
Why Your Digital Clutter Is Costing You ROI¹ — and What to Do About It

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This is the first of a 3-part series examining redundant, obsolete, transient (ROT²) information assets, the risks ROT presents to your organization, and how information governance (IG) is essential to reduce ROT and realize the benefits of AI.

In the age of digital transformation, many organizations believe that simply moving to the cloud will solve their content management challenges. But here's the truth: if you are migrating your mess, you're not transforming it — you are just relocating the problem.

Across enterprise environments, especially those using SharePoint or file shares, there is a silent but costly problem: ROT. While it may seem harmless, ROT is quietly draining resources, increasing compliance risks, and making AI tools like Microsoft 365 Copilot far less effective.

Let's explore why digital clutter is such a big deal—and what you can do to clean it up for good.

The Hidden Cost of ROT

Think of ROT as the digital version of an overstuffed attic full of unmarked boxes. You know it's there. You know it's slowing things down. But it's easier to ignore — until it starts costing you.

Here's how:

- **Storage bloat:** Unused or unnecessary files are still taking up space in your various cloud environments. That means higher Azure storage costs and longer migration timelines when moving to Microsoft 365
- **Compliance and legal risk:** ROT can contain outdated, incorrect, or sensitive information. In the event of an audit or investigation, irrelevant content makes eDiscovery efforts more complicated—and increases your exposure to risk
- **Reduced productivity:** When employees waste time “sifting” through irrelevant files, it adds up. Search becomes harder, collaboration suffers, and decision-making slows down
- **AI inefficiency:** AI tools like Microsoft 365 Copilot are only as smart as the data they have access to. If your environment is full of ROT, Microsoft 365 Copilot's value is diminished — delivering poor suggestions based on outdated or irrelevant content
- **Low Data Quality:** ROT also contributes to poor data quality, which can amplify risks when using AI. This can happen when AI uses ROT information to answer prompts, which may result in erroneous decisions

¹ Return on Investment.

² Redundant includes duplicate, obsolete includes out-dated, and transient includes temporary and trivial content.

Step One: Acknowledge That Cleanup Is Not Optional

Whether you are preparing for Microsoft 365 Copilot, a major migration, or just trying to get control of your information assets, one thing is clear: you can't build the future on a messy foundation.

Yet many organizations are still using manual ad-hoc methods to identify which digital content to keep, what to archive, and what to delete. It is time-consuming, subjective, and often ineffective.

You need an intelligent approach. One that goes beyond guesswork and reduces risks.

Smarter Cleanup, Reduce Risk, and Better ROI

Organizations need to rethink the way they handle digital content. Reducing ROT is essential to managing digital content. In fact, it is a top priority for most C-levels, such as the CTO, CIO, and / or CDO in an organization. Today, we are living in the zettabyte era³, due to the digital content explosion. Consequently, every organization is dealing with “content chaos” and the proliferation of ROT. This is directly hurting organizations' ROI and their bottom line. For example, cloud and on-prem storage costs are increasing; compliance and privacy risks are increasing; IG oversight risks are increasing; information quality risks are increasing; data loss risks are increasing.

What exactly does that mean to users and how does one “get there?” Also, what does smart cleanup mean to a decision-maker when analyzing information and then taking a decision.

- **Discover what's hiding in your repositories** through automated scans across SharePoint, file shares, and other systems
- **Identify ROT quickly** by using AI-driven rules to detect redundant, obsolete, or trivial content
- **Auto-classify content** using Microsoft Syntex to tag and organize content that's valuable
- **Enable a smart migration** that focuses only on useful, compliant, and high-value content—saving time, cost, and effort

Ready to See the Savings?

It's time to turn digital clutter into strategic clarity—and unlock new capacity, efficiency, and value. But remember cleaning up the ROT is only the first step. If you don't fix the foundation, you are just letting “content chaos” get worse, thereby reducing ROI, increasing costs, and amplifying risks.

One way to estimate your savings is the [THEMIS ICE Cost Savings Calculator](#). By answering a few questions, you will see in a few seconds an estimate of just how much ROT is silently draining your budget—and how much your organization could reclaim by eliminating it.

³ IDC predicts that in 2025, the world will create approx. 175 Zettabytes of digital content, which is the equivalent 175 trillion gigabytes, See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zettabyte_Era and <https://www.forbes.com/sites/tomcoughlin/2018/11/27/175-zettabytes-by-2025/>

Embarking on an initiative to reduce ROT and improve accurate, relevant, and trusted (ART⁴) content should be the outcome your organization wants to achieve. In other words, let's move from ROT, and start focusing on ART.

The Bottom Line

ROT increases risks and costs, and limits the effectiveness of your investment in IG / information management (IM) tools. Before you layer on more tools, enable AI assistants, or migrate your digital content to repositories, take the time to clean house. This is possible by understanding information (IA) architecture and IG.

In our next blog, I will explore why most organizations are still struggling with search, compliance, and AI tools — and how broken or poor IA design is often the hidden culprit that is costing your organization and reducing ROI. I will discuss how IA is the missing link between better IG and ROI when using Microsoft 365 Copilot.

Amitabh Srivastav has deep knowledge of IG / IM and is a transformation strategist with over 25 years of PM experience. He has a strong portfolio of qualifications in strategy, digital transformation, AI risk management, and content services. As the CDO & VP, Compliance & Risk Management at HELUX.ai, he advises clients on emerging technology trends, navigating the evolving technology landscape, and implementing digital transformation strategies by leveraging Microsoft solutions. Over his long career, he has managed and implemented many ECM projects with an aggregated value of approx. \$100 million. Amitabh is a highly regarded speaker and thought leader within the industry, having presented at leading conferences such as ARMA International, ARMA Canada, PMI, and M365 SharePoint. He is a member of ARMA, PMI, AIIM, ISACA. Amitabh is also deeply involved in shaping the future of IG / IM through his work as a member of various AIIM and ARMA committees, a community member of AIIM True North, and a board member of ARMA International Education Foundation. He is also a member of the Standards Council of Canada as a delegated member on ISO/TC 171/SC 2/WG 11 committee that update ISO 10244, 12029, 18759, 18829, and 22957. Amitabh hosts webinars discussing digital transformation and AI at AIIM True North. As well, he has authored and contributed to several articles, textbooks, publications, and the CIP and IGP exams. Amitabh has advance degrees in Computer Science and Project Management, and a Bachelor of Computer Science (Honors) degree. His certifications include PMP, CIP, IGP. Amitabh is an AIIM Fellow and AIIM Ambassador. You can contact Amitabh at amitabh@heluxsystems.com or www.linkedin.com/in/amitabhsrivastav.

About HELUX

As enterprise content experts, we help our customers maximize the potential of their information, pairing Microsoft technologies with proprietary industry-leading intelligent migration and information architecture solutions. We help leaders and users to do more than aspire - we help them create and manage usable

⁴ Relevant can include reliable content.

information in the real world of content management. We are passionate about providing organizations with user-focused processes, tools, training and experience that help them manage content more effectively. Our team of experts can deliver innovative and advanced knowledge and insight solutions with Microsoft 365, SharePoint and Teams. We are a Microsoft Gold Partner, a member of the Microsoft Intelligent Security Association (MISA) and a Charter Member in the Microsoft Content AI Partner Program (CAPP). The content modernization journey doesn't have to be a daunting one. We're here to help. Visit www.helux.ai or contact info@heluxsystems.com for more information.