# ORIGINS

**Establishing a single version of truth for consistent, clear and cost-effective content**

## Executive summary

Time-consuming, confusing and expensive, the management of vital documentation across public sector - and some private - organisations is an area that is often overlooked. Considering the number of issues, and given the way we work has moved on substantially in recent years, the current system is well overdue for renewal.

Digital Innovation and Growth's ORIGINS component content management system (CCMS) provides a framework for bringing an organisation's documentation into the 21st century. In this paper, we show evidence of this working for UK fire and rescue and also explain why the problems with this area will only increase if not dealt with proactively.

> **ORIGINS BENEFIT**
> **All content is componentised. No version control issues.**

## Introduction - The state of play

An organisation's operational guidance - its established best practices, standards and ethics - along with its training documents, health and safety policies, and legal and auditing paper trails, all play a crucial role in improving efficiency, ensuring regulatory compliance and, in the public sector especially, providing greater transparency into an organisation's operations.

Typically, these documents will take the form of paper-based manuals or PDFs, word docs, and presentations. In public bodies such as the NHS, local authorities, and the emergency services which have been active for many years, a large volume of these documents will have accumulated over time. Updates or revisions will have been added on top whenever required. Regional branches may have added their own output and updates to their own particular documentation, rather than to any central resource

> **ORIGINS BENEFIT**
> **Shared best practice and integrated training & learning.**

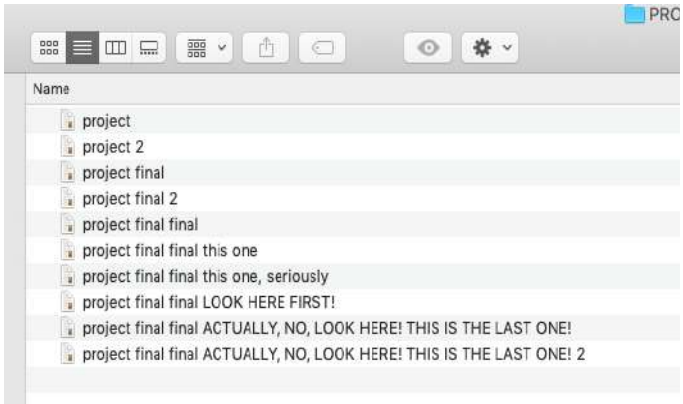
There are several issues arising from this approach. For one thing, if they are not kept up-to-date, documents will no longer be fit for purpose. And, as they grow in size and complexity, there is a risk that, with every iteration, the content of these paper and digital documents becomes increasingly inconsistent with that of other similar versions, or between the digital and paper copies. What is more, updating and revising these documents can be seen as an administrative burden, and they can often lay unattended, gathering dust on a (virtual) shelf.

## Issues of confusion and consistency

An organisation's operational guidance - its established best practices, standards and ethics - along with its training documents, health and safety policies, and legal and auditing paper trails, all play a crucial role in improving efficiency, ensuring regulatory compliance and, in the public sector especially, providing greater transparency into an organisation's operations.

Aside from the growing volume of documentation itself, continuously adding new content on top of existing content can lead to a lack of consistency and confusion among the workforce, especially in the case of geographically disparate organisations.

With multiple iterations of the same document, it can be hard to keep track of what is current and identify what is out of date.



The situation is complicated further by lack of an adequate ability to search for and discover particular areas of content. As a result, employees can soon find themselves out of step with the latest company guidance or policy, while organisations may quickly become non-compliant with the latest industry regulations.

Little or no standardisation can mean that no two regional offices will complete and update their documentation in the same way. Different regional branches can therefore follow disparate guidance and policies despite being members of a single overall organisation or association.

**ORIGINS BENEFIT**
**Time saved reviewing documentation: 80%**

Finally, there are significant cost implications. An inefficient search and discovery process can be hugely time-consuming, while an organisation can spend a considerable amount of time and money on physically updating and editing its documents.

And these problems are only set to grow. New regulations driven by added scrutiny on the public sector continue to be introduced and new policies formulated, each of which adds layer upon layer of additional documentation. But many of these issues are unnecessary, especially when considering how much the way we work has changed over recent years.

## Digital disruption of the workplace

Digitisation has disrupted the workplace - and the creation, management and storage of documentation is no exception.

The widespread adoption of the cloud, for example, has seen a shift from documents being primarily PDF and paper-based to existing largely in online environments. These environments afford users the opportunity for greater collaboration, enabling them to access the latest version of a document in a central cloud-based repository, whilst any downloaded documents are time-stamped and state their short-term validity.

**ORIGINS BENEFIT**
**100% confidence in content accuracy: downloaded/printed items are instantly out of date.**

Indeed, the ability to freely collaborate with colleagues and peers is now expected by today's technology-literate workforce. After all, with the ubiquity of smart devices and almost universal wireless connectivity, remote and flexible working practices are becoming increasingly commonplace across all types of business in both the private and public sectors.

Given the technology available, and the general understanding and acceptance around its use and purpose, it would be sensible to apply that technology to best practice management of documentation. By allowing stakeholders, regardless of location, to search, access, and edit (with clearance) the latest version of its documents, an organisation can help ensure everyone is working to a single version of truth.

## Introducing ORIGINS

DIG's (Digital Innovation and Growth's) ORIGINS is a flexible, customisable SaaS platform designed to improve the collation, distribution, and regulatory and legal compliance of operational guidance. In short, it ensures the right guidance is delivered to the right people at the right time. Its potential application runs beyond just operational guidance however, to include all documentation.

Whenever a document needs to be changed, whether for legal, regulatory or operational reasons, ORIGINS enables managers to make those changes in a central place. In a CCMS, items of content are treated as components, thereby allowing instant changes and approvals to be made on items that feature across multiple documents.

**ORIGINS BENEFIT**
**Cloud-based SaaS (Software as a Service): no infrastructural investment, no software licenses.**

Not only does this save time and reduce the risk of inconsistency but, by hosting that document in a central location, it allows employees to see which changes have been made. What is more, should the organisation come under scrutiny or undergo an audit, it's possible to see how that documentation did look at any given point in time.

It overcomes the consistency issues faced by regional offices, too, offering a structured means for feeding local updates and insights back to an organisation's central team, where changes can be submitted, approved, and instantly permeated back to the regional team from where they came.

Multi-dimensional, filterable search, with strict access and permission controls, means that employees can quickly find the content that is most relevant to them - on mobile devices if required - thereby overcoming the issues of portability and the static nature of paper-based documents and PDFs that once made this documentation so impenetrable.

The ORIGINS unique Gap Analysis tool ensures that any gaps in content between learning, training, guidance or policy are rapidly identified. The workflow to fix this is then tracked at every stage, through to resolution.

## The UKFRS project

Firefighters must undertake a huge amount of training in order to be able to respond effectively and safely. Until recently, though, the operational guidance underpinning this training was based on more than 8,000 pages of disparate online PDFs and paper-based documents. Their size and complexity meant they were hard to penetrate; searching for and discovering specific guidance was virtually impossible. And, given the frequency with which they were updated and republished, many of these documents were duplicated, and different versions were often contradictory.

Maintaining a consistent set of guidance across 50 fire and rescue services in paper format was a costly challenge. A robust, centralised guidance system was needed that would overcome these historic issues of duplication and dissemination.

**ORIGINS BENEFIT**
**All departments work together as collaborators.**

As part of a substantial transformation project, UKFRS and DIG developed a fully digitised, indexed, and searchable web platform. Powered by ORIGINS, the site shows version changes over time, alerts users to new guidance and allows self-auditing for compliance.

Considerable economies of scale have been reported as a result of centralising the creation, storage and dissemination of operational guidance among the UK's approximately 50,000 firefighters. For one thing, the hugely improved user experience has led to an increased uptake of the guidelines, with staff kept informed of any updates to the content. In addition, training is now more efficient, with less time spent on searching for, and consuming, information.

Perhaps most important is the time and money saved in updating and editing existing documents. In 2014, for example, the UKFRS published a new version of its National Breathing Apparatus Guidance, containing 35 fewer pages than its predecessor. In addition, each service would require three policy documents, each with an average of 50 pages. These had to be rewritten from scratch following the assessment of the changes in the national guidance. The total cost, per service, of this project - including initial meetings, assessment, writing and publication - came to £7,206. Had all 50 services taken the same approach, this would equate to a total UK cost of £360,300 per document.

**ORIGINS BENEFIT**
**Delivers a 68% rewrite saving.**

By deploying ORIGINS however, revisions could be shared among other services, with work assigned to relevant subject matter experts. What is more, using a side-by-side comparison tool to assess changes significantly reduced both time and associated costs. Using ORIGINS reduced the cost of the project by £245,325 or 68%.

**ORIGINS BENEFIT**
**Savings across the whole fire service for one document: £245, 325**

The deployment of ORIGINS represents considerable cost savings for the public too. It is estimated that for every five years the site is operational, taxpayers will save between £1.1m and £1.25 in printing costs alone.

What is more, by enabling more effective collaboration between the central team and its 50 regional branches, there is now far greater consistency and cohesion around policy, procedure, training and working practices.

As an evolutionary step in the production and distribution of guidance to the UK's fire and rescue services, the introduction of ORIGINS means the UKFRS can now produce, update and share its national guidance using a cost-effective, modern and accessible online format, ensuring all services are kept up-to-date with the latest information, without duplication, and accessible from anywhere at any time.

## Conclusion

The operation of many organisations is reliant on accurate and up-to-date documentation. But an outdated approach to compiling and updating documents means organisations are drowning under their weight, risking confusion and non-compliance due to their complexity, and generally struggling with their maintenance.

This need not be the case. The technology exists to address this situation now. Just as it is possible to update a musical album that is hosted online in a way you never could with CDs or vinyl LPs, so organisations are able to iterate, amend and approve live, centrally hosted documents in a way they cannot with paper or PDFs.

**ORIGINS BENEFIT**

**The whole organisation works on a** *single version of truth*

Cloud-based platforms, such as ORIGINS, provide organisations with a single version of truth that ensures all employees have access to the latest, most accurate documentation. All stakeholders can be made instantly aware of the latest changes to any documents, confident that these changes are consistent throughout their organisation - from its central office to its regional branches. They can access all past iterations too, if necessary, and follow the backward trail of revisions - a key factor to regulatory compliance for organisations in the public sector.

What is more, having additional consultancy support on hand to ensure content is appropriate to its audience will further minimise risks around dissemination.

Ultimately, providing employees with access to the most accurate and up-to-date guidance means everyone can follow the latest best practice, at all times, wherever they are.

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