AGILITY LOGISTICS

Enhanced document access, new efficiencies, and increased customer satisfaction for global shipping company

ESSENTIALS

Challenge

- To improve efficiencies, visibility, and integration in order to shorten cycle times for global shipments, without compromising the operational ability of the company

Solution

- EMC Captiva
- EMC Documentum

Key benefits

- Integration with legacy core logistics system and the company's "Track & Trace" solution provides comprehensive access to critical shipping and transaction data

- Accessing shipping documents online expedites processing and eliminates the expense and delays of faxing, mailing, or sending paper by courier

- The customers' ability to access shipping documents and track shipment status enhances the company's reputation for customer service

- Seamless VMware integration maximizes efficiency

- Data replication increases replication accuracy and flexibility

- Deduplication is 30 percent more efficient than the nearest competitor

- Backed by EMC knowledge, commitment, and experience

Agility Logistics is a leading global provider of integrated logistics to businesses and government organizations. The company's services include freight and shipping via land, air, and sea, as well as specialty services such as warehouse management, chemicals management, and logistics for trade shows and events. Founded in 1979 in the Middle East, the company has recently pursued an aggressive merger strategy which has united many global brands into a seamless worldwide logistics network. With headquarters in Kuwait, Agility Logistics has more than 25,000 employees in 550 offices and 100 countries.

CHALLENGES—LIMITED EFFICIENCIES, VISIBILITY, AND INTEGRATION

Information is the lifeblood for a company like Agility Logistics, which relies heavily on a smooth flow of data and easy access to shipping documents in order to keep operations timely and efficient. For more than 20 years, the company has relied on a core freight logistics management system running on a legacy IBM iSeries platform. This single system serves more than 20,000 users around the globe and supports all of the company's freight forwarding operations.

"This system is basically embedded in the DNA of our company—and being 20 years old gives it certain advantages that newer technologies don't have; for instance, a self-contained and self-managed database," says Deepak Sharma, director of business solutions and support. "However, we realized the legacy system was lacking in some capabilities that are important for meeting the needs of today's customers and markets."

Previously, Agility Logistics' customers had no means of viewing shipping documents online; instead, they had to wait for documents to be sent to them by email or fax. "Visibility is a key requirement in the freight hauling industry and an important component for optimal customer service, and we had definite room for improvement," says Sharma.

Agility Logistics shipments can originate from many different countries around the world, and each shipment produces a paper trail of documents that must be tracked and managed effectively. This includes air way bills, bills of lading, consolidation manifests, sales invoices, and unit manifests, just to name a few. Yet, it could take many days for paper documents to be sent from the shipment's origin to its destination so that the cargo could be processed. In addition, a lack of integration among multiple information systems meant that data had to be re-entered from one system to the next in order for processing to continue.

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"It was clear that we needed to improve efficiencies, visibility, and integration in order to shorten cycle times for global shipments, but we needed to meet those challenges without compromising the operational ability of the company," says Sharma. "At the same time, we needed an enterprise-wide system that could address the unique requirements of our individual operating regions, including North America, the Asia-Pacific, the Middle East, and Europe.

A CENTRALIZED REPOSITORY TO MEET USERS NEEDS AROUND THE GLOBE

After a lengthy evaluation process, Agility Logistics chose the EMC® Documentum® enterprise content management platform and the EMC Captiva® intelligent enterprise capture solution to provide an integrated, centralized repository for capturing, sharing, and managing documents throughout the company.

"The EMC consultants helped us determine the best way of implementing the solution so that it meets the various requirements of all of our users around the globe," says Sharma. "For example, documents such as invoices are different for nearly every country in which we do business, so we were able to structure the repository for storing different invoice types."

A FULLY INTEGRATED SOLUTION

The Documentum system is tightly integrated with Agility's financial applications and the core logistics system, ensuring that all key financial data as well as reports generated by the logistics system are automatically stored in electronic format in the Documentum repository. Using standard Documentum APIs, Agility was able to link the Documentum system with its "Track & Trace" tracking application, thereby giving customers and Agility users the ability to view documents.

Although Agility Logistics relies increasingly on electronic modes of communication, the company still generates a significant amount of paper—with the majority of the documents printed from the freight hauling control system. When shipping personnel in the branch offices scan the paper documents into the system, EMC Captiva automatically transforms them into PDFs, captures index data, and associates the PDF documents with metadata for storage in Documentum to enable easy search and retrieval later.

Currently, the Documentum system is available to more than 25,000 Agility Logistics users, with up to 3,000 users accessing the system at any given moment. Every eight hours, the Documentum repository receives more than 10,000 new electronic documents through the ERP, customs application, and others. In addition, up to 5,000 printed documents are scanned into the system by the branch offices.

ENHANCED VISIBILITY FOR CUSTOMERS

The Documentum solution has helped Agility Logistics satisfy an important objective: to enhance its customers' visibility into their accounts, shipping status, and key documents. "Today, it's become very hard even to get a contract unless we can assure the clients that they will be able to instantly see their documents. This has become a mandatory requirement in our industry, and Documentum makes it possible," says Sharma.

Subject to strict access control, Agility customers are able to log onto the Track & Trace solution that enables them to view PDFs of documents associated with a particular shipment, such as bills of lading, airway bills, custom documentation, and others. Documentum's built-in security controls ensure that users are only able to see the documents associated with their accounts, and depending on their access, can only view certain document types.

"Now, instead of having to call us and request the documents they need, our customers can instantly access the information themselves—which not only saves them time but also takes the burden off our customer service department," explains Sharma. "The system has had a huge positive impact on our customer satisfaction."

"The system has brought a new dimension to the way we do business . . . by giving our customers a single access point for viewing all of their shipping documents, tracking shipping status, and receiving their invoices, the EMC solution is a powerful marketing tool for us and has helped us attract new business."

DEEPAK SHARMA,
DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS SOLUTIONS AND SUPPORT

ELIMINATING PAPER SHIPMENTS BOOSTS EFFICIENCY AND REDUCE COSTS

Previously, supporting documents for an Agility Logistics shipment were mailed, faxed, or sent via courier from the cargo's origin to its destination, which could take up to three days depending on the locations. Now that these paper documents are scanned into the Documentum repository, this timeframe has been reduced to zero. Once a shipment leaves its point of origin, shipping personnel on the other end simply log into the system and instantly retrieve the documents they need to process the shipment based on its consignment ID. Not only have the costs associated with shipping paper documents been eliminated, but faster processing of each shipment means reduced time to invoice and expedited payments from clients.

The new system has also improved efficiencies in the actual invoicing process by enabling Agility Logistics to submit invoices electronically to customers. Previously, invoices were printed and then faxed, or scanned and sent as email attachments—which created delays—especially if the invoices went missing or went to the wrong people. Now, accounts payable personnel can scan the invoices into Documentum and then attach them directly from the repository via a drag-and-drop interface. The customer receives an email notification that the invoices are ready for viewing.

 "All of these efficiency improvements mean that collection time itself has improved, which has made our finance department very happy," says Sharma.

FUTURE PLANS

Now that Agility Logistics has rolled out its core Documentum system across the organization, the company is expanding its capabilities. Eventually, a Documentum integration with Microsoft Outlook will enable users to store a wider range of documents in the repository. Also, the company is looking at extending Documentum's integration with the EDI system, which generates more than a million transactions every month. The goal is to archive each transaction as a file within the repository to further enhance the body of information available to shipping personnel and customers.

In addition, Agility Logistics is expanding the invoicing application to enable A/P personnel to email invoices to customers directly from the system without having to first print out and scan the documents. This approach is already working well in the Spain and Portugal offices, and the company plans to extend it to the rest of Europe within the next year. "With the base solution in place, the question now is how to completely exploit all of its features so that we can further reduce costs within the organization, improve efficiencies in our daily business processes, and most importantly, improve our customers' access and visibility," says Sharma. "We're barely scratching the surface of what we can do with Documentum."

COST SAVINGS AND CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Through integration points with legacy systems and intelligently capturing paper documents via EMC Captiva, the EMC Documentum content management has delivered powerful advantages to Agility Logistics in the form of new efficiencies and cost savings and improved customer visibility and satisfaction. "The system has brought a new dimension to the way we do business. The dollar savings are significant, but you can't put a dollar figure on customer satisfaction—and that's probably the biggest benefit of Documentum," Sharma concludes. "By giving our customers a single access point for viewing all of their shipping documents, tracking shipping status, and receiving their invoices, the EMC solution is a powerful marketing tool for us and has helped us attract new business."

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