Records Management Services (RMS) Practices of Selected SME's in Pasig City: An Enterprise Reference Guide

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Abstract

This study explores and investigates the Records Management Service (RMS) practices of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Pasig City, Philippines. With a flourishing business landscape with over 18,000 registered SMEs, the effective management of records is critical to ensuring compliance, efficiency, and sustainability. The main objective is to develop an enterprise reference guide to enhance Records Management among SMEs, ultimately promoting operational efficiency, compliance with regulatory requirements, and achieving profitable business ventures. The research employs qualitative methodologies, primarily semi-structured interviews, to scrutinize various aspects of records handling, including risk management practices, safety, and security measures, document retention strategies, compliance with regulatory requirements, cost efficiency, and the challenges SMEs face. The findings delineate significant themes such as SMEs implementing diverse risk assessment techniques to identify vulnerabilities, enforcing safety protocols to protect sensitive information, managing document retention timelines effectively, and striving to fulfill compliance requirements. By demonstrating the critical role of well-structured RMS in business operations, this research addresses the prevalent inadequacies in record-keeping among SMEs. It highlights the potential for strategic growth and improved efficiency in the business sector. The study concludes that a tailored reference guide can assist SMEs in establishing relevant records management systems, facilitating better resource utilization and operational sustainability.

Keywords: Records Management, Small and Medium Enterprise, Qualitative Research, Reference Guide, Operational Efficiency, Compliance, Sustainability

Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION
Background of the Study

Constantly with more than 100 million people, the Philippines is a country that produces so many documents that tend to be unmanaged and without control, as mentioned by Securage, Inc., one of the country's top Records Management Service providers, in an article published on its website www.securageph.com Securage, 2017. There is a deeply uneducated population regarding records keeping and management, especially in the business sector. Department of Trade and Industry Statistics for Business Sector for 2022, using the same 2020 statistics of the Philippine Statistics Authority, has 957,620 registered businesses, 99.51% of which belong to small and medium Enterprises (SMEs). With the upward

direction of Philippine entrepreneurial trends, the growth of SMEs continues to get higher, especially with the economy slowly opening and recovering from the pandemic.

Naturally, with the growing number of companies and organizations, it is inherent that records in many forms, whether hard or physical copies, soft or electronic copies, are produced and, at the same time, need to be stored securely. Aside from its record-keeping, accessing it quickly is a much-needed process to get the document and secure the information desired. As mentioned in the article of Securage, Inc., over time, the amount of paper in the offices naturally grows until it reaches its destruction date. Companies produce many types of documents, such as legal, operational, financial, personnel files, and even maps, which are accumulated in specific periods. Some documents are often readily needed or used, and some are used for safekeeping for a long time or even a lifetime.

Picking Pasig City as the subject area due to its significant location in the business industry in the National Capital Region, the e-FOI (Electronic Freedom of Information) released a list showing that the city is home to thousands of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises and contributes 99.51% (see Fig 1) of businesses to the Philippine economy, as published by the Congressional Policy and Budget Research Department of the House of Congress.

As published in the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority's Regional Development Plan 2017-2022 (MMDA, 2018), Pasig City was declared the Emerging Regional Center for the National Capital Region, where its impact is considered Primary. With its significant location in the heart of the National Capital Region and as the regional Center, Pasig City provides a good sample size for conducting research and studying the practices of records management, which will help create a Records Management Reference Guide for Small and Medium Enterprises.

Statement of the Problem

The problem that SMEs are facing right now is their inability to maintain or keep essential records with significant information about the company and the business, which will eventually take a toll on the business's cost. SMEs usually face substantial challenges in keeping up with compliances from different agencies governing their line of business. Not only compliances but also records from their daily operations, such as sales and expenses, typically get little attention among SMEs. These challenges form part of a bigger problem once compliance season, such as filing taxes, business permits, and other regulatory requirements, comes in (Garland, 2019). As records keep filing up each day, the problem of records management gets more prominent and eventually hinders the growth of the enterprise or the company. With a lack of awareness and focus on Records Management, SMEs succumb to low-efficiency and high-cost business processes.

With these, the study will focus on practices of SMEs in records keeping and management in Pasig City as it aims to answer the following questions to come up with an enterprise reference guide that will help SMEs establish their own records management system:

1. What were the RMS practices of selected SMEs in terms of:

1.1 Risk Management;

1.2 Safety/Security keeping;

1.3 Retention;

1.4 Cost Efficiency; and

1.5 Compliance Requirement

1.6 Problems Encountered

2. Among RMS practices of the selected SMEs, how do these practices supported the operations in terms of:

2.1 Administration;

2.2 Operations; and

2.3 Technical?

2.4 What proposed reference guide can be developed to enhance the RMS practices?

Significance of the Study

The significance of records management is as important as to the life of the company or organization itself as it will find a resolution to having a highly efficient and cost-effective business process, and this research study will help every SME create and implement their own records management system to manage their records and eventually lead to business growth effectively. According to Weller (2023) in his article at Smartsheet, "Keeping good records helps companies protect institutional memory and maintain evidence of activities, transactions, and decisions. An effective records management system can save money on storage and improve an organization's efficiency". As discussed in Netwrix.com titled "The Importance of Records Management Policy," Garland reiterated that records management is integral to a company's overall information governance strategy (Garland, 2019). Safeguarding the authenticity and accessibility of records over time can help your business achieve its mission. It also supports ensuring compliance with government laws and industry regulations. Therefore, three groups (with definition from DTI, 2022) that will benefit and have the most significant effect on this research are the following:

1. Micro Enterprise – this group can be defined as a business with assets of PhP3 million and below, employing ten (10) people or lower.

2. Small Enterprise – this group can be defined as a business with assets of PhP15 million, not lower than PhP3 million, and employs ninety-nine (99) people but not lower than ten (10).

3. Medium Enterprise—This group can be defined as a business with assets of PhP100 million but not less than PhP15 million that employs at least one hundred ninety-nine (199) people but not less than one hundred (100).

Having a records management system in place among SMEs is a huge benefit that comes with it. According to Touray (2021), the benefits of effective management of companies' vital historical and current records, both paper and electronic, are:

1. Reduced or eliminated level of record-keeping redundancies;

2. Decreasing costs of records storage equipment and supplies;

3. Reduced cost of space occupancy, pest control, and other security-related costs;

4. Recalibrated usage of office space to a more productive income-generating space and

5. Institutional accountability and timely access to information.

Moreover, (Touray,2021) pointed out in his study that "Implementing RMS will pave the way for organizations to prioritize the need to appoint a trained and qualified records manager who will champion records management activities at the management level and influence management support. The study revealed the importance of records management as a significant tool in achieving organizational objectives. Records management must be a collective responsibility of all stakeholders in the organization. Records management strategy should be incorporated in all aspects of management function." Top management must be involved in each phase of the records management practice. Top management must embrace records management purposes to enhance efficiency in all aspects.

Scope and Limitation

In creating a Reference Guide for SMEs, this study focuses on the practices, procedures, and policies that would act as determining factors of records management among the Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) in Pasig City in creating a reference guide for the records management system of the SMEs and its positive effect on the total business process expected to result in high efficiency and cost-effective business processes. The scope will cover all variables, independent and dependent, to come up with the determining factors so that SMEs will entice themselves to implement their own Records Management system to establish an efficient and cost-effective business process through the reference guide in which this research will come up. This study will be supported by questionnaires, which will lead to the main focus of coming up with a reference guide or handbook on records management system application and implementation. The questionnaires will be done through interviews as a reference to be used as part of the analysis of the study.

The respondents of this study will be business owners and managers directly affected by records management. This study will not cover other processes not connected with Records Management Services. In almost a million SMEs nationwide, this study has chosen Pasig City as the area of research and will cover only all SMEs registered in Pasig City.

Theoretical Framework

Business operations make activities for their daily operations by which documents are produced. Operational activities and documents are interdependent and depend on records keeping and management to achieve perceived efficiency. business operations are interdependent with records management as records management provides information regarding the operations; thus, the Theoretical Framework follows the concept of interdependence of factors to achieve a highly efficient, cost-effective business process. In theory, as shown in Fig. 3, the business and operational processes are interdependent and flow continuously as each process involves producing documents. These documents must have a management system to access information, which will result in effective and efficient processes that will benefit the business by achieving high profit. Frank Upward's Records Continuum Model, as detailed in his work "Modelling the Continuum as a Paradigm Shift in Record Keeping and Archiving Process and Beyond" (2022), offers a powerful framework for organizations to optimize their recordkeeping practices. This model underscores the dynamic nature of records, emphasizing their continuous journey from creation to disposal. By comprehending and implementing this model, organizations can refine their recordkeeping processes, reduce costs, and mitigate risks associated with ineffective record management.

Conceptual Framework

This study will be based on determining factors of record management that are influenced by human and technology factors as well as procedural and compliances. The relations between humans and technology, the changes technology brought in the business field, the concept of records management, and the possible benefits of implementing a reference guide in companies and organizations are essential in establishing an efficient business operation. In a business environment where standardization is significant to compliance, the records management service plays a big part in maintaining a systematized business operation. The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) defines records management as the discipline concerned with the efficient and systematic control of records throughout their lifecycle. This encompasses activities such as creating, receiving, maintaining, using, and disposing of records.

Importantly, records management ensures the preservation of evidence and information about business activities and transactions, safeguarding an organization's history and legal obligations. In this framework, the RMS Practices of SMEs that directly affect the business are Risk Management, Safety and Security, Cost Efficiency, Retention, and Compliance. Departments directly dependent on these practices are Administration. Operations. And Technical/Financial as the records pass on the records continuum as discussed in the theoretical framework. To standardize practices that are involved in each of the departments, a proposed reference guide is needed to bring uniformity of practices from among the departments mentioned

The concept of the foundational theory on the determining factors of records management that will be more carefully mentioned are the supposed effectiveness and the costs in a business and how they are affected by an established records management system. In concept, companies are dependent on how records are managed to achieve consistency in practices, as shown in Fig. 4. The conceptual theory follows the process in Fig.4 in which dimensions such as Risk Management, Safety and Security, Cost Efficiency, Retention, and Compliance. All this information is critical in creating a reference guide for small and medium enterprises.

Chapter 2
METHODS

The procedures and methods the researcher used to collect and systematically assess the study's data are described in this chapter. The methodology is presented in the following sections: research design, data management, sampling design, and decision criteria. It explains the study's description and answers the questions the researcher must answer.

Research Design

Qualitative research was used in this research. To gather data, a structured and unstructured questionnaire was used in a one-on-one interview between the researcher and interviewee as the interview instrument to solicit information from the target respondents that gathered data on the day-to-day activities of the records management of their respective companies. The interview results were analyzed through content analysis. Through the in-depth interview, all gathered data were reviewed, which were based on their views, thoughts, and experiences.

Chapter 3
RESULTS

This chapter presents a comprehensive analysis of the data collected, focusing on the key themes and patterns that emerged from the study. The findings concerning the research questions are discussed, and insights into the records management practices of selected SMEs in Pasig City are provided. This chapter presents the RMS Practices of Selected SMEs based on the themes grouped in risk management, safety/security keeping, retention, cost efficiency compliance requirements, and problems encountered. Furthermore, it also presented the responses regarding RMS practices that support operations in terms of administration, operations, and technical and the proposed reference guide for the SMEs that can be developed to further enhance the RMS practices.

Small enterprises comprise employees of 3 – 33 people, and their revenue varies from 3 million to 14 million, while medium enterprises comprise employers between 34 – 127 employees and have a higher

revenue ranging from 15 million to 21 million. This differentiation implies that record management within medium enterprises is relatively harder and more demanding in psychiatry due to the size and scope of these operational enterprises. Furthermore, the choice of storage also differs considerably, and most businesses worldwide still use paper-based storage, especially small organizations, and businesses organizations in the automotive and food services sectors. As seen in the IT and manpower sectors, there is a physical and digital hybrid model, though its application seems limited at this stage.

Remarkably, some organizations use the service of other companies, such as the Medium Enterprise (ME4), probably because of the need for expertise in managing records containing legal information. On the other hand, Medium Enterprise (ME5), a manufacturing industry, validates storage; it could be out of privacy, or otherwise, they want to safely handle all their records. As for enterprise structures, the majority of small enterprises are sole traders, and the majority of MEs are corporations. This difference indicates that corporate organizations may already have standard practice on how to manage records and may need structures within which the records can be stored to meet legal requirements. (Please see Appendix no. D.1)

RMS Practices of Selected SMEs in terms of:

Thematic Analysis on What were the practices of selected SMEs in terms of:

SMEs adopted several tactics to recognize and evaluate the possible hazards connected with their records management systems. One of these strategies is doing regular checks, which helps monitor internal and external threats and take necessary action before it's too late. Such risk assessments enabled SMEs to discover weaknesses and treat such matters while they were still at the incipient stage (Kokot-Stępień 2023). Small and medium enterprises used different approaches, such as improving security protocols, using multiple suppliers, and obtaining insurance to minimize imminent dangers. The strategies aim to lessen likely threats to records management systems. Proper risk control practices are needed to minimize possible disturbances and protect records processing procedures (Kokot-Stępień, 2023).

Safety/Security Keeping

There are different ways that organizations do this; some prefer using electronic means while others use manual techniques such as physical protection methods, which involve things like secured storage or even using a safe box to store valued documents, while digital safeguards may include encryption and cybersecurity rules. However, combining them is important because it protects records from invasion by criminals and maintains their quality (Kokot-Stępień, 2023).

Effective communication and comprehensive training programs are required to ensure employees understand and follow the records management policies and procedures and security protocols. These initiatives included informing employees about the specific guidelines and policies in place and educating them on the importance of these safeguards in protecting the organization's assets and data. Regular workshops, interactive sessions, and continuous learning opportunities help to reinforce these protocols, allowing employees to be vigilant and responsive to potential security threats.

"All our policies, procedures, and systems are conveyed during town hall meetings."

Retention

Organizations created protocols to keep documents for a specific time depending on how long each document should be maintained and according to legal obligations. Such measures ensure that all standards set for regulations are adhered to, hence managing the files efficiently. Properly structured retention

policies play an essential role in managing records effectively while complying with the law (Kokot-Stępień, 2023).

The handling of documents at their end-of-life date is controlled through procedures that allow either their archival or disposal in a good way. This analysis determined whether to retain the documents for historical or legal purposes or whether it is safe to destroy them. The need for compliance with retention policies during the management of records is crucial, and such compliance can only be achieved when these procedures are followed (Kokot-Stępień, 2023). Here are some notable quotes from the transcript:

Cost Efficiency

Firms judge how well they use their money by looking at what it takes to keep and run records compared to how much better their organization runs afterward. They need to identify if record-keeping investments bring forth adequate returns in productivity and cost reduction in results. It is crucial to determine cost efficiency because it helps identify if these techniques for dealing with files add any value and can help organizations achieve their purpose (Lu, 2024).

Having sustainable practices in the record-keeping system is meant to promote long-term effectiveness and conservation of the environment. This is done through measures like reducing the consumption of paper by using digital storage or decreasing energy consumption during data storage, among other things, recycling programs for outdated documents and files. Through this approach, the operations become more efficient while also supporting caring for the environment as well as sticking to ecological norms (Lu 2024).

Compliance Requirements

Corporations utilize multiple tools and materials to remain in touch with the changes in compliance needs and follow the rules set by the authorities. It involved monitoring laws and regulations changes and utilizing professional networkers and resources that provide accurate information. Therefore, one should be aware of compliance so that the justice system may not bring this person into trouble while maintaining records is done according to today's requirements (Amoako et al., 2020).

To keep apprised of legislative changes frequent training and development and continuous monitoring lie at the heart of dealing with corporate compliance issues. In addition, companies also add that an organization's procedures and regulations should be regularly revised in line with recent laws including other guiding principles on lawful business operations. Therefore, it is important always to acquire knowledge and remain prepared since it prevents legal issues and demonstrates competence in record management (Amoako et al., 2020).

Problems Encountered

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) have faced a number of challenges in record keeping that can have an impact on their operations and performance. Such barriers could include concerns about system integration, data security, and rule compliance. Tackling such issues is necessary to sustain proficient records management approaches and guarantee healthy business (Hock-Doepgen et al., 2021).

Strategies and measures to increase efficiency and compliance are employed to tackle and surmount the challenges recognized in records management. This entails embracing digital solutions that would enhance process reengineering and improve accessibility. They conduct regular training and audits to ensure adherence to professional practices and continuous improvement (Suttipun et al., 2019).

Occasionally, when these records management systems do not live up to what was anticipated, they may experience data loss or not perform as expected, thus becoming inefficient, while at times, they tend to be non-compliant. The first cause for all this happening may be outdated technology; no one knows how to

use it because there are no employees trained on it, and poor security policies are also among the reasons why such things happen. Likewise, poor organizational policies and a lack of proper resources lead to failures in that area (Lu, 2024).

RMS Practices of Selected SMEs in Support of Operations
Thematic Analysis of How These Practices Supported the Operations in terms of:
Administration
One of the departments in an enterprise or company that is heavily dependent on records and its management is administration. It is where volume of records are created, reproduced, analyzed, discussed, organized and controlled. Companies that are efficient and productive have effective administration that implements streamlined records management system to achieve desired productivity and meet business goals. Administration demands ease of access of its records to respond quickly to the need of operations and therefore RMS practices must be simple and direct to support the operational needs. The administrative duties were aided by RMS routines through keeping documents structured, workable, and reachable. Suitable document management systems facilitate smooth administrative processes via simplification of retrieval and handling. Organizational operations and executive effectiveness can be supported through following the right RMS practices (Suttipun et al., 2019)..

Operations
RMS practices made operations to be better by reducing record handling and increasing efficiency at a large level in an organization. One such aspect included making records available on merit for daily functions that needed them well taken care of. Improved efficiency in operations through effective documentation administration generates profits for the entire organization (Suttipun et al., 2019). Effective and Efficient Operations follows certain standard procedures specially in terms of documentations and RMS practices plays vital role in the analysis of data and information essential in improving and enhancing the production rate by analyzing metrics and identify chokepoints through recorded data. With an established RMS practice, communication is easier and records is available as needed.

Technical
RMS's practices are influencing technical operations through the implementation of advanced technological solutions and the provision of robust data security procedures. Consequently, data that contains confidential information belonging to the organization is protected by secure information storage and retrieval systems. It is essential to bear in mind that technology can facilitate safe records management and complement technical operations (Suttipun et al., 2019). Technology plays important role in the Records Management Practices in making RMS effective and contributes to high productivity however in as much as technology enhances the technical operations, it is imperative that security of data is well established to avoid breaches that may affect the efficiency of the operations. Data protections is an essential as it applies strict safeguards to prevent sensitive information from landing in the wrong hands and prevent potential loss.

Records Management Services (RMS) plays a vital role in ensuring the successful functioning of selected SMEs in three areas: administration, operations, and technical aspects. In administration, RMS provides systematic and organized management of crucial records, which include, but are not limited to, HR files, financial documents, and compliance-related items. The development of records management programs ensures that SMEs' interests in regulatory compliance are met, and this helps them make decisions based

on the efficient retrieval of accurate structured data. Administrative efficiencies are also realized from RMS, through fostering of better communication and accountability within the group.

For operations, RMS is greatly beneficial in providing better workflows for managing human resources. Proper records management facilitates the supply chain with inventory and performance monitoring, thus allowing SMEs to have a streamlined routine. That permits SMEs to make proper records, trace their clients' orders, manage relationships with their customers, and address operational issues on time. This enables continuous operation and also ensures better service delivery.

From a technical perspective, RMS aims to provide the infrastructure and tools required to manage records. Many SMEs use technologies such as archiving, cloud systems, and secure databases to deal with their records and protect sensitive information. Technology directly affects efficiency in record-keeping, safety, and protection. Training of staff in safe record handling enables SMEs to have more technical support for their RMS implementation. Ultimately, these practices will allow an SME to sustain administrative, operational, and technical functions for organizational success.

Proposed Reference Guide

The findings were found to agree well with the theoretical and conceptual frameworks, especially concerning the interrelatedness of records management, business operations, and organizational efficiency. The theoretical foundation, derived from Frank Upward's Records Continuum Model, focuses on the interaction of the four dimensions--create, capture, organize, pluralize--under the axes of evidential, transactional, recordkeeping, and identity (Gesmundo et al., 2022; Upward, 2022). The organizational, operational, and technical practices of SMEs herein are illustrated within the said components. For instance, the systematic organization of HR files and compliance documents illustrates how records creation and organization support the evidential and transactional axes, improving decision-making as per the regulatory framework.

Furthermore, the development of factors influencing the human, technology, and process, yet compliance variables within the conceptual framework are widely manifest in the results. The technical incorporation of secure databases, cloud systems, and archival tools to manage records embodies the create and capture dimensions of the continuum model (Mckemmish & Piggot, 2020). These streamline inventory management, enable optimization of customer relationship management, and streamline workflow issues in the organization. The conceptual framework, for its part, represents the sustainability of organizational compliance through practices such as internal audits and legal compliance, which embody the pluralization dimension, whereby records are shared and reused to sustain organizational identity and memory.

The proposed reference guide further builds on the various frameworks by articulating the key principles of the Records Continuum Model in operational terms. Recommendations like clear retention schedules, safe disposal methods, and regular vulnerability assessments further increase the significance of the theoretical dimension by ensuring cost-efficiency and effectiveness in operations. The need for customized and scalable options speaks of the primacy given in the conceptual framework to the customized strategies recommended with role-based access and staff training guidelines embedded in the reference guide.

Table 10 Proposed Reference Guide

Area of Concern	Optimal Practices
1. Understanding Records Management	Always ensure the accessibility of records. Maintain confidentiality of records. Comply with legal policies.
2. Risk Management	Regular vulnerability assessments for IT systems. Create action plans and implement strong security, firewalls and access controls. Evaluate incidents and breaches; review and update strategies.
3. Safety and Security Keeping	Use techniques like Intrusion Detection Systems, Encryption, and Storing it Securely. Employee Training: Conduct training sessions to communicate policies to employees. Incident Response: Develop guidelines and enhance security protocols for incidents.
4. Retention	Retention Schedules: Set clear periods based on document type and legal requirements. Disposal Procedures: Secure disposal methods include shredding of physical documents and secure deletion and ensure documentation of disposal.
5. Cost Efficiency	Cost tracking: Monitor costs for storage, staffing, and maintenance; and other accessorial cost related to maintaining document storage and management compare to savings. Sustainable Strategies: Implement scalable storage solutions, recyclable materials usage, and offer ongoing training.
6. Compliance Requirements	Stay up to date by reviewing government-related websites and business publications, as well as attending seminars/webinars, and conferences. Ensure compliance: Conduct periodic audits and keep all necessary documentation. Address challenges by allocating funds to compliance monitoring and investing in training.
7. Support for Operations	

7.1 Administration	Organizational Efficiency: Create a well-organized filing system and ensure clear labeling. Ease of Access: Set up procedures for quick retrieval and management.
7.2 Operations	Improve operational efficiency by streamlining document handling for faster and more accurate results. Improved Communication: Keep organized records to improve team communication.
7.3 Technical Aspects	Technology Integration: Implement systems that support technical operations and data security. Data Security: Implement security measures such as role-based access and encryption.
8. Implementing a Reference Guide	Customization: Tailor the guide to your organization's specific needs and infrastructure. Support and Training: Form a team to oversee implementation and provide continuous education. Evaluation: Keep track of metrics like document retrieval rates and user satisfaction.

Chapter 4
DISCUSSIONS

This chapter concludes the study by summarizing key findings and insights gained from the analysis, providing actionable recommendations, suggesting avenues for future research, and discussing the broader implications of the results for businesses and enterprises.

Conclusions

The study is more specifically at the handling of records management services (RMS) amongst small and medium-sized businesses in Pasig City. It aimed at establishing the current state of these companies, their work, tasks, challenges, and support for their activities. The results fall into main topics:

1. **Risk Management Practices:** Companies apply various techniques to identify and assess risk resistance in SMEs. These included, as discussed, consideration of the weak links and implementation of the best security practices. They minimized risks by making efficient plans and, in most cases, revising the plans to address new threats.

2. **Safety and Security Keeping:** Managers ensured that their business records were secured by implementing both physical and virtual security. They invested in technology and ensured that their workers learned how to deal with security issues and how to avoid the leakage of restricted information.

3. **Document Retention:** Essentially, the guidelines that are necessary in regard to records management

are elimination and retention. SMEs established time horizons for storage and proper methods of disposal of items. This made them obey the law and avoid their accumulation of many papers.

4. **Cost Efficiency:** Businesses maintain records on costs of record management and look for improvements that have to be made. Recycling and training benefits and overviews how the environment, money, and operations are positively impacted.

5. **Compliance Requirements:** To comply with the rules, one needs to follow the new regulations and do regular check-ups. Businesses spend money on monitoring and coping with compliance points, investing in coaching and upgrades to maintain their methods.

6. **Problems Encountered:** Some of them are staff resistance to change and difficulties locating documents. The concept of good solutions includes the ideas of creating simple systems, continuing the training, and restructuring system flaws so that everything works out better.

7. **Support for Operations:** The various RMS practices assisted in such segments as administration, operation, and technology. It is crucial because, through good records management, you can have fewer problems in your admin tasks, good communication, and strength in your technical support.

The study concluded that efficient documentation management or records management is critical to the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises. Companies implementing an extensive records management system have seen increased operational efficiency, security, and regulatory compliance. The thematic analysis emphasized the importance of a comprehensive records management approach involving risk assessment, security measures, retention policies, cost efficiency, and compliance. By addressing common challenges and implementing best practices, SMEs can improve the effectiveness of their records management processes and overall business operations.

Recommendations

Based on the results, the following suggestions were made.

1. **Boost Risk Management:** SMEs ought to develop and implement a clear-cut strategy to counteract risks. This includes periodic assessments for vulnerable areas, sound risk control procedures, and professionals assigned to recommend or change the procedures for handling risks.

2. **Improve Safety and Security: Invest** in high-tech security for handling paperwork and computer-based records. Educate the workers so that they are fully aware of security procedures and measures to be taken in case of an incident.

3. **Put in Place Clear Rules for Keeping Records:** Develop and adhere to schedules for storing documents that comply with the law. In this case, ensure that there are secure methods of discharging papers when they are no longer useful.

4. **Optimize Cost Efficiency:** Monitor and allocate record management expenses like space, human capital, and system maintenance. Introduce cost-effective practices, policies, tools, and technologies that can increase operational efficiency and decrease operating expenses.

5. **Ensure Compliance:** One way to do this is to affiliate with organizations that regularly update policy changes and discussions. Perform periodic compliance checks to be certain that your organization complies, and allocate funds to keep on watching and training employees.

6. **Address Challenges:** To address document management challenges, organizations should establish simple systems and continually assist with them. They should also improve document retrieval and the system's efficiency to make it better and more efficient in supporting operations.

Output

A reference guide for records management in small and medium enterprises (SMEs) has been developed based on the research conducted. This enterprise reference guide incorporates key findings and recommendations to support SMEs and to help improve their business and operational processes:

Goal 1: Improving the business efficiency and effectiveness by streamlining the records management framework that resulted in cost-effectiveness and sustainability.

SMEs' streamlined records management processes allow quick access to top information, reducing time spent in searching for documents thus productivity increased across all departments. SMEs seek improvements through cost-effective initiatives and training programs that enhance operational efficiency and reduce expenses.

Goal 2: Intensifying security and safety of information through effective risk management practices and highly secured safekeeping of physical records.

SMEs invested in data and information protection of business records through both physical and digital security measures. Investments in technology and employee training are essential for preventing information leaks. SMEs utilized various strategies to identify and mitigate risks, including evaluating vulnerabilities and implementing robust security measures. Companies regularly revise their risk management plans to adapt to emerging threats.

Goal 3: Implementing a robust program to ensure adherence to compliance and legal retention schedules and disposal.

SMES effective records management assures that organizations follow required compliances and adherence to retention periods safeguarding the enterprises against liabilities from improper document handling. Establishing clear procedures for the secure disposal through the destruction of records that meet the retention schedules. Training is an integral part of having effective compliance policies and procedures, assuring that compliance requirements are followed as per schedule, including retention and disposal.

Goal 4: Implementing sustainability and corporate social responsibility programs.

Recycling, energy-efficient systems, and other company corporate social responsibility programs are essential in integrating the company in social and environmental concerns in business operations other than considering economic profits. This also supports a sustainable action that uses renewable energy and recycled materials that will contribute positively to the environment. The commitment from leadership, combined with active participation from all stakeholders, is crucial for the success of these initiatives.

4.4 Direction for Future Research

Future studies could look into the following areas:

1. Consider new technology, such as artificial intelligence, to improve record-keeping and solve current problems.
2. **Industry-Specific Research:** Investigate how various industries handle documents to identify unique issues and develop solutions for each type of business.
3. **Long-Term Results:** Examine how record management procedures affect a company's performance and efficiency over time to determine whether they are effective in the long run.
4. **What Employees Think:** Inquire about employees' perspectives and experiences with record systems to find ways to make them more user-friendly, improve training, and involve more individuals.

5. **What Business Owners Think:** While most Medium-sized enterprises have their own records management practices, most small-sized enterprises don't have formal records management in place. Both types of business owners agree that having an established records management system will improve business performance and optimize profitability.

Implications of the Study

The study highlights that SME operation success and compliance depend mainly on effective records management. A thorough reference guide is presented to enhance RMS practices, addressing the challenges frequently encountered; moreover, it aids in resource optimization. Through such implementations, SMEs could improve their administrative efficiency, control costs, and improve operational effectiveness. More important, however, is continuous assessment and adjustment to changing business needs for records management practices to remain relevant per regulatory requirements.