

Omnium Gatherum: Supply Chain Management for the Construction Industry



Vertical Market:

Systems Integration and Consulting
for the Construction Industry

Problem:

Competitive need to reduce
tender (RFP) response cycle time
and improve overall supply
chain management

Solution:

eCopy ShareScan
eCopy Software Developer Kit

“ eCopy is an off-the-shelf, proven product. You just plug it in, and away you go. In fact, it is the de facto standard for scanning on Canon equipment. It's ideal for the construction industry, where people are not necessarily IT literate. It is simple to use, straightforward for people to learn, and easy to implement.”

John Sanders
Director
Omnium Gatherum (OGL)

Executive Summary

PROBLEM

- > Needed to reduce tender (RFP) response cycle time and improve overall supply chain management
- > Needed to reduce human input errors and labor-intensive document management process
- > Needed to process paper, electronic and image files into SharePoint
- > Needed to use OCR to convert files from image to text and then automatically load them into SharePoint

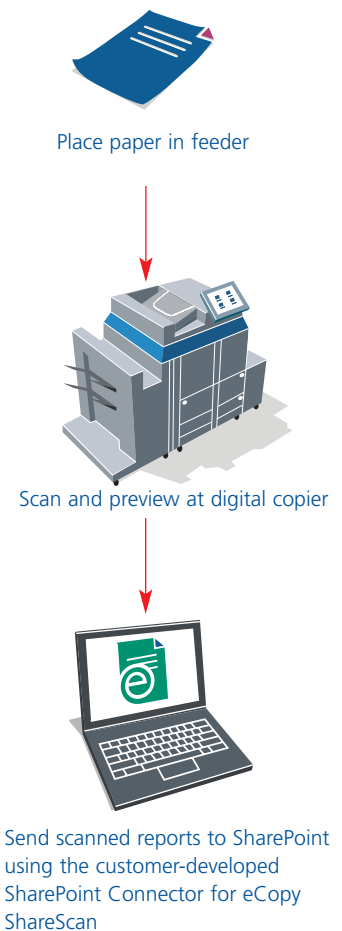
SOLUTION

- > Used eCopy Software Developer Kit to develop a Connector to their existing SharePoint Portal
- > Installed eCopy ShareScan on their existing Canon copier
- > Installed eCopy Desktop on user workstations to take advantage of the OCR feature
- > Integrated eCopy Connector with a Microsoft server solution to ensure document security

BENEFITS

- > Tender (RFP) response cycle time reduced up to 80%
- > Streamlined electronic process; virtually eliminated human errors
- > Significantly improved supply chain management process to heighten competitive edge

The eCopy Solution



ABOUT OMNIUM GATHERUM (OGL)

According to John Sanders, Director at Omnium Gatherum (OGL), "Omnium Gatherum is Latin for a collection of different things. We chose the name because we are a collection of people that all have different skills and we apply those skills to differentiate ourselves in the marketplace." A systems integration firm that offers bespoke (customized) solutions to the construction industry, OGL employs a staff of six, with a flexible association model that allows the company to draw on contract expertise as required. The company was founded in July of 2001 and is located in Edinburgh, Scotland. OGL supports upwards of 50 customers across Europe.

PROBLEM

An OGL client came to the firm for help in developing a solution that would improve its tender (RFP) processing workflow. According to Sanders, "The client was receiving tenders, or requests for bid, in paper format and wanted to be able to scan them into their SharePoint knowledge management system for more efficient processing. The client wanted to process both electronic and image files using Sharepoint and, in some cases OCR them to convert image files to text.

Additionally, the client needed to be able to share information with other parts of its supply chain, not only during the development of the tender response, but also during the construction process for the bids it won. Sanders says, "When our general contractor clients receive that tender, they copy sections of the tender and send them out to subcontractors. When subcontractor responses are returned, they must then compile those responses into a final offer. Once they win the contract, they then have to manage their subcontractors through the balance of the contract process."

This process has historically been labor-intensive, with tender documents being manually copied and collated, a process that adds significant time to the response process and can be error-prone.

SOLUTION

"Working with eCopy and Canon UK, we developed an eCopy Connector for the SharePoint Portal as the first step in solving this customer's business problem," says Sanders. "This allows the client's users to scan in a wide range of tender documents using eCopy, generally into PDF or Tiff format, depending on the specific document, and automatically load the document into the document management system with appropriate indexing information attached." Sanders points out that with eCopy, the firm was able to easily integrate the solution with any Microsoft server solution, including Exchange, taking advantage of the existing Microsoft authentication process that the client depended upon to ensure document security.

The eCopy solution allows OGL clients to better manage four document stages: initial document capture using eCopy; introduction of indexing information using the eCopy interface; automatic storage of documents and images into the hierarchical structure developed within the SharePoint Portal; and retrieval of documents as users need them.

THE BENEFIT OF THE eCopy SOLUTION

This initial OGL client was able to immediately and dramatically reduce the time between receiving a tender and responding to a tender, in some cases by as much as 80%. Sanders says, "What could originally have been a 10-day turnaround can now be as little as two days. In addition to the time savings, the client has reduced the associated costs involved with manual copying and collating. And the electronic process virtually eliminates human error."

The OGL client was also able to do a better job of controlling its supply chain. Sanders says, "Using eCopy, we can scan in a master document, split it into sections, load individual sections into the SharePoint knowledge management system, and only send relevant parts of the document to subcontractors. Additionally, the client can now better monitor and manage responses from subcontractors, including consolidation of responses into the final tender offer. eCopy has enabled us to create a complete tender management process."

Sanders points out that for its clients in the construction industry, it is not just about providing better service to their customers, it is also about establishing better control over the entire supply chain in an extremely competitive market space.

As a result of the success with this initial project, OGL has expanded its relationship with eCopy. The jointly developed SharePoint Connector was beta tested in both the UK and Madrid and has been released as a product, and OGL is expanding its relationship with eCopy to represent the eCopy product suite in multiple European countries outside of the U.K. In addition, OGL has deployed the solution to eight other construction firms and is exploring mapping customized Connectors to other vertical industries, including Legal and Financial Services.

"Our customers are interested in building a paperless environment and a more efficient workflow to gain competitive advantage. The combination of our workflow expertise and eCopy's robust suite of offerings allows us to easily meet that need."

John Sanders