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Portal intranet workflow cannot be dissected outside a specific corporate or industry environment because workflows and workflow management are industry-specific and can serve different purposes within different contexts, scholars and professionals agree. Workflow and workflow management are only one of many constituents of a corporate web portal, where the power of modern-day intranets is used to deal with complex tasks that involve collaboration between work groups, content management, and workflow management within enterprises of all sizes.

Contemporary enterprises rapidly pile tons, actually terabytes of information that should be managed efficiently and accessed according to hierarchical access level trees. A corporate intranet portal is able, in theory, to provide the means to combine access points, applications, and information processing and analyzing tools that should create a valuable tool for accessing, processing, and publishing content (virtually everything can be considered content, starting from customer support forms, to invoices, and personal work calendars). Thus, corporations can gain significant competitive advantage by automating various tasks and crating algorithms to deal with their rapidly, and inevitably growing documentation.

An enterprise portal usually features personalized views and is intended to be used in a multi-user environment where managers and personnel can easily interact, collaborate, and utilize various embedded or third-party applications. Workflow management, within such a context, is taking advantage of integration of tools used to automate and handle various tasks, including scheduling, project tracking and reporting, making revisions of different documents, etc. Most workflow management systems rely heavily on alarms and alerts related to various tasks; therefore, software vendors incorporate advanced alarm modules into workflow management systems intended to be integrated into an intranet portal. Alerts generated by the system may be related to possible issues or risks to projects under way but can also signal that new content is added to the intranet portal or important information has been changed or edited.

Workflow management deals with repetitive tasks and portal intranet workflow can be considered an example of a machine (not a physical machine but a mechanism to collect, process, and disseminate content) where content is processed according to preset rules and managed in a strictly planned manner. In a business context, portal intranet workflow involves repetitive application and performance of a thoroughly designed plan to accomplish particular goals. In this regard, scholars gradually realized that information flows are far more adaptive than their mass and energy counterparts, while information flows are also characterized by their low cost compared to mass and energy flows.

Thus, an enterprise portal, with the help of workflow management software modules, improves the overall efficiency within an organization by alerting individuals or groups that a task should be performed and transferring the task between those responsible for its completion until the project is complete. This is an extremely simplified model of workflow management, though.

Portal intranet workflow is usually also subject to strict access rights rules to eliminate risks of accessing, editing, or deleting content that is intended for restricted use only.

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