AutoFORM
LaserNet

DHL Wanted a Fast, Easy to Use, Web-enabled POD System — That Actually Worked! AutoFORM LaserNet 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 copy document access required for both customer services and customers.

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

Solution was to interact with their existing IBM I-Series supported software.

■ **Solution**
AutoFORM Online document archive

AutoFORM automated data capture automated indexing system, overcoming difficulties associated with OCR & bar-code indexing.

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

■ **Why AutoFORM LaserNet?**
"It was abundantly clear that only the EFS software 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." T. Bullock DHL Logistics

■ **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?**
AutoFORM assists any company looking for an inexpensive, easy to use system, to provide online copy documents and lower cost processing.

In 2002 DHL Logistics, part of the Deutsche-Post Group (formerly Securicor Omega Logistics), faced many of the same problems as every other supply-chain logistics providers: giving their clients what they wanted, at a price they could afford, while making a profit.

The company quickly identified that one of the most cost-intensive tasks was processing and matching documentation produced by their own IBM I-Series systems with that produced by their client at the point of delivery. What made this task critical was that in most cases it was on receipt of the client's documents that they were paid.

Many of DHL's depots were handling 2-3,000 deliveries a day. Every evening copies of delivery notes were collected and sent to DHL's Customer Services department in Ipswich for sorting and filing. A daunting task to say the least.

DHL's project leader, Tony Bullock spent months looking at most of the major document scanning software solutions. The majority of which relied heavily on the use of Optical Character Recognition (OCR).

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Online Archive & Workflow Solutions to Resolve Real Business Issues

The Problem with OCR

OCR is superb (EFS use it extensively!) when you have clean, crisp, laser-printed documents. However, when you have handwritten notes on the third sheet of a multi-part document set 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. In addition, OCR software also requires experienced, IT literate staff, who still need extensive training.

The other main alternative tends to rely on the use of barcodes. Again, EFS can read (and print) barcodes, but it is usually a very time consuming laborious job to get the labels onto the documents. Unless the barcode is pre-printed on the documents, which is not practical in a multi-client, multi-drop operation, the whole process is too prone to error.

Bullock says "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" says Bullock, "was just over half of the documents scanned with no errors." One company was prepared to work on developing the solution further, but wanted a substantial investment in advance.

Tony Bullock then approached EFS who to his pleasant surprise, had an excellent knowledge of the freight & logistics market. Within a few days they had proposed a practical solution to the problem and offered a free one month proof of concept trial. The solution was based on an 'operator-proof' scanning interface originally developed for online purchase invoice approval, but adapted for proof-of-delivery.

The Solution was AutoFORM

EFS Technology's Freight & Logistics Consultants quickly established that all of the delivery information could be verified at source. The scanned in coming paperwork is then automatically validated against the main delivery instructions & regularly updated. A major criteria was that the system 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 customers or DHL customer services via a secure Internet link, overcoming the delays associated with the previous paper-based system.

AutoFORM met our Specific Needs - at a Realistic Price

Over the course of the next two months APS worked closely with DHL to develop a solution that would provide exactly what was needed. Tony Bullock who had spent over two years on the project meeting with all of the major suppliers of scanning systems says, "it was abundantly clear that only the EFS software 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."

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Tony Bullock
Special Projects Manager

Customer Service Agents Immediately Notified of Claused Deliveries - with an Online Copy of the Delivery Note

Any delivery document which was 'claused' or needed further attention (missing pages, KPI failure, etc.) would trigger an automatic alert appearing on the desktop browser of the operator in Customer Services responsible for looking after that client. KPI issues can even be flagged before the paperwork is returned to the depot. The operator can then take the appropriate corrective action or escalate the problem to a manager simply by selecting that option from a drop-down list. All the while, both managers and customers 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 required. As each operator makes notes, the date and their location is automatically stored. In addition each record can be tagged with a searchable flag for follow-up or further action by another member of staff.

All our Delivery Records, POD, Equipment Tracking, Photographs, Correspondence - in One Place

A useful additional facility is the ability to keep equipment tracking records via the archive and have these automatically uploaded to DHL's host system. The archive is also used to hold information about any outstanding queries or claims, including scanned correspondence and digital photographs.

> **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."**
>
> **Stuart Ayling,
> DHL Logistics' CIO**

Reality Check

Logistics isn't about moving cans and boxes any more. It's about telling people where their goods went, when they arrived and who signed for them. The ability to deliver this information - online - is critical to winning new business.

A single missing POD can take hours to find, copy, and fax or e-mail to someone who wants an answer now. This invariably creates tension between your customer service staff and your customer, who is let's face it, the source of your revenue.

Most 3PL contracts are now based on the understanding that you only get paid for what you deliver - or more importantly, what you can prove that you have delivered. Missing or claused POD documents are a major cause of lost revenue and delayed payments.

Manual POD processing is expensive, in many cases accounting for up to 5% of your total operating costs, and it's going to get more expensive as customers start looking at awarding international 3PL and 4PL contracts. Online processing gets cheaper every day, and costs less the more depots you have.

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Proof of Concept Trial

The one-month proof-of-concept was installed at head-office in Ipswich and at the depot to be used for the trial. Once training was completed, scanned records began to appear in Customer Services. 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 the EFS system used simple Internet-Browser based technology for both the scanning software and access to archived records, very little installation work was needed. As a result, DHL's own IT staff were trained to carry out the installation themselves, reducing the cost of the project even further.

Since the software was installed, not a single record has been lost or misfiled. As DHL Logistics 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 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 DHL Logistics website.

The Results were Impressive, says DHL Logistics CIO

Stuart Ayling, DHL Logistics' CIO said "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". He added, "100% accuracy would be unusual for any new piece of software, but in a POD scanning system, it's almost unheard of."

The scope of the system has now been extended to include supplier invoice processing – scanning and matching incoming invoices against purchase orders prior to Purchase Ledger entry. More recently vehicle and trailer tracking documentation has been added to the archive.

The last word should go to Tony Bullock who says: "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% return on capital invested inside a year is worthy of note on that basis alone!"

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