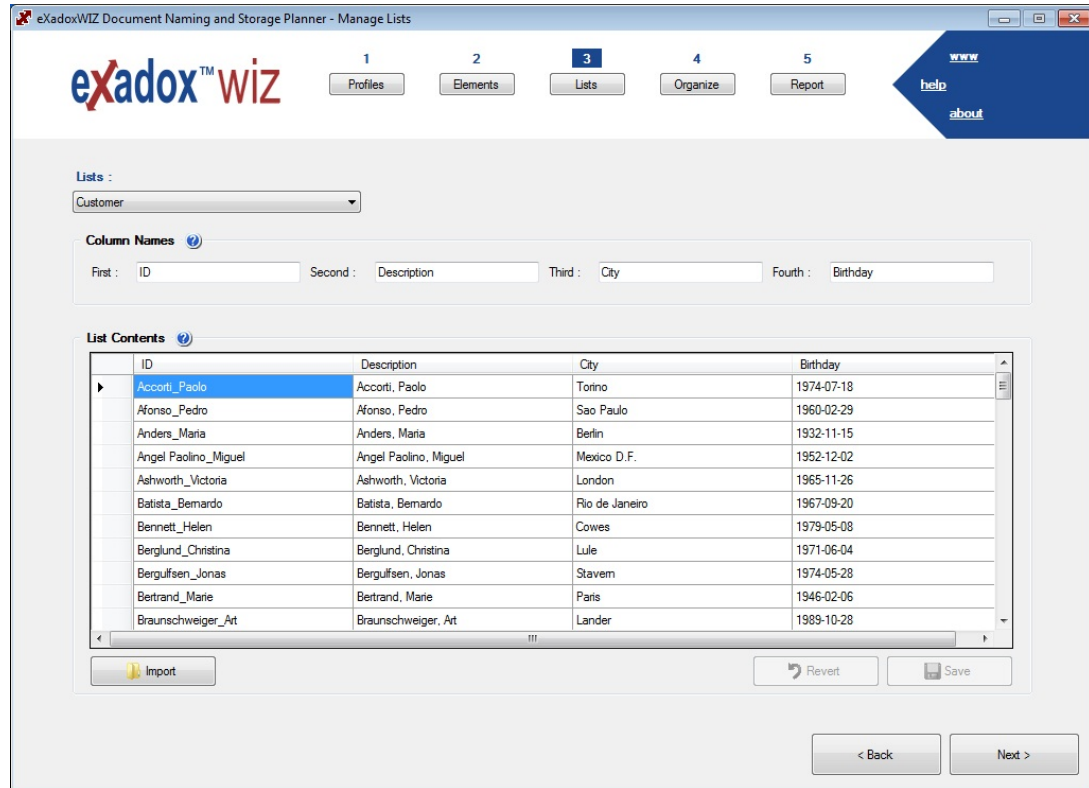
STEP 1: Profile Management – lets you create, copy, or edit a filing policy profile.
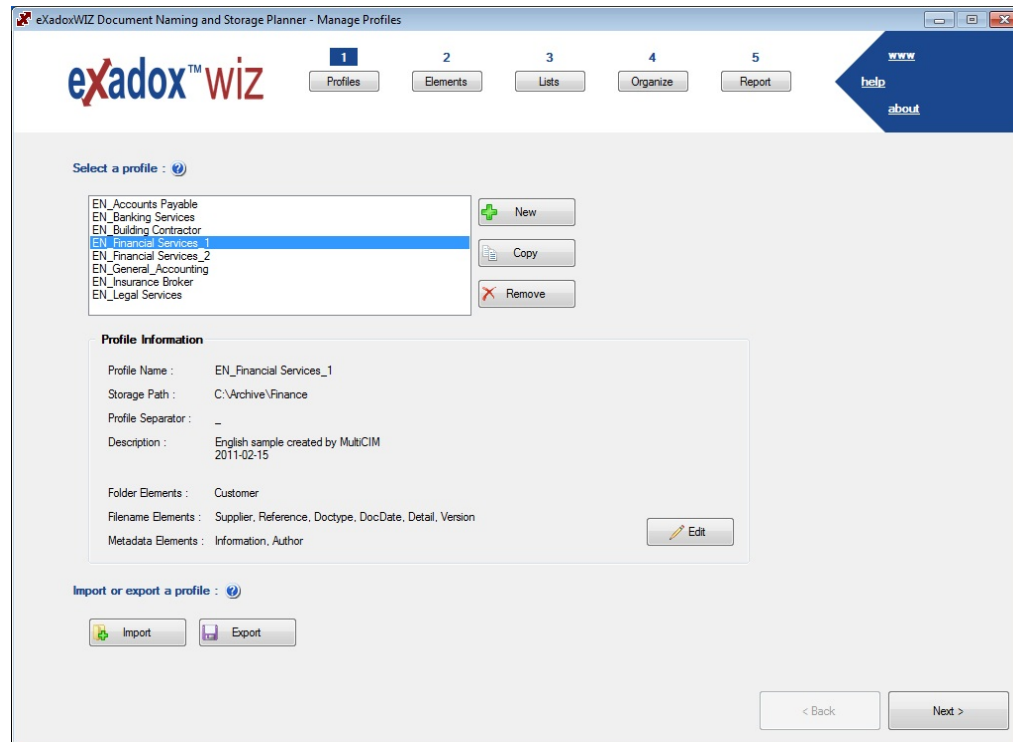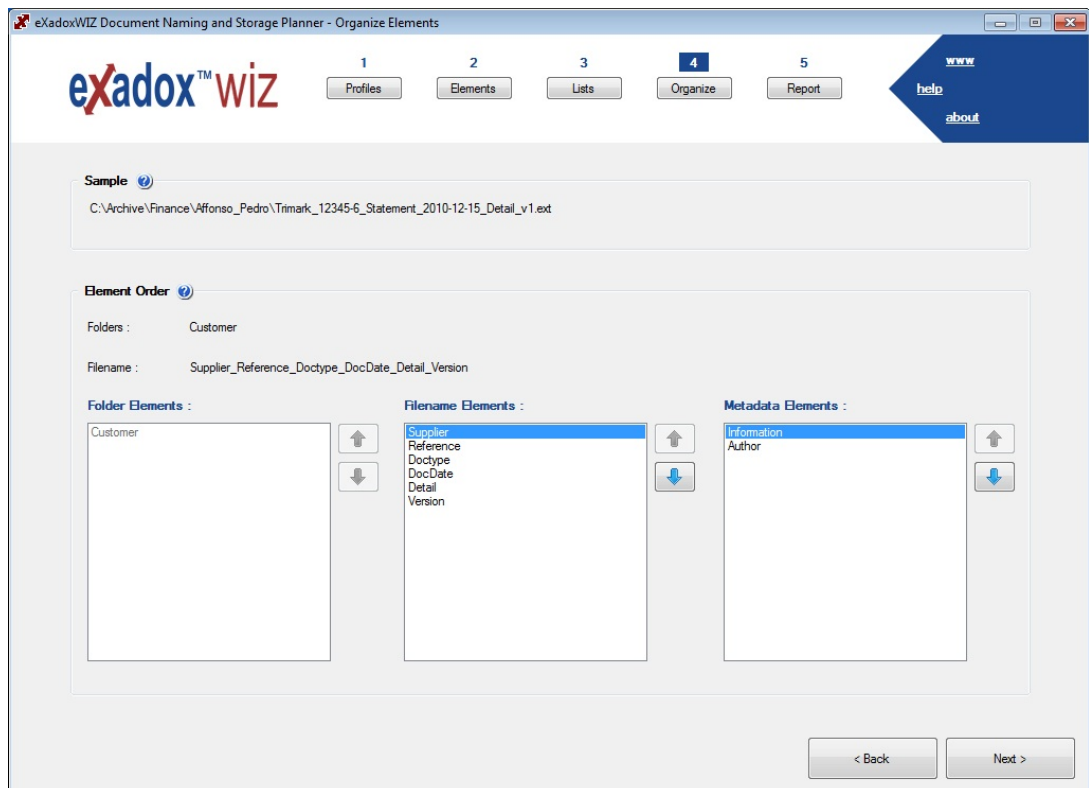

STEP 2: Element Definition – lets you create or edit folder, file name, and metadata elements.
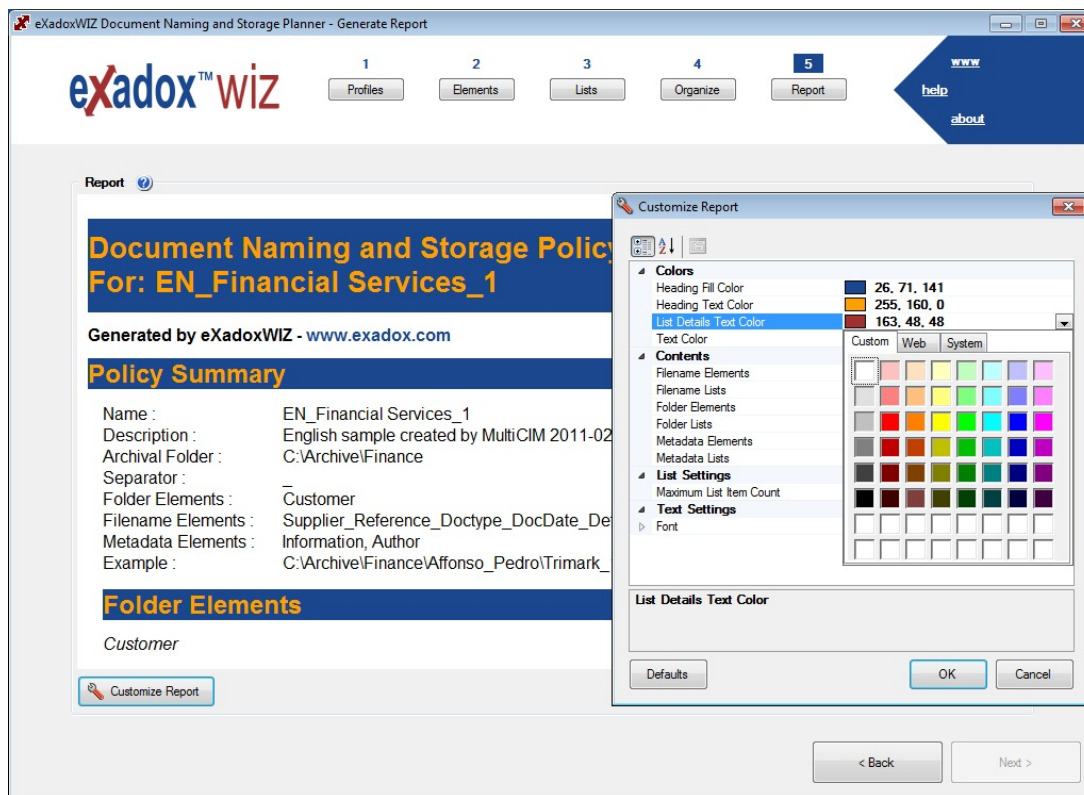
STEP 3: List Definition – lets you add, remove, or edit list entries; and change column names.

STEP 4: Element Organization – lets you reorder folder, file name, and metadata elements.
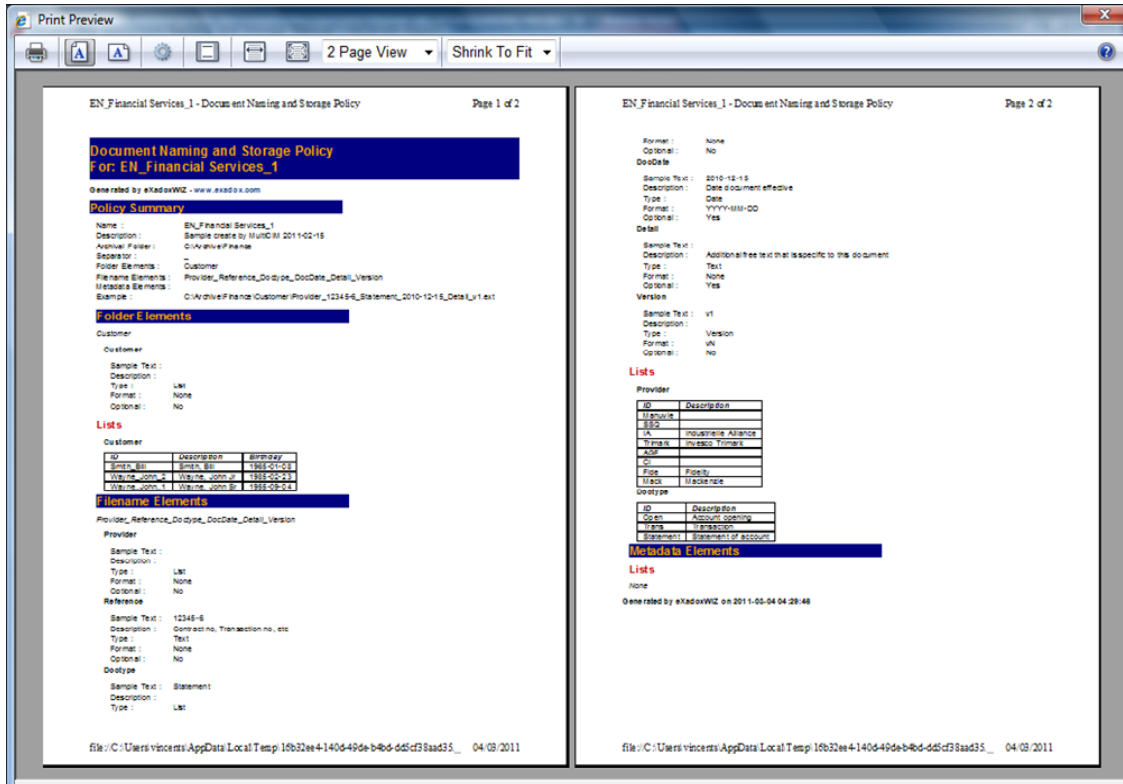
STEP 5: Generate Report – lets you view customize, print, or save a filing policy report.

Appendix – B   Filing Policy Report Sample

eXadox WIZ enables the previewing of a Document Naming and Storage Policy Report.

eXadox WIZ Document Naming and Storage Policy HTML Report is viewable via a browser.