



CASE STUDY

BTD Manufacturing Engineers Better Design with Captaris RightFax

BACKGROUND

BTD Manufacturing (www.btdmfg.com) is a metal fabrication company based in Detroit Lakes, Minnesota. Since 1979, the organization has continued steady growth operating today with 360 employees, 260,000 square feet of manufacturing space and earnings of more than \$50 million in annual revenue.

With its stated mission to deliver quality products and superior service, BTD offers expertise and innovation to its customers by making products "Better Through Design."

Among BTD's top customers are leading recreational vehicle manufacturers. The company also serves vendors within the lawn and garden, health and fitness, mass transportation and other industries. Along with the Detroit Lakes headquarters, BTD maintains a machine shop in Pelican Rapids, Minn., and a warehouse in Farmington, Minn. BTD is an operating company of Otter Tail Corporation (NASDAQ: OTTR).

THE CHALLENGE

BTD's commitment to making things "better through design" applies to more than sheets of metal. As a customer-focused company, BTD continually reviews and improves business processes to best serve its large clientele.

True to this commitment, BTD evaluated its business communication and fax solution. "We were looking for a paperless solution that also allowed us to streamline information," said Marty Kiebke, IT manager at BTD.

The company had been using desktop fax software, but found it to be unreliable and unusable when it came to integration with other programs and platforms. Besides the annoying extra maintenance of occasionally "pushing a button to get the old fax moving," the software also did not integrate with business-critical solutions BTD used to increase productivity and reduce costs.

Kiebke explained, "We were putting a forms package in place from our ERP (enterprise resource planning) vendor. They gave us recommendations of approved fax software vendors, but our old fax system was not listed."

Among the documents BTD found useful were forms for purchase and sales orders, acknowledgement and estimating. On the finance side, employees benefited from invoice, remittance advice and check forms. BTD first used pre-printed forms costing the company close to \$5,000 a year. Kiebke said, "Then we had to print on the forms before stepping over to the fax machine—an expensive procedure."

Once BTD standardized to its Adobe Accelio (formerly JetForm) electronic forms generation package, it envisioned a better process. "We asked ourselves why we were printing and faxing all the documents if we could set up a solution to fax forms directly via an electronic method," Kiebke said.

With a moderate fax volume; averaging 100 faxes per day, BTD employees could improve productivity markedly if they were to save steps in the fax process. They wanted to cut out the need to print documents, pick them up from the printer, transport them to the fax machine and then stand by for transmittal.

An improved solution would also save time for the BTD receptionist, who was tasked with the job of routing all incoming faxes. Since even faxes delivered via the desktop solution were received in one location—her computer—the receptionist had to spend much of her time viewing and routing documents to send to the intended recipients.

Just routing the faxes often proved complicated when the text was simply illegible. Kiebke said, "Some faxes were so unclear, I would be copied to them because the receptionist didn't know who the documents should go to."

To improve its fax system, BTD approached the process with the same goal it sets for service to its customers: To create a high-quality solution in the most cost-effective way possible. In addition to a reliable, interoperable and convenient solution, Kiebke and his team looked for a system that is easy for employees to use and for the IT staff to maintain.

THE SOLUTION

"We've taken 80 percent of our fax traffic and assigned it directly to the people who need it." —Marty Kiebke, BTD Manufacturing IT Manager

After conducting research and viewing demonstrations, BTD decided the "better design" for its fax needs centered on Captaris RightFax, the world leader in e-document delivery. BTD described the reseller as professional and knowledgeable. Kiebke said, "They sold us on RightFax right away."

As a desktop fax solution with an open architecture, RightFax integrates with and leverages existing business systems.

"When we looked at the list of fax software vendors that integrate with our forms, RightFax was newer but had climbed to number one pretty quickly," Kiebke said. "RightFax stood out."

Mike Potocki, Network Administrator at BTD, agreed: "During the research stage, we looked at a couple other vendors. RightFax had fared well in testing and was so highly recommended, the decision was simple."

Since RightFax integrates with the various forms used by BTD, it improves the ease and speed with which employees are able to communicate with customers. Rather than leaving the desk to fax printed purchase orders and invoices, BTD staff members are able to send and receive faxes right at their desktops. While BTD is still recognizing benefits from the recent installation, they expect annual savings to be in the thousands due to saved employee time and the decrease in supply costs, including ink, paper, etc.

Along with the database forms, RightFax provides effective integration for direct-dial fax receipt with BTD's existing call-processing solution. Among those receiving faxes directly are customer service and purchasing representatives—personnel who experience the highest volume of incoming and outgoing faxes.

With RightFax, Kiebke said BTD has shifted the fax communication back to the 80/20 rule. "We've taken 80 percent of our fax traffic and assigned it directly to the people who need it," he related.

Of course, this ratio means the receptionist's responsibilities related to fax delivery have been reduced by 80 percent. "RightFax has saved our receptionist a lot of time," Kiebke said. "She went from answering phones and faxes as a full-time job to only forwarding a few faxes a day."

The process is simplified even for faxes the receptionist must forward via email, said Potocki. "When the data is available, CallManager and RightFax deliver faxes with the CSID in the subject line," he said. Since accounts are handled by specific BTD employees, "It's easier for our receptionist to look at the subject rather than open the entire fax in order to email it to the right person."

The electronic solution has offered additional benefits, according to both Potocki and Kiebke. "We had an ongoing problem with incoming faxes that were too garbled to read," Potocki said. They never pinpointed the catalyst, but he reports: "Since installing RightFax, we haven't heard anything from our users about garbled faxes."

In addition, outgoing faxes look more professional with improved clarity and simplified delivery, said Kiebke. RightFax allows users to designate the form and header page and then select the recipient from a built-in address book. "Users don't have to hand-write information," Kiebke explained. "They just select the documents and phone number. As a result, there are a lot less delivery errors."

EXTRAS

While RightFax fulfilled BTB's main requirements, it offered several other appreciated resources. "We were impressed from the beginning," said Kiebke. "There are a lot of easy-to-use features." Among these capabilities:

- Users enjoy receiving and sending faxes in the familiar Microsoft Outlook environment with abilities to save, forward and store faxes as easily as emails.
- IT staff appreciate the central administration for various RightFax tasks.

"To make additions, all I have to do is add a user to the fax group and I'm done," Potocki said. Comparing the direct integration of RightFax to the complex connections of BTB's prior fax system, he said RightFax cuts down bandwidth, traffic and other resources. "It's made our fax solution one less thing to worry about."

And getting to that point was a painless maneuver. Potocki explained, "The initial RightFax implementation was easier than we expected. We had scheduled two days for the install, but we were done and trained within one day."

Overall, to create a better design for its fax communication, BTB wanted to find the latest and greatest solution, according to Kiebke. An exceptional solution would also integrate with existing BTB platforms for ease of maintenance and administration. Kiebke concluded, "RightFax is built to work with the systems we wanted it to and has expanded to provide other exceptional benefits."

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Captaris Business Information Delivery solutions help organizations of all sizes automate the information and document flow throughout the information lifecycle (capture, process, archive, deliver). With a comprehensive suite of software and services, Captaris helps organizations to grow revenues and increase profits while meeting compliance goals. Through a global distribution network of leading enterprise technology partners, Captaris has installed more than 90,000 systems in 95 countries in companies of all sizes, including the entire Fortune 100. For more information, visit www.captaris.com or call 1.800.443.0806.

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