Imaging and COLD Solution Relieves the Paper and Microfilm Burden of Fortune 500 Manufacturing and Communications Conglomerate

The Pfaltzgraff Co. has been in the pottery business since the early 1800s when Johann George Pfaltzgraff emigrated to the USA from his native Germany. He established a small pottery in York, Pennsylvania, and began producing salt-glazed crocks and jugs for the neighboring farm homes. From this simple beginning, Pfaltzgraff today designs and markets over sixty beautiful casual dinnerware patterns, a full line of high quality stainless steel flatware, and assortments of pantryware and glass gift and serveware. Managing all of the paperwork for a business of this complexity is just as important as having the right products to sell. Often, the difference between a successful company and an unsuccessful one is the emphasis it places on providing information quickly and easily to customers. Pfaltzgraff - despite its historical origins - has continually been open to utilizing today's new technologies.

Understanding the importance of information flow, Claire Bange, Vice President of Information Services for Pfaltzgraff, formed a project team to investigate new technology that could replace the time-consuming, arduous process the company had been using to access important administrative documents. According to Lloyd Myers, System Development Manager, "Our principle methods of archiving our computer data were microfiche and paper. This meant that items in long-term storage were difficult to access and to index, and the microfiche was expensive to create and copy." He explained further that accessing microfiche records required special equipment which was only in one location, a further restriction on information accessibility. "Most of the records were housed in one building, dubbed the 'Library of Congress' by employees. Needless to say, this involved long retrieval times," remembers Myers.

Selecting and Installing a System

Four different products were tested on-site and evaluated, and the team unanimously selected MetaViewer from Metafile. According to Myers, "MetaViewer worked with minimal technical difficulties. Its true full-text indexing did not use selective fields as some of the other programs we tested, which slowed the operation down."

Pfaltzgraff.

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> Lloyd Myers
> System Development Manager
> Susquehanna/Pfaltzgraff Co.

Industry:

Manufacturing/
Distribution

Metafile Solution:
Credit Department
Customer Service
Document Distribution
Bill of Lading
Inventory
JD Edwards Integration

Pfaltzgraff Corporate Profile:
America's leading manufacturer and marketer of casual dinnerware and accessories for the home

Established in 1811

METAFILE
Capture
Organize
Index
Deliver

http://www.sbsusa.com

Within four months the new system was in full operation and the microfiche system phased out. "Things moved very quickly," says Michael Maloney, Manager of Technical Services at Pfaltzgraff. "Metafile spent two days doing an initial workup that gave us a big head start and saved research time. Their technical support has been responsive, too. In fact, we developed a list of possible areas for improvement, and Metafile plans to include our suggestions in the next software release."

Improved Efficiency

Efficiency now reigns in Pfaltzgraff's customer service and credit departments. Where the credit department used to spend hours locating an invoice, copying it and faxing it, today it now takes two minutes to search for the record and fax it directly from the workstation. Previously, about twenty-five people used the microfiche system. After about an hour's training, each was comfortable with the new system and elated with the tremendous time savings. Today 150 people use MetaViewer and over 100 reports reside on the system, including accounting, credit, customer service, EDI, inventory and the Pfaltzgraff Retail Division's records and sales reports. Over one million pages are currently on the system, of which a quarter of a million of them are invoices. "An initial concern was the system's ability to handle large volumes," explains Myers, "but we are finding that the average response time is between 5 and 10 seconds."

Since Pfaltzgraff already had an installed network with the majority of workstations high end 486's or Pentium Windows PCs, the cost of installation was $50,000 for the software and a network file server dedicated to COLD. A dedicated PC receives incoming data from the host, then indexes, compresses and stores it on the COLD server. The network is fairly large with 400 attached PCs and another 100 PCs able to use dial-in access. In all, there are fifteen different locations. The server is equipped with a 16-gigabyte RAID 5 disk and, after being live for four months, three gigabytes have been used. By Pfaltzgraff's estimates, the disk should be sufficient for one year, but in the third quarter the addition of an optical jukebox is being considered.

This move toward a paperless, more efficient operation is further facilitated by the use of two other Metafile products. The MetaViewer Imaging Xtension (MIX) is used for the several hundreds of bills of lading of the company's daily shipments. MIX allows MetaViewer's Hyperlink to locate and display TIFF or MOD:CA Image files, so that calling up an invoice number also permits all associated images to be viewed on the dual window screen. MetaViewer Enterprise, Metafile's document capture system, is for use in accounts payable to create images of required paperwork for IS purchases. With the judicious use of both COLD and imaging, Pfaltzgraff is able to eliminate paper outflow, which it can control, and also to reduce or, in some cases eliminate, the storage of the paper inflow over which it has little control.

"We even discovered that the new system gave us an unexpected new tool, "Myers enthusiastically reports. "It gave us the ability to export information as ASCII text and then convert it into a spreadsheet, chart, or graph. This is a great research and information tool." A full-text search option locates all required data from any number of stored documents and formats it for different kinds of analysis.

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