IBM

Fast and Reliable Document Storage

Overview

Centea is one of the seven largest financial institutions in Belgium. As part of the KBC Group, Centea employs approximately 500 people in its headquarters in Antwerp, while 100 regional managers advise independent agents in more than 800 local offices throughout Belgium.

The Challenge

According to Belgian law, financial institutions are required to store thousands of documents – such as customer signatures, opening statements and copies of customers' identity cards for each account – for a number of years. In order to comply with these standards, reduce costs and paper volume, and optimise customer service, Centea needed to replace its outdated imaging system with a more comprehensive, high performance document scanning and management system.

"Our requirements had evolved beyond what our current system could provide. We needed an easy-to-use, reliable system that would simplify our document storage processes and reduce the document retrieval time required by our staff, which would then translate into improved customer service and response times," said Geert Bernaerts, department manager at Centea Headquarters, Antwerp, Belgium.

The Solution

Centea selected to work with IBM ValueNet partner Getronics from an original list of six suppliers to provide its new document management solution. The combined experience, approach and technology offered by IBM and Getronics appealed to Centea. With IBM's software at the core of the solution, it promised to facilitate fast and reliable document storage – exactly what Centea needed to meet

regulations and keep up with customer demands.

The new system ensures employees at Centea's Antwerp headquarters can easily find and retrieve any customer document from their own workstation. It scans a document, indexes it by Optical Character Recognition (OCR), and sends it to the networked database. IBM's software then makes it easy to file every document in the right folder, ensuring they are easily located and accessible. IBM also provided Centea with a Computer Output on Laser Disc (COLD) system. This solution drastically reduced the huge amount of printed listings originating from the mainframe. Now Centea sends files digitally to a structured disc, where each user can easily find the data they need.

"We were in the market for a document scanning and management system with easy scanning, reliable storage, and fast traceability. The new system had to be capable of handling the migration of 2,850,000 images from our old system without any risk of

> *"In the past, it could take us an entire day to find a document. Now it's a maximum of ten minutes."*

Geert Bernaerts
Department manager at Centea Headquarters, Antwerp, Belgium

corruption. The IBM/Getronics solution met these requirements," said Bernaerts.

Implementation and Technology

Tackling the migration of critical customer files, information and documents from Centea's, outdated and unsupported system proved to be the most difficult part of the implementation process.

Working closely with the Getronics implementation team, Centea and IBM transferred 100 per cent of the documents from the old system to the new IBM system with no disruption to the business.

To avoid downtime and ensure reliability and security, the document management solution has a cluster of two Hewlett Packard servers that ensure information is always available: when one server is offline or down, the other one automatically takes over, providing seamless access to documents at all times. In addition, the solution has Kodak scanners and an Oracle database as its principal components.

"The partnership between Getronics and IBM made us feel at ease from the start. We have won time and decreased costs with the new system. The risk of losing information is also significantly reduced thanks to the innovative cluster system," said Bernaerts.

The Results and Business Benefits

With the new system fully functional, Centea employees scan, locate and retrieve approximately 60,000 pages a day. There are currently 100 users online and Centea will soon make the stored documents and information available to their managers outside Antwerp, in the local offices.

Staff at Centea can now store and retrieve their documents faster and more easily than in the past. Finding the relevant documents quickly also means increased productivity, cost savings and less frustrated employees, translating to improved customer service. In addition, the speed and efficiency of the system ensures customers no longer need to wait for the relevant documents, so Centea can meet their demands more quickly.

Centea continues to see reduced costs and improvements in productivity with its system. Bernaerts added, "Last, but by no means least, the amount of paper we saved thanks to IBM FileNet's COLD system is enormous. We decreased the number of printed pages from 400,000 per month in July 2002 to 92,000 in December 2003. That is more than a 75 percent reduction, and the figure is still decreasing!"

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