Applied Knowledge Group
Linking the Knowledge of People

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Whitepaper

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Best Practices for Document Naming Conventions

Best Practices and Strategy to Incorporate People, Process, and Learning with Technology

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Executive Summary

Introduction

Background

Key Benefits of SharePoint Libraries

A Document Management Plan is Essential

Best Practices for Document Naming Conventions

Best Practice 1: Keep File Names Short but Meaningful
- ✓ File names should be kept as short as possible but still be meaningful
- ✓ Long file names create long file paths and long URLs
- ✓ SharePoint search breaks down when a file path or URL exceeds 255 characters
- ✓ Long filenames are more difficult to remember and recognize and their associated URLs are more difficult to transmit in emails as they often 'break'
- ✓ Avoid using initials, abbreviations and codes that are not commonly understood

	Correct	Incorrect
File name	SausageMashCtteeRemit.rtf	The_sausage_and_mash_committee_remit.rtf

Explanation
- Some words add length to a file name but do not contribute towards the meaning, for example words like "the", "a", and "and"
- Where the remaining file name is still meaningful within the context of the file directory these elements can be removed
- Sometimes words have standard abbreviations, e.g. "cttee" is a standard abbreviation for "committee"; where this is the case the standard abbreviation can be used

Best Practice 2: Avoid Repetition and Redundancy
- ✓ Avoid redundancy in file names and file paths. Unnecessary repetition increases the length of file names and file paths, which is incompatible with Best Practice 1

	Correct	Incorrect
File name	/.../Court/20041030Minutes.rtf /.../Procedures/Appeals.rtf	/.../Court/20041030CourtMinutes.rtf /.../Procedures/AppealsProcedures.rtf

Explanation
- In the first example the folder is called "Court" so it is not necessary to include the word "Court" in the file name because all the records in that folder are Court records
- In the second example the folder is called "Procedures" so it is not necessary to include the word "Procedures" in the file name because all the records in that folder are procedure records

Best Practice 3: Capital Letters
- ✓ Use Capital Letters to Delimit Words Instead of Spaces and Underscores
- ✓ Avoid using spaces and underscores in file names
- ✓ SharePoint replaces spaces with the percent sign (%), which makes the path difficult to read
- ✓ Using underscores and hyphens in your file names increases the length, which is incompatible with Best Practice 1
- ✓ Where capitalized acronyms are used in file names the acronym should appear in capitals and the first letter of the following word should also be capitalized

	Correct	Incorrect
File name	RiskManagement.rtf RAEInstructions.html	Risk_management.rtf Risk management.rtf RAE_instructions.html Research Assessment Exercise instructions.html

Explanation: Removing the space or underscore reduces the length of the file name, but by using capital letters to differentiate between the words the file name is still readily recognizable

Best Practice 4: Numbers in File Names
- ✓ When including a number in a file name always use a two-digit number, unless it is a year or another number with more than two digits
- ✓ The file directory displays file names in alphanumeric order
- ✓ To maintain the numeric order when file names include numbers it is important to include the zero for numbers 0-9 to retrieve the latest record number

	Correct	Incorrect
File name	OfficeProceduresV01 OfficeProceduresV02 OfficeProceduresV03 OfficeProceduresV04 OfficeProceduresV05 OfficeProceduresV06 OfficeProceduresV07 OfficeProceduresV08 OfficeProceduresV09 OfficeProceduresV10 OfficeProceduresV11	OfficeProceduresV1 OfficeProceduresV10 OfficeProceduresV11 OfficeProceduresV2 OfficeProceduresV3 OfficeProceduresV4 OfficeProceduresV5 OfficeProceduresV6 OfficeProceduresV7 OfficeProceduresV8 OfficeProceduresV9

Explanation: This example shows the last eleven versions of an office procedures document. You need to use two-digit numbers to display the documents in numerical order.

Best Practice 5: Dates
- ✓ Dates should always be presented 'back to front', that is with the year first (always given as a four digit number), followed by the month (always given as a two digit number), and the day (always given as a two digit number)
- ✓ Entering the dates back to front means that the chronological order of the records is maintained when the file names are displayed in a SharePoint list. This helps when trying to retrieve the latest dated record

	Correct	Incorrect
File name	RiskManagement.rtf RAEInstructions.html	Risk_management.rtf Risk management.rtf RAE_instructions.html Research Assessment Exercise instructions.html

Expalanation:
- This example shows the minutes and papers of a committee
- By stating the year 'back to front' the minutes and papers from the most recent meeting appear at the bottom of the SharePoint list
- Note: Users can filter a SharePoint list so that dates display in ascending or descending order
- This will prevent the need to scroll through long lists of documents to find the most current files

Best Practice 6: Personal Names
- ✓ It may be appropriate to include within a file name the name of an individual, usually when the record is a piece of correspondence
- ✓ It will not usually be appropriate to name records after the record owner or creator, i.e. avoid naming records after yourself
- ✓ When it is appropriate to include a personal name it should be given as family name first followed by initials as it is most likely that the record will be retrieved according to the family name of the individual

	Correct	Incorrect
File name	BrownSR20041201.rtf	SamRBrown20041201.rtf

Explanation: This is a letter to Mr Samuel R Brown. By putting the family name first the file directory will display this file next to the b's, which is where you would expect to find a letter to Mr Brown.

Best Practice 7: Do Not Begin File Names with Common Words
- ✓ Avoid using common words such as 'draft' or 'letter' at the start of file names, or all of those records will appear together in a SharePoint list, making it more difficult to retrieve the records you are looking for
- ✓ You may only ignore this Best Practice if starting file names with these sorts of words aids the retrieval of the records See Best Practice 8 for further details

	Correct	Incorrect
File name	/…/Publicity/ AdvertisingV01Draft.rtf AdvertisingV05Final.rtf BudgetReport2002-2003V20Final.rtf BudgetReport2003-2004V15Draft.rtf GrantS20040312.rtf OfficeProceduresV10Draft.rtf ThomasA20031205.rtf	/…/Publicity/ DraftAdvertising.rtf DraftBudgetReport2003-2004.rtf DraftOfficeProcedures.rtf FinalAdvertising.rtf FinalBudgetReport2002-2003.rtf LetterAThomas.rtf LetterSGrant.rtf

Explanation:
- The file directory will list files in alphanumeric order
- This means that all records with file names starting "Draft" will be listed together
- When retrieving files it will be more useful to find the draft budget report next to the previous year's budget, rather than next to an unrelated draft record

Best Practice 8: Word Order in File Names
- ✓ The elements to be included in a file name should be ordered according to the way in which the record will be retrieved during the course of everyday business
- ✓ This will depend on the way you work. For example, if the records are retrieved according to their date, the date element should appear first. If the records are retrieved according to their description, the description element should appear first

	Correct	Incorrect
File name	/…/SausageCttee/ 20040630Agenda.rtf 20040630Minutes.rtf 20050120Agenda.rtf	/…/SausageCttee/ Agenda1Feb2005.rtf Agenda20Jan2005.rtf Agenda30June2004.rtf

	20050120Minutes.rtf 20050201Agenda.rtf 20050201Minutes.rtf /…/Events/ GardenParty20040630.rtf ProcurementAward20040905.rtf WeddingDinner20030304.rtf	Minutes1Feb2005.rtf Minutes20Jan2005.rtf Minutes30June2004.rtf /…/Events/ 20030304WeddingDinner.rtf 20040630GardenParty.rtf 20040905ProcurementAward.rtf

Explanation:
- The first example shows minutes and agenda of the Sausage Committee. Minutes and papers of a meeting are likely to be retrieved on the basis of the date of the meeting, it is therefore best to have the date at the start of the file name, otherwise all the Agendas will come at the top of the directory list, followed by all of the minutes, and then by the papers.
- The second example shows the file names of the files in the Events folder. Because events are likely to be retrieved by the name of the event rather than the date of the event, it is most useful to have that element first.

Best Practice 9: Naming Recurring Events Files
✓ The file names of records relating to recurring events (e.g. meeting minutes and papers, weekly, monthly or annual reports, event management and budget planning documents) should include both the date and the event name or event description so that the record can be identified and retrieved
✓ When deciding the order of the elements consider Best Practice 8. Date first will usually be appropriate for events that are time specific and recurring. Event first will usually be appropriate for events that are infrequent, but regularly recurring.
✓ The event description could be the title of the event or the subject of the event. Whichever description type you choose, ensure that it is short, to the point, and readily recognizable to you and the colleagues you work with

	Correct	Incorrect
File name	/…/Website/ 20040301WebStats.rtf 20040401WebStats.rtf /…/Planning/ Budget2003-2004V10.xls Budget2004-2005V01Draft.xls	/…/Website/ WebStats20040301.rtf WebStats20040401.rtf /…/Planning/ 2003-2004BudgetV10.xls 2004-2005BudgetV01Draft.xls

Explanation:
- The first example shows the website statistic reports which are created on a monthly basis. Because the reports recur frequently and are retrieved by date it is most appropriate that the date

is given first. Also remember Best Practice 2; in some cases it may be appropriate for the SharePoint library category to be called "WebStats", in which case the file names only need to include the date. For another example see the first Best Practice 8 example.

• The second example shows annual budget reports. Because the reports are annual and likely to be retrieved by the description rather than the date, it is likely that it will be most appropriate for the description element to come first. Also remember Best Practice 2; in some cases it may be appropriate for the SharePoint library category to be called "Planning2003-2004", in which case the file names only need to include a description. For another example see the second Best Practice 8 example.

Best Practice 10: Naming Correspondence Files
✓ The file names of correspondence should include the name of the correspondent, an indication of the subject, the date of the correspondence and whether it is incoming or outgoing correspondence, except where the inclusion of any of these elements would be incompatible with Best Practice 2: Avoid Repetition and Redundancy.
✓ Note: In SharePoint, consider creating categories in your libraries to eliminate the need for some of this detail in the filename. For example, you can create a library called Correspondence. Within that library you can create categories for different people, teams, departments, clients, etc. Within each category you can then create a sub-category for Sent and Received. If you use a system like this, then your actual file name might only need to be the type (email, memo, letter), subject and date.
✓ The file names of correspondence should include the following elements so that the record can be easily identified and retrieved:
    ✓ Name of correspondent, that is the either the name of the person who sent you the letter/email/memo or the name of the person to whom you sent the letter/email/memo
    ✓ Subject description, where it is not given in the folder title
    ✓ Date of letter/email/memo
    ✓ If incoming correspondence, include 'rcvd'
✓ When deciding the order of the elements consider Best Practice 8. It will usually be appropriate to order the elements in the same order in which they are listed above, as it is likely that correspondence will be retrieved on the basis of the correspondent.
✓ If more than one email is received from the same person, on the same day, on the same subject and the latest email does not include the whole string of the correspondence, the time of the email can be included in the file name to differentiate it from the email received earlier in the day.

	Correct	Incorrect
File name	/…/Complaints/ BloggsJ20031205.rtf BloggsJ20040105rcvd.rtf BloggsJ20040220.rtf ThomasH20030610rcvd.txt ThomasH20030710.rtf /…/	/…/Complaints/ EmailFromHelenThomas10Jun03.txt LetterFromJoeBloggs5Jan04.rtf LetterToHelenThomas10Jul03.rtf LetterToJoeBloggs20Feb04.rtf LetterToJoeBloggs5Dec03.rtf /…/Correspondence/

	EvansWAppeal20040715rcvd.rtf EvansWAppeal20040820.rtf EvansWAppeal20040905rcvd.rtf	WilliamEvans15Jul04.rtf WilliamEvans20Aug04.rtf WilliamEvans5Sep04.rtf

- The first example shows some incoming and outgoing correspondence concerning complaints. All the correspondence with Mr Joe Bloggs appears together in chronological order and it is easy to pick out the incoming correspondence because it is indicated by 'rcvd'. The same is true of the correspondence with Miss Helen Thomas. In this example it is not necessary to include an indication of the subject in the file name because it is given in the folder name.
- The second example shows some incoming and outgoing correspondence with Mr William Evans regarding an appeal. All the correspondence is listed in chronological order; it is easy to see what the correspondence is about, who it is with and whether it is incoming or outgoing correspondence. In reality it is likely that it will not be necessary to include an indication of the subject matter in the file name because the library would likely include a category titled 'Appeals'. It is not recommended to give categories in a SharePoint list or library very general names such as 'correspondence'.

Best Practice 11: Versioning for Migrated Archived Files
- ✓ Some records go through a number of versions, for example they start out as working drafts, become consultation drafts and finish with a final draft, which may then be reviewed and updated at a later date
- ✓ It is important to be able to differentiate between these various drafts by giving them each their own number
- ✓ Where a version number is applicable, it should always appear in the file name of the record so that the most recent version can be easily identified and retrieved

	Correct	Incorrect
File name	IEAM2003-2004V03Draft.htm IEAM2003-2004V04Final.htm OrgHier2002V02.xls OrgHier2002V03.xls OrgHier2002V04.xls OrgHier2002V04-1.xls	Iemodel0304_draftv3.htm Iemodle0304_finalv4htm Org_Hier_2002_v2.xls Org_Hier_2002_v3.xls Org_Hier_2002_v4.xls OrgHier2002V04_1.xls

- The first example shows two versions of the income and expenditure attribution model for 2003-2004, version 3 is a draft version and version 4 is the final version. The common abbreviation for the model is used. The covering years are given in four-digit format. The version number is given with two digits so that the versions will appear in numeric order.

- The second example shows a number of versions of the organizational hierarchy for 2002. In this case none of the versions are marked as draft or final because the nature of the record means that 'draft' and 'final' are not applicable.

Best Practice 12: Avoid Non-Alphanumeric Characters
- ✓ The use of characters can cause problems
- ✓ Even if your operating system allows you to save the file you may encounter difficulties if you try to transport the file to another operating system, for example the file may not be recognized, or if you send it to someone else they may not be able to open it
- ✓ It is therefore recommended that you avoid the use of non-alphanumeric characters in file names
- ✓ Avoid: * : \ / < > | " ? [ ] ; = + & £ $, .
- ✓ Hyphens (-) may be used

	Correct	Incorrect
File name	SmithJohn20070507.txt DavidLaingCollection.rtf GuidelinesAndRegulations.pdf Budget2006-2007ABCIncProposalV1-1	Smith,John20070507.txt "DavidLaingCollection".rtf Guidelines&Regulations.pdf Budget2006/07ABCIncProposalV1.1

Explanation:
- Most non alphanumeric characters can be omitted without much loss of meaning, e.g. commas and quotation marks.
- Others can be replaced with alphanumeric characters, e.g. "&" and "+" can be replaced with "And" and "Plus"
- Hyphens can be used in place of forward slashes and brackets.

Solution

Summary

The AKG Approach—Quick Delivery, Risk Management, Long-Lasting Value

There's a concept we believe in at AKG—"the art of the possible." It is helping clients imagine a future state in which their organization works better, more efficiently, more cohesively, with the help of a business and technology solution tailored to their needs.

We help our clients envision the possible and set priorities. Then we deliver tangible value quickly, meeting the most important business needs first. To minimize delivery time, risks, and costs—and to limit our clients' dependency on AKG—we custom-configure and integrate off-the-shelf software whenever possible. Our proprietary Keys methodology relies on rapid prototyping and regular feedback loops between AKG and our clients. Some call our approach *agile*; we call it client-focused.

AKG's Keys Methodology

Here's how the Keys methodology works:

- **Discovery & Adaptive Planning:** You tell us what you need, we listen, and we plan collaboratively for a successful engagement.
- **Solution & Design Development:** We deliver prototypes and/or working software modules quickly, according to time-boxed iterations, so we can get your feedback.

- **Implementation & Rollout:** We work collaboratively with you to develop, test, and roll out successful business solutions.
- **Sustainment:** New business solutions require cultural change. We provide user adoption, training, and change management guidance.

Why The AKG Approach Works:

- **Shorter feedback loops mean you have more control**. You will ask for what you need, know what to expect, and have ample opportunity to give input.
- **No months-long requirements phases.** We will develop a solution and schedule that suit your needs and priorities—no disappearing acts by the project team, no unnecessarily complicated documentation.
- **Diverse perspectives mean better ideas.** We will collaborate internally and with our clients to vet ideas, test solutions, and ensure high quality.
- **It meets auditing, reporting, and quality standards—**including Six Sigma.

About Applied Knowledge Group, Inc.

Applied Knowledge Group (AKG) is a premier business and technology consulting company that provides innovative business collaboration solutions for government, commercial and non-profit clients. Headquartered in Reston, Virginia, AKG was founded in 1996 and our services include SharePoint implementations that create intranet, extranet and website solutions, and customized user adoption and training strategies tailored to your needs. AKG is proud to be a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner specializing in the implementation and support of Microsoft SharePoint, Business Intelligence solutions and related technologies. For more information, please visit www.akgroup.com.

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