

DHL wanted a fast, easy to use, web-enabled POD system - AUTOFORM DM delivered.

Overview

Challenge

To alert customer services of 'claused' or missing POD copies for immediate corrective action within a few minutes of a driver returning to base. Internet accessible document copies required for both customer services and clients.

To measurably lower the cost of document handling while improving the service to customers.

The solution had to interact with their existing IBM I-Series supported software.

Solution

AUTOFORM DM

AUTOFORM Workflow to alert and escalate 'claused' delivery corrective actions.

Key Business Benefits

No lost documents leading to dramatically reduced debtor delays and major operational efficiency improvements. Customers also value being able to ascertain actual delivery of goods by viewing POD online, within a few minutes of the driver returning to depot.

Is it for You?

The AUTOFORM suite of products assist any company looking for an inexpensive, easy to use system, to provide online copy documents and lower cost processing.



DHL, one of the worlds most well known supply-chain logistics providers, found themselves, facing the increasingly difficult task of giving their clients what they wanted, at a price they could afford, whilst still making a profit. They quickly identified that one of their most cost-intensive tasks was processing and matching documentation produced by their own IBM I-Series systems, with those produced by their client's at the point of delivery. What made this task even more critical was that, in most cases, payment wasn't made until the client's documents had been received.

Many of DHL's depots were handling 3-4,000 deliveries a day and every evening copies of delivery notes were collected and sent to DHL's Customer Services department in Ipswich for sorting and filing. An enormous task, requiring a great deal of care and accuracy. DHL's project leader, Tony Bullock, spent months looking at most of the major document scanning software solutions to try and address this issue, the majority of which relied heavily on the use of Optical Character Recognition (OCR).

OCR - Not always the right solution for the job

After assessing the market, Tony realised the limitations of OCR: "It is superb when you have clean, crisp, laser-printed documents. However, when you have handwritten notes on the third sheet of a multi-part document that has spent its life in a driver's cab, where it has been folded, some of the address details torn off where it has been stapled and has the odd smudge or errant mark in a vital area, the technology very quickly hits the buffers. Everyone we talked to made all the right noises, but ultimately offered us very little in the way of demonstrable software. Those we did see had trouble reading the dot-matrix printed characters. Furthermore, they had difficulty processing the supplementary documents which varied in size, from handwritten forms not much bigger than a post-it note, to A3 sheets. The best result was just over half of the documents scanned with no errors".

Tony then approached EFS Technology, without realising they had an in-depth knowledge of the freight and logistics market. Within a few days EFS had proposed a practical solution based on an 'operator-proof' scanning interface and offered a free one month proof of concept trial.

The solution revolved around verifying all of the delivery information at source. The incoming paperwork would be scanned and then automatically validated against the main delivery instructions & regularly updated.

One of the major criteria specified by DHL was that the system also had to be very easy to use, enabling delivery records to be scanned and archived within minutes of the driver returning to base. This would make them instantly available for viewing either by clients or DHL customer services via the web, overcoming the delays associated with the previous paper-based system.

Providing a robust solution at a realistic price

Over the course of the next two months, EFS Technology worked closely with DHL to develop a solution that would provide exactly what was needed. Having already spent two years assessing the marketplace and testing other products, Tony was immediately impressed with their work: "it was abundantly clear that only EFS's solution fulfilled all of our requirements at a realistic price. Equally important was the company's familiarity with our industry. Their ability to structure the application to meet our specific needs was outstanding".

Immediate notification of claused deliveries with an online copy of the delivery note

EFS's solution also covered any delivery document which was 'claused' or needed further attention (missing pages, KPI failure, etc.) by triggering an automatic alert to appear on the desktop browser of the Customer Services operator responsible for looking after that client. KPI issues could even be flagged before the paperwork was returned to the depot. The operator could then take the appropriate corrective action or escalate the problem to a manager, by simply selecting that option from a drop-down list. All the time, both management and customer services have instant online access to all the document copies they need to resolve the issue, with additional facilities to quickly post, email or fax copies to the customer.

Audit trail notes facility

A free-form notes field, with an audit-trail capability was also included, so that as each operator adds information, the date and their location is automatically stored. In addition each record could be tagged with a searchable flag for follow-up or further action by another member of staff.

All DHL's delivery records, POD, equipment tracking, photographs, correspondence - in one place

EFS also included the ability to store equipment tracking records via the archive and have them automatically uploaded to

DHL's host system. Alongside the tracking records, information about any outstanding queries or claims, including scanned correspondence and digital photographs were also added to the archive, to create a central digital repository for DHL.

The proof of concept trial

The one-month proof-of-concept was installed at DHL's head-office in Ipswich and at a single test depot. Once the training was completed, Customer Services immediately started to receive scanned documents. Not only were they receiving details of 'claused' deliveries 24 hours earlier than they had been, they weren't having to manually sort and process thousands of sheets of paper.

No lost documents & no filing

What began as a one-month trial quickly became a company-wide implementation. As EFS's solution uses a standard web browser for both the scanning system and to access the archive, very little installation work was needed. As a result, DHL's own IT staff were able to carry out the installation themselves, reducing the cost of the project even further.

Since the software has been installed, not a single record has been lost or misfiled. As DHL +are equally responsible for ensuring that their customers are paid for valuable loads, this represented a significant customer service improvement on the previous paper-based system. According to feedback from DHL customers, one of the most useful aspects of the system is that they can access and email copies of their own delivery records, via a secure portal on the DHL website.

Impressive results

For Tony, the solution was a huge success: "What impressed me was that the system closely matched the business requirements, was quickly installed and operational, was intuitive to use with minimal training and had very little impact on the existing IT infrastructure. The results were impressive. 100% accuracy would be unusual for any new piece of software, but in a POD scanning system, it's almost unheard of. Putting aside the fact that this system has been hugely beneficial to the productivity of the supply-chain logistics operation, any system that is capable of providing a 70% ROI inside of a year, is worthy of note on that basis alone".

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