

Everyone Wins With Document Management

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Frontline Insurance Managers Inc. saw a critical need to improve the quality of its documents, which it found to be dated, lacking in identity and inconsistent with the firm's brand image as a high-quality provider. Like many carriers, the Lake Mary, Fla.-based insurer knew that undertaking such a task would be no trifling matter. Frontline sends thousands of documents (i.e., unique notes) to its customers weekly, as well as hundreds of thousands of pages monthly when taking into account additional policy documents, endorsement forms on new policies and the like.

When Frontline issues a new policy, a packet stuffed with up to 100 pages must be printed, assembled and mailed to the policyholder. A Fiserv Inc. system, running on an IBM iSeries model 520 housed at Frontline's collocation site, automatically produces separate documents detailing the policy's declarations, terms of cancellation, conditions of expiration and, when appropriate, non-renewal documents or reinstatement notices.



Last year, Frontline decided it had to improve the appearance of the litany of documents that the policy administration system produced. It also needed to get the documents indexed and loaded into its existing imaging system.

Frontline, which issues policies that cover damage to high-end costal homes and personal property, chose a solution from S4i Systems Inc., based in Oceanside, Calif. By the fourth quarter of 2007, it had begun implementing the supplier's S4i Express software, which electronically captures, separates, indexes, bundles and delivers or archives documents and reports derived from standard spool files.

Frontline considered numerous document management offerings for IBM System i shops before it concluded that S4i Express "was the solution that allowed for the fastest implementation timeframe and most seamless integration with our policy administration system," says Kurt Bonigut, CIO for Frontline. "In addition, it offered us the flexibility going forward that we needed to make document changes quickly to meet our business needs."

This adaptability is a large piece of the software's competitive advantage, according to S4i. Without any customization, S4i Express was able to work with Fiserv; the imaging system Frontline had selected, and its Canon Image Runner. The insurer had already plowed significant funds into these other technologies just a couple of years earlier, so the new document

management system needed to work with them. "Because of the flexibility of our product there is no [enterprise resource planning] solution, such as Fiserv, that we can't work with," explains Spencer Elliott, president of S4i. S4i Express resides entirely on a System i server and does not require an intermediate PC to handle any processing.

IMPLEMENTATION RESULTS

In just a few months S4i Express and an integrated forms design solution had performed numerous highly complex printing, formatting and sorting routines for Frontline. The insurer, which writes business in Florida and South Carolina, has already implemented S4i Express on the policy side of its systems, making its declaration pages, invoices, cancellation notices, reinstatement notices and other documents look both highly consistent and professional, according to Bonigut.

Through its quarterly meetings with a core group of agents, Frontline has received "extremely positive feedback" concerning the quality of the documents that it now produces, according to Bonigut. "The before-and-after shot of what we had been sending out versus what we are sending out now is just night and day," he explains.

Rather than a numerical measurement, this serves as the best indicator of the implementation's success. Indeed, quantifying return on investment is highly difficult in light of the fact that improving Frontline's brand—as viewed by the quality of the documents that go out its door—is the crucial driver for the implementation.

S4i was able to deliver these results to Frontline at a lower price than other vendors. "In Frontline's case, there wasn't so much an ROI as there was a cap on what they were willing to spend," according to Susanne States, director of sales and marketing for S4i. "When they were looking at a solution that would do exactly what they wanted it to do, they were looking at spending an amount of money that was just too exorbitant for them to cost justify in any way."

While it is difficult to track the ROI, Bonigut doesn't need numerical figures to prove the worth of using S4i Express. "It has been absolutely worth the investment," he says. "The discussion with our agents is that it reflects extremely well on our company and it makes getting and retaining business better. We are providing a higher degree of customer service to our insureds and agents, which is what we are going for at the end of the day."

Frontline represents one of a growing herd of insurers that are gradually embracing document automation solutions to boost their brand image, according to observers. "There has been a lot of progression in the document handling space in the last four to five years," says Jeff Goldberg, senior analyst in the insurance practice of Boston-based Celent. "Systems are now bringing forward to varying degrees the ability to create a consistent brand across all documents." Those carriers that adopt enterprisewide document automation solutions and that consider document management as part of an overarching strategy are those that will reap the most benefits, he argues.

CHALLENGES

Though its adoption has been relatively smooth, Frontline has faced some hurdles. Chief among them was capturing indexing values on the S4i output so that Frontline's imaging system could pick up the documents and load them appropriately — though this was not an issue with S4i, as much as it was with the company's imaging system. "S4i came up with a great solution whereby we write our indexing values in a very small black font and hide the index values behind a line in the document that is a header design element," says Bonigut. "The indexing values are not visible to the reader, but the imaging system can locate them and load the document appropriately."

For S4i, the main challenge was adapting to Frontline's particular needs, as it had to make numerous modifications to the insurer's forms to ensure they provided it with the desired look and feel. "A lot of computer software design is ready ... fire ... aim, and people get a better perspective of what they want after they have seen something already," says Elliott. Still, modifications "aren't that big of a deal. You don't have to go all the way back to the design phase of the entire project and go hire big programming staff to get it done." Among the new looks that Frontline customers now see are invoices or declaration pages with a distinctive color logo at the top and subtle shading that makes the document easy to read.

FUTURE STEPS

Frontline is now writing index values onto its documents and passing them into its imaging system on a nightly basis. "Having all policy administration system produced documents in our imaging system is a great efficiency for us and allows us to operate in a paper-free environment," says Bonigut.

The company is looking at using S4i Express for also a claims acknowledgment letter that it prepares for its insureds. Frontline plans to customize the letters and give them a consistent look and feel. While S4i offers 24/7 support to Frontline, the insurer is now completely self-sufficient.

By year's end, Frontline hopes to offer these documents via the Web to its insureds and agents, eliminating hardcopy mailing. "Without having the output from S4i integrated with our imaging solution, this would not be possible," Bonigut says. He expects the firm to see a more substantial and measurable benefits in the future when it begins to provide access to the documents via its imaging system through the Web. Then, the company can start measuring variables such as how S4i Express eliminates its daily costs.

Now that Frontline has already burnished its brand image, uncovering hard savings from the implementation will only be the icing on the cake.

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