A Consentia Success Story:

Critical Records Access

PROFILE

A large provincial government Ministry has the responsibility for setting, monitoring and enforcing provincial policy and standards, programs and managing capital planning, procurement and outcome measures. The Ministry sets the policies and direction to achieve a sustainable and accountable system for Albertans.

CHALLENGE

For many years the Ministry created microfilm copies of their paper files using Consentia Inc. (Consentia) as their service provider. Microfilm was (and is still) considered a time tested and approved method which provides for longevity of the records. At a time when digital imaging was only just beginning to gain traction, microfilm was a very safe and affordable option for most records offices, and the Ministry created approximately 3.6 million microfilm images annually.

While this method guaranteed that these records would exist for hundreds of years, it did not provide for quick user access to the data. In order to access the information they required to answer a question or perform an assessment, the Ministry's staff had to make a formal request for the file from film. The roll of film would then be retrieved, the required documents located and printed, and then sent to the requesting party (in paper or fax form).

SOLUTION REQUIRED

In order to allow the Ministry's staff to directly and securely access the image files and retrieve the images in a self service manner, the Ministry needed to change the way this information was maintained and made available for access. The new model had to allow information to be accessed easily and quickly at any time.

RESULT

This requirement was accomplished through the creation of a Self-Service Document Image Retrieval system. The implementation of this system in 2008 provided instant secure access to files for up to 200 users. It provided them with the information they needed to do their work in a timely manner, while still providing the security required for these confidential records.

Solution Approach

Consentia has a long standing relationship with this Ministry, and therefore had an intimate understanding of the challenges facing the Ministry.

Knowing that the Ministry's long term goals included the creation of a digital solution, in December of 2003, Consentia began the transition required to facilitate the move from microfilm to digital records. Rather than microfilming using cameras as was the traditional approach, Consentia changed their process to allow the digital capture of images with a dual stream release to microfilm. This provided the Ministry with the microfilm that they were mandated to create (as microfilm was their master record), but also created an electronic image that could be used once the Ministry was ready to go digital.

In 2008 the Ministry and Consentia conducted a series of meetings to outline the requirements for providing secure and straightforward access to digital images.

Several options were considered, including a formal Enterprise Content Management (ECM) system, use of a network drive at the Ministry, maintaining the status quo or hosting the images via an external vendor, with the pros and cons of each scenario considered.

The Ministry made the decision to engage Consentia to create and host a Hosted Image Repository solution utilizing the ApplicationXtender software platform.

Scope

The Ministry and Consentia worked together to create a solution that met the following requirements:

1. Continue to produce digital records
2. Create Microfilm copies of those records until such time as the digital record could be declared the master record
3. Provide and host an image repository that was:
   - Accessible to multiple staff
   - Secure and robust
   - Low cost to implement

Benefits

Upon implementation of the solution, the Ministry was able to quickly realize many benefits, including:

- Web based secure retrieval for their staff, which allowed the staff to focus on providing services rather than requesting documents and waiting for their arrival.
- Because of the transition to digital imaging in 2003, Consentia was able to load 23 million images into the repository as soon as it was implemented, providing for an immediate return on investment and increase in accessibility for their users.
- The microfilm rolls were accessible via very simple index fields—roll and frame. The solution incorporated additional index information from other sources, providing for increased search-ability of the files.
- Previously microfilm requests might have taken up to 8 hours to be filled; access was now instantaneous.
- Greater security was added to the retrieval process by eliminating the sending back and forth of paper and/or fax copies of the information.
- Minimal up front costs—many organizations are faced with constrained budgets and can be challenged to come up with capital budget dollars to complete large scale projects such as a full scale Enterprise Content Management solution. Increasingly, it is important to get solutions that work quickly and effectively at a relatively low cost.

The solution supports and enhances current operational and business processes while leveraging information from current systems. It provides a solid platform on which the Ministry can build and enhance its document management initiatives into the future.