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Email Archiving & eDiscovery

The Complete Guide to Choosing an Office Productivity Suite

A Deep Dive into the Key Considerations for Businesses When Selecting a Solution

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Empowering Collaboration in the Modern Workplace

How Office Productivity Suites Are Changing the Way the World Works

The modern workplace looks vastly different now than it did even a few short years ago. Almost all business communications have gone digital; hybrid and remote work arrangements are well on their way to becoming the norm; business takes place at literally all hours of the day; and organizations both large and small rely on technological resources and advanced systems to support day-to-day operations.

Although technological innovation has fast-tracked workplace efficiency, it has also introduced complexity. With entire workforces becoming more dispersed — often working in different time zones and according to different schedules — how can organizations ensure that their employees stay connected, workflows remain streamlined and strategic goals are consistently met?
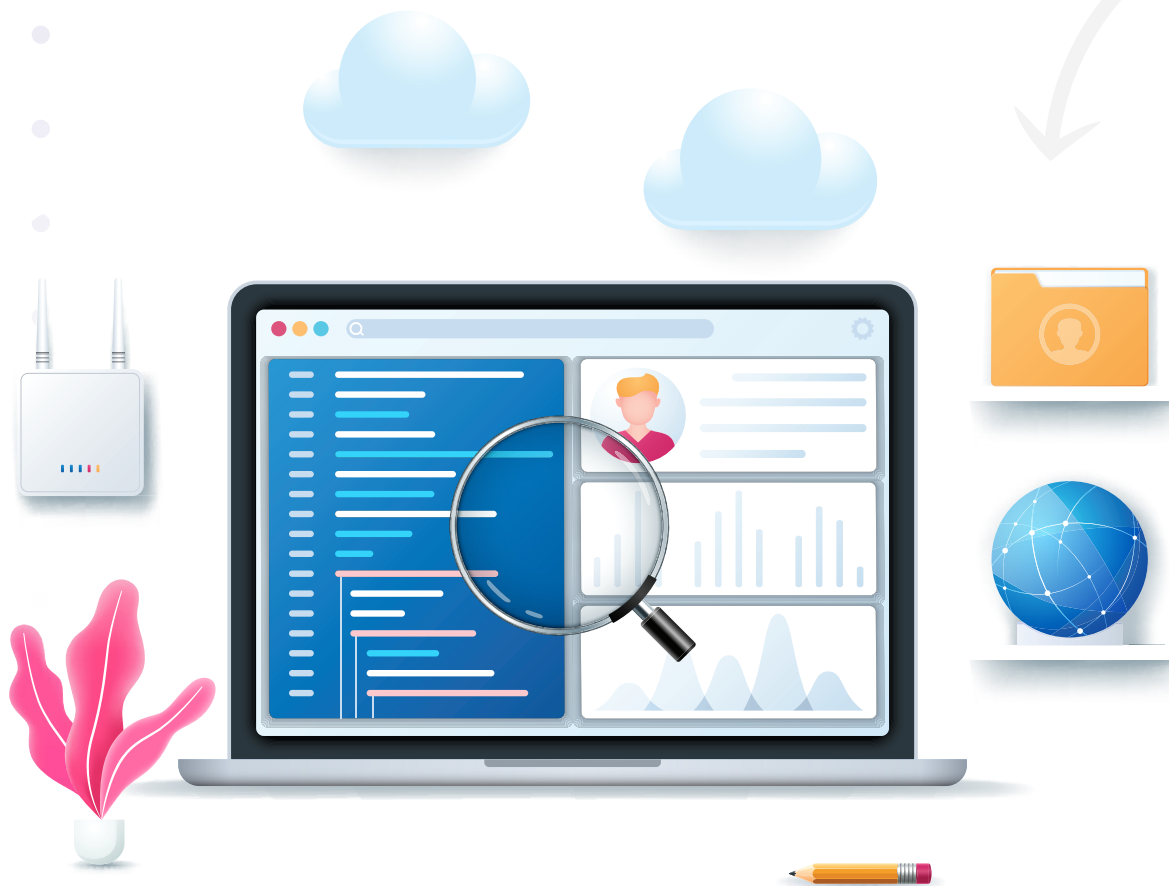
That's where office productivity suites come into play. Designed to support the needs of the modern workplace, office productivity suites leverage cloud computing and deliver a wide variety of collaboration tools that enable teams to:

- Easily share information
- Communicate in real time
- Automate essential business processes
- Eliminate physical paperwork
- Securely store business-critical information
- Prioritize and track important tasks
- Improve file organization and record-keeping
- Work while on the go
- And much, much more

Since almost all productivity suites leverage cloud computing, they empower employees to work in synchronicity, regardless whether they're in adjacent cubicles or located on opposite sides of the globe. With individual contributors, teams and entire departments feeling more connected, they're also likely to feel better equipped to get their work done and more aligned with strategic initiatives, improving morale across the organization.

In this eBook, we'll explore the world of office productivity suites, including the different applications they include, what to look for when comparing different solutions and a list of some of the most popular suites and providers on the market today.

What is a Productivity Suite?

Greater Than the Sum of Its Parts

The term "productivity suite" refers to a bundle of application programs used in workplace environments to generate, store and manage important documents and files.

The very first office productivity suites created in the 1980s were on-premise and consisted of word processors, spreadsheets and relational databases. By comparison, most modern productivity suites are entirely cloud-based, making them accessible from anywhere in the world, and offer a rich variety of tools and functionality, such as:

Email Hosting
An integral component of most office productivity suites, email hosting refers to a web or internet hosting service that operates email servers, enabling organizations to send, store and receive email.

Calendaring
An application that enables users to create virtual calendars, view other users' calendars, schedule meetings, send invites and more.

Word Processors
One of the very first productivity solutions to ever exist, word processors allow for the rapid generation of documents and typically include additional editing, formatting and composing capabilities. Most modern word processors allow multiple contributors in different locations to share, review and edit documents at the same time.

Spreadsheets
An application that captures, arranges and displays data in a series of rows and columns, allowing for better organization and data analysis. Similar to modern word processors, modern spreadsheet generation tools support real-time collaboration.

Presentations

An application that enables users to present information in slideshows (also known as "slide decks"), incorporating dynamic text, eye-catching graphics, video and audio content, animations and other digital elements.

File Sharing

A software program that facilitates the distribution of digital media, including documents, audio, images and video, and other resources over the internet or a local network. Most file sharing applications are capable of sending and receiving content in a matter of seconds, regardless of users' physical location.

Instant Messaging

A communication technology that supports the exchange of text transmission through digital channels in real time. Faster than email, instant messaging is often preferred for urgent or casual workplace communications.

Video Conferencing

An online platform that enables users in different locations to participate in virtual meetings using live audio-visual technology.

Web Conferencing

An online platform that enables users to create webcasts or webinars — live or pre-recorded media presentations that incorporate audio and visual elements — and distribute them via the internet or local network.

Task Management

An application that enables users to plan, prioritize and monitor the progress of tasks throughout their lifecycle, thereby encouraging better organization and on-time achievement of deliverables. Most task management tools include fields where users can enter pertinent information related to each task, including timelines, available resources, contributors and teams involved, dependencies and more.

Project Management

Similar to task management, but on a larger scale. Project management software makes it easier for entire teams to manage the various deliverables associated with and monitor the progress of each project, as well as share documents and communicate with internal and external stakeholders.

Time Tracking

An application that enables end users to track the amount of time spent on individual assignments; ideal for production-based roles, organizations that pay employees at an hourly rate and organizations that bill clients at an hourly rate.

Employee Monitoring

Software that enables company leaders to monitor employee communications in order to prevent the unauthorized sharing of sensitive or confidential information, proactively monitor for cybersecurity threats, surface harassment and other workplace issues, and ensure that employees are meeting productivity goals.

Key Considerations When Choosing a Productivity Suite

How to Find the Solution That Best Meets Your Business' Needs

As you are likely aware, there are a wide variety of office productivity suites on the market today, each of which includes its own unique combination of applications and services and comes with its own set of benefits and drawbacks. Given how saturated the market is, it can be challenging to determine which suite best meets your organization's needs — after, you likely don't have the time to carefully evaluate every single vendor and solution available.

With that said, it's important that you know exactly what to look for in order to get the most out of your investment. We've created this list of key considerations to help simplify your search:

Intended Use

How do you intend to use your new productivity suite? Your answer to this question will dictate exactly which capabilities you require and influence which platforms you consider.

For example, a small business whose employees still report to a physical office location would probably find a simple platform with core functionality such as email hosting, word processing and file sharing sufficient to its needs. A larger organization with a more distributed workforce would likely benefit from a suite with more advanced features, such as web conferencing and instant messaging, that makes it easier for employees to communicate and share important information regardless of their location.

Total Number of Seats

How many people do you expect to use your new office productivity suite? Some of the more established vendors in this market offer platforms with the flexibility needed to accommodate thousands of end users and the scalability to support future growth. Small- and medium-sized businesses, by comparison, have more freedom to choose between suites from leading providers, which might come with a higher price, or smaller, more affordable vendors.

Total Investment

What is your budget for this implementation, and what is your preferred payment method? As noted, office productivity suites from vendors with household names may require a higher investment than those from lesser-known providers. With that said, what you save in costs you might make up for in feature functionality and reliability.

Different solution providers also utilize different payment models — some might require a single, upfront investment; others a monthly subscription fee; and others still a variable pricing plan based on system usage.

Storage Requirements

What are your minimum system storage requirements? Do you anticipate those changing over time? Given that email hosting and file storage are two of the most common uses for any office productivity suite, it's likely that any cloud-based provider will have the capacity to meet your exact storage requirements.

It's also likely that they'll be able to scale that capacity up or down as needed and provide backup storage space. It's important to note, though, that most vendors will factor storage capacity into the price they quote you; the more storage space you need, the higher your overall cost.

You could also choose a productivity suite with an on-premise deployment option, thereby bringing storage in house; however, you'll need to pay out of pocket for servers and other hardware, as well as pay maintenance fees to keep your system infrastructure in peak operating condition.

System Compatibility

What existing systems does your organization rely on for business operations? Will your new productivity suite be able to integrate with those systems? It's important that any systems you and your employees use be able to communicate with one another and safely transmit data back and forth in order to prevent system and departmental silos — which can impede workplace productivity — from forming.

When evaluating any software solution, be it a productivity suite or otherwise, be sure to verify whether it is compatible with your existing infrastructure and whether the provider offers integration support.

Privacy & Security

How will your new productivity suite — and all the important information it will inevitably contain — be secured? The right platform and provider will have a clearly defined privacy policy and robust security features such as two-factor authentication, data encryption, anti-virus and anti-malware systems and more in place so that you and your employees can enjoy the peace of mind of knowing that your data is safe.

Regulatory Requirements

Is your organization subject to any industry-specific regulations or legislation? Do those laws or regulations include specific language about how data is to be stored or transmitted? It's imperative to take this into consideration when comparing platforms and providers; failure to do so could result in severe consequences for your company.

If you operate in a heavily regulated industry, be sure to seek out a productivity suite that is not just marketed as compliant, but that actually has the policies and controls in place to ensure proper compliance. Doing your due diligence is well worth the effort: You might find that the right productivity suite actively supports your company's compliance initiatives.

Customer Service

What level of customer service and support do you require? When evaluating different office productivity suites, you'll obviously want to partner with a vendor that provides excellent customer service, but your definition of what "excellent" looks like depends entirely on your organization's needs.

Perhaps you'd prefer to have a dedicated customer service representative whose hours of operation align with yours, so that you have a reliable point of contact for any issue that might arise. Perhaps your employees are scattered all over the world, and you need an entire team of equally global support specialists who can provide service at all hours of the day. Perhaps you'd benefit from a self-service portal with an established knowledge base, so your employees can look up answers to their most pressing questions whenever they need to. Perhaps you require some combination of all three.

Different productivity suite providers offer different support packages — often at different price points — so you'll want to figure out exactly what it is you and your employees need before making a decision.

Onboarding & Training

How do you intend to onboard employees to your organization's new productivity suite? Will you conduct in-house training sessions, or will you require support from your software vendor? Half the battle of implementing any new software system is user adoption. Employees can sometimes be set in their ways and prefer to use their original system(s) or simply struggle to understand how to use the new platform.

Selecting a productivity suite with easy-to-use tools and a simple, intuitive interface can go a long way toward ensuring that employees are comfortable using the new system. Having a clearly defined onboarding plan, comprehensive training curriculum and ongoing support will take you even further. Be sure to keep these factors in mind when considering different platforms and providers in order to ensure that your workforce not only understands but actually uses your new office productivity suite.

11 Office Productivity Suites Worth Considering

Start Your Search Here

Now that we've covered key considerations when selecting an office productivity suite, let's get to know some of the major players in this space in the interest of helping you find the perfect solution for your organization.Google Workspace

Google Workspace

One of the world's most well-known online productivity and collaboration application suites, Google Workspace began its life as Google Apps for Your Domain in 2006 and was later rebranded as G Suite in 2016. In 2020, Google announced that it would rebrand the toolset once again, as well as add a new, deeply integrated user experience — and so, Google Workspace was born.

Google Workspace is home to a wide variety of productivity apps, including:

- Gmail, an email hosting service
- Docs, a word processor
- Sheets, a spreadsheet generation tool
- Slides, a presentation creation tool
- Drive, a file storage and sharing platform
- Forms, a survey administration tool
- Chat, an instant messaging app
- Meet, a video conferencing service

Google Workspace also offers more advanced functionality, including Currents, an internal enterprise communication platform; Vault, an information governance and eDiscovery tool; and Jamboard, a digital interactive whiteboard.

Google Workspace is a paid service, starting at $6 per user, per month for Business Starter, which buys you custom and secure business email, 100-participant video meetings, 30 GB cloud storage per user, security and management controls, and standard support. There is also an Enterprise license for larger organizations, with additional security features, extended storage and unique video conferencing capabilities such as noise cancellation and in-domain live streaming.

Microsoft 365

Perhaps the most recognizable name on this list, Microsoft 365 — formerly known as Office 365 — has been one of the most popular productivity suites in the world since its release in June 2011. Known for its scalability, ease of use, security and more, Microsoft 365 is the office productivity suite of choice for over 1 million companies worldwide and over 200 million business users.

Microsoft 365 offers an expansive feature set, including:

- Word, a word processor
- Excel, a spreadsheet generation tool
- PowerPoint, a presentation creation tool
- Exchange, an email hosting service
- Outlook, an email client
- OneDrive, a file storage and sharing tool
- Teams, a video conferencing and instant messaging platform
- SharePoint, a web-based collaboration platform

A subscription-based service, Microsoft 365 starts at $6 per user, per month for the Business Basic plan, which includes chat, call and meet-up for up to 300 attendees; the web and mobile versions of Office apps; 1 TB of cloud storage; and more.

Zoho Workplace

Zoho Workplace is an integrated online office application suite that divides its business apps into three categories:

✅ **Office Productivity**

- Writer, a word processor
- Sheet, a spreadsheet generation tool
- Show, a presentation creation tool

✅ **Team Collaboration**

- WorkDrive, an online content collaboration platform
- ShowTime, an online digital training and education platform
- Meeting, a web conferencing platform

✅ **Unified Communication**

- Mail, a web-based email hosting service

Additional Zoho Workplace features include Cliq, Zoho's built-in instant messaging platform, and Connect, a social intranet team collaboration software. Zoho also offers built-in Calendar, Task, Notes, Bookmarks and Contact applications.

Zoho Workplace plans start at $3 per user, per month for the Standard license, which includes 30 GB Mail storage per user, 10 GB WorkDrive storage per user, and all of Zoho's Office Productivity and Team Collaboration tools. Zoho also offers a Mail only plan, starting at $1 per user, per month.

Apple iWork

Not one to be left out by major competitors Microsoft and Google, Apple has developed its own app-based office productivity suite for macOS and iOS operating systems. Called iWork, this suite consists of three main tools:

- Pages, a word processor
- Numbers, a spreadsheet generation tool
- Keynote, a presentation creation tool

Though the iWork suite might appear simple, each of these tools offers extensive functionality. For example, with Keynote, users can connect to multiple external cameras to create live video content for presentations. Keynote also enables users to create interactive demos and includes a multi-presenter option for shared presentations. The Numbers tool — which can integrate with Microsoft Excel — is the first application to bring full-featured pivot tables to mobile, enabling users to access data analytics wherever they're located. It's also important to note that iWork offers file sharing capabilities and is entirely cloud-based, allowing for flexible storage.

Perhaps the most exciting aspect of iWork, however, is that it's completely free to any user with an Apple device, making it a great option for organizations that utilize Apple products.

Dropbox

Dropbox made its name in the cloud storage market and has since expanded into the world of team management and collaboration. By consolidating all files within a secure, centralized repository, Dropbox makes it easy for team members to share files and folders, edit documents in real time, provide feedback and more, all from a single access point.

Here's a sampling of the features and functionality Dropbox has to offer:

- Word processor
- Flexible storage
- File sharing and transmitting
- File synchronization
- eSignatures
- Document scanning
- Annotations
- Task management
- Screen capture and recording

Although Dropbox doesn't include all of the same features as other suites, it does provide a solid foundation for office productivity, affordable cloud storage and integrations with numerous solutions for greater extensibility.

Dropbox team plans start at $12.50 per user, per month — a price that includes 5 TB of secure storage, team management and collaboration tools, admin console and audit log, granular sharing permissions and file encryption.

Bitrix24

Built with small businesses in mind, Bitrix24 is a free office productivity suite that includes:

- HD video calls and conferencing
- An instant messaging tool
- Time-tracking functionality
- Kanban boards
- Workflow automation tools
- Calendaring functionality
- A document management and collaboration platform
- Task management tools
- Workflow automation

In addition to office productivity tools, Bitrix24 also has a customer relationship management (CRM) system, telephony tools and a website builder, making it a smart option for businesses in the market for a productivity suite — with a little extra.

As noted, Bitrix24 utilizes a freemium model which includes 5 GB storage, collaboration tools, task and project management tools, CRM and more for unlimited users. Additional plans start at $39 per month for five users.

Citrix ShareFile

Citrix ShareFile is a full-service team collaboration suite designed to drive efficiency in the workplace. In order to achieve this, Citrix ShareFile delivers a wide range of features and capabilities, including:

- Flexible cloud storage
- Secure file sharing
- File synchronization
- Email encryption
- eSignatures
- Workflow management
- Online collaboration portal
- Real-time editing
- Document management

Citrix also has a strategic partnership with Google, allowing end users to integrate Citrix ShareFile with Google Workspace for even more functionality, including additional storage using the ShareFile Connector for Google Drive, co-editing with Google Docs and more.

Citrix ShareFile pricing plans start with the Standard plan at $50 per month, which includes storage, sharing and syncing functionality; mobile applications; and unlimited client users for up to five employee users. Organizations with the Standard plan can add additional employee users for $9.90 per user, per month or upgrade to the $77 per month Advanced plan.

Apache OpenOffice

A free and open productivity suite from the Apache Software Foundation, OpenOffice consists of six productivity applications:

- Writer, a word processor (with web-authoring component)
- Calc, a spreadsheet generation tool
- Impress, a presentation creation tool
- Draw, a 3D illustration tool
- Base, a desktop database management system
- Math, a mathematical equation editor

Designed with accessibility and ease of use in mind, OpenOffice offers a familiar user interface and is compatible with file types from major competing productivity suites. Since OpenOffice is an open source solution, it's completely free to personal and business users alike, making it an excellent option for budget-conscious organizations.

With that said, it also means that OpenOffice does not offer dedicated support — instead, it relies on a combination of product documentation, professional services (at an additional cost) and a community of volunteers.

Hancom Office 2020

Designed as an alternative to Microsoft 365, Hancom Office 2020 provides a feature-rich set of desktop applications to support productivity in the modern workplace — applications that include:

- Word, a word processor
- Cell, a spreadsheet generation tool
- Show, a presentation creation tool
- PDF, a PDF annotation and conversion tool
- Mail, an email hosting service
- Built-in chat functionality
- Calendaring
- Video conferencing

Hancom Office 2020 also offers unlimited online storage through an integration with Hancom Space. Organizations that require online and mobile access in addition to offline functionality are advised to look into Hancom Online and Hancom Mobile. Those interested in Hancom Office 2020 are encouraged to download a free trial offer or contact Hancom for pricing information.
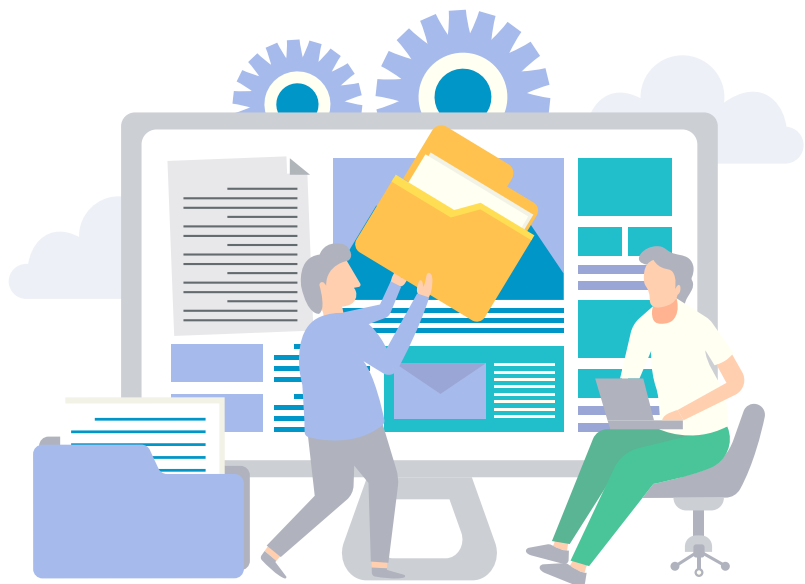
LibreOffice

Created by The Document Foundation, a nonprofit organization dedicated to "[eliminating] the digital divide in society," LibreOffice is an open source, 100% free office productivity suite that includes:

- Writer, a word processor
- Calc, a spreadsheet generation tool
- Impress, a presentation creation tool
- Draw, a 3D illustration and diagramming tool
- Base, a database management tool
- Math, a mathematical equation editor
- Charts, a chart creation module

All of LibreOffice's files utilize the OpenDocument format which is "a fully open and ISO [standardized] file format that guarantees access to your data forever," with the option to encrypt or password-protect files. As an additional point of interest, LibreOffice is actually built on top of Apache OpenOffice, but folds in additional features, Microsoft 365 compatibility and regular releases with security updates.

As noted, LibreOffice is free for personal or business use, making it an affordable option, but the same support limitations that apply to OpenOffice also apply here. LibreOffice users are also encouraged to contribute to the software's ongoing development by joining its online community of developers, designers, translators, quality assurance testers and marketers.
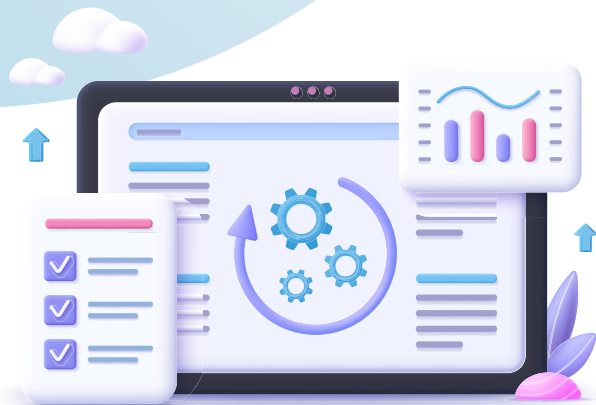
The Perfect Complement

How Archiving Can Enhance Office Productivity

For companies both large and small, using the right office productivity suite is the secret to meeting the demands of the modern — and often virtual — workplace, staying organized and on top of important documentation and setting employees up for success.

Regardless whether you choose to use one of the suites featured in this eBook or any others you come across in your search, it's vital that you base your decision upon your organization's unique needs. It's also vital that you safeguard your company's most sensitive data — including emails, social media communications and text messages — by investing in an archiving solution.

Archiving electronic communications plays an important role in everything from ensuring compliance with key regulations to preparing for pending litigation. It can boost productivity, too, by enabling users to easily track down and reproduce business-critical communications in a matter of seconds. With less time spent combing through thousands of files looking for a single piece of information, employees are able to dedicate their time and attention to more important — and often more fulfilling — tasks, thereby streamlining workflows and enhancing job satisfaction.

As the leading vendor of archiving solutions for healthcare providers, government agencies, educational institutions, financial firms and organizations in countless other industries, Intradyn has the technical expertise and proven experience to custom configure an archiving platform based on your company's exact requirements. Contact us today to find out what makes Intradyn the perfect complement to any office productivity suite.

Or, if you'd like to speak to one of our archiving specialists directly, don't hesitate to **contact us** today.

We look forward to showing you what Intradyn can do for you.