As one of the largest pharmaceutical companies in the world, AstraZeneca has a critical mission: “...to make a meaningful difference to patients and add value for our stakeholders and society.” Its continuing development of advanced Cardiovascular, Neuroscience, Gastrointestinal, Oncology, Infection, and Respiratory medicines is driven by a U.S. $4 billion R&D annual budget commitment and a staff of over 11,000 highly qualified R&D specialists.

CHALLENGES
R&D and other operating units have long archived critical information in paper form with business units located in over 50 countries around the world, and used thousands of record keeping systems globally. Locating archived information was time consuming and the cost of maintaining disparate systems was high.

Recently, the company’s Archives and Records Management Group (AZ ARM) presented a business plan that demonstrated high levels of efficiencies, increased productivity, and significant cost savings if implemented. Here, we discover how EMC Documentum has helped the company to expedite a comprehensive automated eArchive capability, thereby facilitating the realization of significant benefits for the organization.

MEETING ARCHIVING REQUIREMENTS WHILE MAXIMIZING ROI
AZ ARM was charged to lead this effort because legacy systems lacked automated long-term retention support, posing a potential threat to the company.

“Our legacy solution was really a non-solution,” says David Berglund, strategy and program director in AZ ARM. “The company kept every document where it was created. We have thousand of systems that create records scattered throughout AstraZeneca business units around the world. Possessing a high number of legacy systems is costly to maintain—each system requires administration, while also accruing costs associated with licensing and employing people to provide maintenance to each of those systems.”

As a pharmaceutical company, AstraZeneca faces many compliance challenges. For instance, should the FDA or similar health authorities request information regarding any of their medicines—even those developed 50 years ago—they must be able to locate it quickly. Under legal obligation, many of the company’s records must be retained for a long period of time. In R&D, it is not unusual to have retention requirements for the life of a product plus an additional 25 years. Therefore, it is not unlikely to have records retention periods lasting 100 years or more.
“With our legacy systems, critical information was held in a large number of repositories in the company, including information stored in systems that were no longer viable or supported,” says Berglund. “It was also slow and cumbersome to manually locate records wherever they were.”

AstraZeneca must also meet regulatory and legal archiving standards to maintain its license to operate.

“We needed a methodology to substantially decrease costs, mitigate risk to the business, and enable us to locate relevant documents quickly,” Berglund summarizes. “This was one of those business challenges where everyone agrees that something needs to be done, but it can be difficult to justify it in terms of Return on Investment. However, there are tangible cost savings accrued by our new automated eArchiving: significant money could be freed up and returned to the company by decommissioning older legacy solutions. The less tangible benefits are just as important: by protecting and preserving our critical records for regulatory and legal obligations, we significantly minimize the risk to the company. Regulations became primary drivers for this eArchive project. We needed such a solution to maintain the company’s license to operate.”

EMC SOLUTION

EMC Documentum was selected at the end of 2008, and the final solution went live in October 2009.

“EMC’s Documentum solution was the best match against our business requirements in terms of records retention and being fit for purpose,” Berglund states. “The solution has provided us with an automated method to retain records, the ability to find records quickly, a way to reduce costs by decommissioning older systems, and a method to purge the archive of unnecessary documentation, which saves on data storage requirements.”

THE METHODOLOGY OF GLOBAL eARCHIVING

With this new eArchiving solution, comprised of EMC Documentum Records Manager and EMC Documentum Retention Policy Services, AZ ARM’s new archiving methodology is both practical and efficient. The group has trained internal archivists who have traditionally dealt with paper documents to now manage electronic information. Their job is investigational work.

“To maximize our ROI, we are targeting our main hubs first,” says Berglund. “We actually have higher demand for our eArchiving services than we can handle right now. We knew that was going to happen, but Documentum and our service is scalable, and we’ll scale up toward the end of the current year.”

Working from offices often thousands of miles away from the targeted location, archivists examine records remotely, index the records, and transfer them to Documentum. Through this process, hundreds of legacy systems in those particular hubs are being scheduled to be decommissioned.

“Our overall strategy is to minimize paper records,” explains Berglund. “For instance, we know that more than 90 percent of all printed paper records are actually created electronically. By providing an electronic archive, we can increase efficiencies and decrease costs in that area as well.”

This team, dedicated to records management, supports the archiving requirements for many of the company’s divisions including R&D, manufacturing, finance, sales, and human resources.

“We’re targeting records that must be retained for seven years or longer, and we support both structured data and unstructured document archiving—the archiving of database data, for instance—as well as the archiving of unstructured documents such as those from Microsoft Word,” says Berglund.
“By protecting and preserving our critical records for regulatory and legal obligations, we significantly minimize the risk to the company. Regulations became primary drivers for this eArchive project. We needed such a solution to protect the company’s license to operate.”

DAVID BERGLUND
STRATEGY AND PROGRAM DIRECTOR, ASTRAZENECA’S ARCHIVES AND RECORDS MANAGEMENT GROUP

THE SIGNIFICANT BENEFITS OF EMC DOCUMENTUM
Each piece of the archiving solution is equally important to the eArchiving capabilities of the company, and the benefits are significant.

“First, the use of Documentum and our service has resulted in exceptional cost benefits by allowing us to enable decommission of hundreds of legacy systems,” says Berglund. “We are minimizing maintenance, licensing, and similar costs. Just looking at the tangible benefits—and excluding risk mitigation and the fact that we have invested for the future with state-of-the-art technology—our break-even for the project will be four years after going live, and we’re well on track to achieve this.”

Thanks to EMC Documentum’s design flexibility, relevant documentation on all records are now easily searchable. Today, if a document has been archived, it takes only seconds to find it, versus through a lengthy legacy system or paper archives. The ability to configure Documentum to index documents according to a proprietary methodology developed internally, also enables AstraZeneca to easily locate and find records.

“Our eArchiving capability, made possible by EMC Documentum, also enables us to maintain our license to operate as a pharmaceutical company, which is obviously of highest importance to us,” states Berglund.

This EMC Documentum solution is also highly scalable.

“Our eArchiving requirements will grow further,” says Berglund. “We will have more records to archive tomorrow than we do today. By investing in a scalable eArchiving solution now, we avoid the challenge of growing to meet archiving requirements in the future.”

In addition, EMC Documentum Retention Policy Services help minimize data storage requirements by scheduling appropriate data purging.

“When a document is initially archived, internal rules established to meet legal and governance requirements start a ‘ticking clock’ via Documentum Retention Policy Services,” says Berglund. “When the clock stops ticking, we know that we can legally dispose of that record. While it is important to retain information, it is equally important to dispose of records when they are no longer relevant, and when you can legally do so.”

“Documentum is a very important piece of our complete eArchive solution here at AstraZeneca,” Berglund concludes. “Any compromise on the level of capability found in this records management solution would not have resulted in the success that we have achieved.”