



DIGITAL STORAGE PUTS INFORMATION ON VIEW AT WINDOW MANUFACTURER

Bill Gates is not the only one doing a brisk business in windows. New England-based Harvey Industries produces and sells half a million custom windows a year for general contractors, remodelers, and builder wholesalers. Founded in 1961, the building materials distributor reports approximately \$225 million in annual sales and some 1200 employees.

Manufacturing and selling anything, whether it's windows and doors or software, generates plenty of corresponding paperwork. Harvey Industries produces many different kinds of documents including invoices and statements, product orders, pick tickets and green bar end-of-day reports. "We generate about 500,000 to 600,000 invoices a year," said MIS manager Jeff Ribeiro, "and about 80,000 statements and 100,000 manufacturing orders." A 14-year company veteran, Ribeiro has been a part of the Harvey evolution from hardcopy to digital storage.

With the installation of COLD (computer output to laser disk) digital technology four years ago, Harvey Industries became one of the first companies in their industry to implement enterprise-level automated storage and retrieval capabilities. "We had been using microfiche, and costs started to climb," Ribeiro added. "We were spending \$25,000 year for just a few invoices and were still not able to do the things we wanted."

Fast Access to Information Critical to Customer Service

Fast information retrieval was another issue. Harvey Industries is distinguished by a very service-oriented approach to its customers. This includes responding to customer inquiries as quickly and thoroughly as possible. "With the microfiche, getting information was extremely time-consuming," explained Ribeiro. "Someone had to physically go to another room, look up the information, copy it, and then fax it to a customer, who could hopefully read the fax. There were not only too many steps involved, we could not get back to customers quickly enough to suit our standards."

Customer satisfaction became one of the biggest concerns driving the move to a new digital storage solution at Harvey Industries. Because so many different areas of the company dealt with customers, poor information access affected them all. For example, in the case of a dispute, a credit person often had to get information and call the customer back. "When your customers are contractors and often in the field on a job site, they can be hard to reach, so we prefer to resolve issues immediately," said Ribeiro.

Harvey Industries also wanted to reduce the space taken up by physical storage of paper records and files. Locating an invoice, statement or especially a green bar report was a time-consuming task. Each time the employee would have to leave their desk, go to find the material, and then copy it. Not a very efficient process given the company's considerable document flow.

An "Industrial Strength" Solution

To meet all these needs, Harvey Industries required technology that could handle high volumes of document usage. "We needed something industrial strength that could take the load of documents we produce and process. We were concerned how it would handle our volume," said Ribeiro. "We were looking at functionality and response and how it would work over the LAN." The answer proved to be COINSERV technology from INSCI Corporation.

COINSERV is an integrated suite of products for indexing, storing, retrieving and distributing high volumes of computer-generated documents and scanned images of all types. With this electronic digital document repository, Harvey gained automated storage and retrieval capabilities for invoices, statements, reports and other documentation. With COINSERV's powerful document management capabilities, users can now quickly archive and access information electronically.

"The system is very feature-rich, and it could tie into our UNIX system. We needed this level of functionality and the ability to expand the system as our business grows."

Budget considerations had some impact on the decision, but because of what we were spending on main-frame access, payback on COINSERV turned out to be only 18-19 months."

Harvey Industries also uses the WinCOINS retrieval engine and Advanced COINScan function. WinCOINS allows swift navigation of entire COINSERV document repositories. This dedicated client software comes equipped with an easy-to-use workstation interface for displaying, printing, faxing or exporting documents. Advanced COINScan is a full-featured image capture solution that systematically scans, processes and indexes images stored in COINSERV systems. Source documents can be captured from a wide variety of industry-standard scanners.

Quick Implementation, Significant Savings

Implementation was quick. "We installed and implemented the system in matter of two to three months. COLD was implemented first, then scanning," said Ribeiro. "Upgrading to COINSERV has been an easy process for the most part. INSCI has always been there and supported us. We were also pleased with the training on the product.

"Accounts payable was the first area slated to use COINSERV, and now we have eliminated all the filing in A/P. Then we went into credit, where we keep personal guarantees by our contractors. The credit and accounting departments use COINSERV extensively. We had to show people the potential benefits of the system at first, but some groups, such as accounting, were really ready for it anyway. Now we are seeing clear benefits. Cost savings have been significant, but more important is the ease of accessing information. The time it takes to get answers back to a customer has been much improved."

Understanding and learning about their customer base is also easier now. "Before we had a situation where if we wanted to know the types of customers who bought a particular product, we had a major research project. Now we can just scan through invoices," he explained.

"Having access to these new capabilities has led us to change some of our internal processes. For instance, check approval used to be a labor-intensive process because we had to organize and review multiple documents. Now we can review all the documents associated with check approval right from the desktop."

The company has achieved quantifiable results in document management efficiency, as well as other "softer" justification. "Someone is still responsible for storing the information, so we didn't eliminate any personnel. However, we can put value on how much time we save by accessing information right from our desks and the good will gained by giving customers immediate answers."

Even manufacturing areas have benefited from COINSERV. "Manufacturing does custom windows and doors," explained Ribeiro. "Each is unique and carefully made so customers don't have to do extensive remodeling to fit the windows to the existing structure. Later on, if a customer calls about their window product, we can go back and pull detailed information about that sale. A few years ago we started using identification tags in windows, so this and COINSERV help us quickly locate the information we need."

Digital Storage and Imaging Support Long-Term Strategies

"Most of our systems are UNIX-based. This is what we run the business on," he said. "We use a combination of platforms, including PCs that are used to access COINSERV. Storage is provided by an HP 64-slot jukebox with four drives. The network is Ethernet TCP/IP, and frame relay hooks up 26 branches, three manufacturing and two mill work plants. COINSERV is not as widely used yet at the branch level, but the capability is there."

The COINSERV digital document storage system and COINScan document imaging is compatible with Harvey's long-term document strategy of electronic imaging. Previously, not a lot of the total document volume was committed to an imaging format, and only the bare minimum was sent to microfiche. "We just did what we needed to do, and that was it. Now with COINSERV technology in place, we are imaging a lot more than we used to. With HSM (Hierarchical Storage Management) we are not having to commit to optical storage for all documents." HSM keeps frequently used documents readily available, while sending less urgent information to storage.

COINSERV will also help Harvey Industries take advantage of another pending window of opportunity. Ribeiro says the biggest challenge facing the company is e-commerce and the Internet, but "with COINSERV we are well positioned for e-commerce business."

For information about COINSERV solutions, contact INSCI worldwide headquarters at 1-508-870-4000 or visit www.insci.com.