efstechnology
OUTPUT & DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT

AutoFORM significantly cuts the time and cost of managing document output for Firth Rixson

Overview

Challenge
To provide a single interface to manage three ERP applications

To automate the collation of data from a number of different databases for test certificates and other documents.

To provide archiving facilities for outgoing and incoming transaction documents

Scanning, indexing and folder management for product lifecycle traceability records management

IT Applications
TROPOS (Windows and Oracle)
MARPACS (UNIX)
IMPCON (VMS Legacy)

Scope
100,000 documents/year

Solution
AutoFORM LaserNet
Output management
Cold Archiving
Process Document Management with scanning interface

Is it For You?
AutoFORM is compatible with all IT platforms and IT applications, substantially reducing document production, distribution and archiving costs

Firth Rixson

"AutoFORM LaserNet has proved to be an extremely useful, powerful suite of document management tools. It has allowed us to collate data from a number of disparate IT sources, and assemble it into highly detailed, informative customer orientated business documents, both in paper and electronic format. To achieve the same standard using ERP programming alone would have been prohibitively expensive".

Paul Armitage B.A, M.B.C.S., CITP
Group Systems Executive, Firth Rixson

Firth Rixson is one of the worlds leading providers of highly-engineered forged, cast and other speciality metal products for the aerospace, automotive and medical markets. Much of Firth Rixson's business success rests on operating a tightly controlled manufacturing and testing operation, focussed on ensuring product safety and reliability. In turn, their quality control relies on producing highly detailed and accurate documentation to record the product traceability throughout its life cycle, from receipt of the raw material to manufacture, test and despatch. These records are subsequently archived for the lifetime of the product (50 years or more in some cases) so that they are available for inspection by regulatory authorities such as the Air Accident Inspection Board.

For the last ten years, Firth Rixson have been using each new version of AutoFORM LaserNet to produce and, more recently, to electronically archive their manufacturing and transaction documents. Paul Armitage is clear about the benefits that AutoFORM has brought to the company: "[It] significantly cuts the time and cost of managing document output, particularly in situations like ours where you have a number of IT applications to manage. For instance, we operate three main IT applications at our manufacturing sites across the UK, namely TROPOS (Windows and Oracle), MARPACS (UNIX) and to a lesser extent a VMS legacy system, IMPCON. AutoFORM works with them all".

He continues: "AutoFORM has given Firth Rixson the facilities to create a unified corporate identity across 100 different document variations for our nine UK Group Companies.

AutoFORM
LaserNet

To manage this level of variation using ERP specific output programming would have been extremely time consuming, not to mention prohibitively expensive. AutoFORM's ability to manage several IT systems also helps when Firth Rixson acquires a new company. Firth Rixson's overlays are simply transferred to the new company's existing IT output, allowing them to quickly produce invoices and purchase orders with the Firth Rixson legal identity and corporate styling".

Automated Document Assembly

He continues: "A prime example of the power of AutoFORM is how it has automated the collation of data for Quality Control Test Certificates. Only five percent of the data comes from the ERP system: the test results are collected from the laboratory databases, raw material certification details from goods-in and the customer specification details from the customer CRM files. Not only does automated certificate creation save a great deal of time, it also avoids the propensity for human error, although Firth Rixson do have a stringent certificate checking policy".

E-invoicing

Jon Free, IT Programming Manager, points out the advantages to using AutoFORM for invoicing: "If industry statistics are to be believed it costs one of our customers around £5 to £15 to process and pay each of our invoices. By sending e-invoices we can reduce this to around £1".

These cost savings can be achieved as the invoice is emailed to the customer as a data file which can be automatically processed by their ERP system without any manual intervention. The format also allows for rule-based validation and checking, significantly reducing errors as well as the time and cost to process the invoice. With Firth Rixson making several hundred deliveries per week, the cost benefits of e-invoicing is immediately obvious.

Whilst Firth Rixson had a number of reporting tools that could create the necessary CSV or XML files for e-invoicing, AutoFORM offered a number of advantages. Firstly, the administrator does not have to create invoices any differently than with a paper invoice: AutoFORM will automatically switch to the customers' preferred format. Secondly, AutoFORM can consolidate several deliveries into one invoice, either on a daily, weekly or monthly basis. In addition, it also calculates the sub-totals, adds various subheadings as well as the legal identity details. Jon concludes: "Using AutoFORM to create e-invoices has been a very straightforward procedure".

Electronic Archiving

In addition to output management, AutoFORM offers integrated document archiving. As documents are created in AutoFORM, a digital copy is automatically indexed and stored in a web-browser archive. Copy invoices, test certificates and other documents can also be emailed or faxed direct to the customer on demand. Paul Armitage notes that: "AutoFORM Archive not only eliminates a multitude of filing and document storage costs, but the archive facilities have improved our business efficiency in a number of ways and we are already looking at ways of extending the benefits further". Some examples of how Firth Rixson are using AutoFORM Archive include:

- TEST CERTIFICATES: Certificates are electronically passed to AutoFORM Archive, ready to be sent by email on the day of test, rather than the day of despatch. This has two benefits: customers can pre-authorise goods acceptance prior to delivery, which is ideal for Firth Rixson's JIT manufacturing customers. It also means that customers who use Firth Rixson's contract test facilities, receive results two days earlier than they would have done, had the certificate been posted.

- ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLES: Credit Control can view outgoing invoices onscreen rather than having to pull them from the files, helping them to resolve invoice queries whilst the customer is on the phone.

- PRODUCT LIFECYCLE TRACEABILITY RECORDS: Firth Rixson has recently invested in the AutoFORM PDM scanning solution to convert archive traceability records from hard copy to electronic storage. This gives regulatory inspectors and customers faster access to historical records. Electronic records can also be duplicated and held off site more easily, making them less vulnerable than paper to environmental and accidental damage.

- WEB PORTAL CUSTOMER ACCESSIBLE RECORDS: A planned future development is to use AutoFORM to publish customer invoices and test certificates to a login controlled Web Portal or Extranet, to give their worldwide customers 24/7 self-service access to copy documents.

Paul Armitage concludes: "AutoFORM is a very powerful suite of document management software that allows you to tailor your documents without the cost of reprogramming the application. It has helped Firth Rixson enormously in producing and efficiently managing the documents that our customers and regulators require. We highly recommend AutoFORM to other engineering companies".

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