xerox

Improving customer service through more effective document processing at Widdowson

> "As a logistics company, we have to ensure that our customers are given timely and accurate information about their orders"
>
> Richard Baxter, IT Systems Manager, Widdowson Group

Background

When faced with a mountain of paper-based proof-of-delivery (PoD) slips, which involved 24-hour manual processing, logistics company Widdowson Group turned to Xerox Global Services to streamline internal business processes.

The logistics industry plays a critical role in the nation's economy with 157 billion kilometres worth of tonnage transported across the UK's roads each year. Widdowson Group, based in the heart of the country, employs over 350 people and is a major logistics player with a fleet of 150 vehicles.

Widdowson currently has 185 different clients ranging from leading toy manufacturers, refreshment companies and large plant equipment builders. The company's delivery system involved a lot of paper-based PoD material to track delivery details and enable the invoicing of clients. Many of these clients also had complex ways in which they preferred to receive PoD slips and how they liked to be charged.

The Challenge

Widdowson's process included the manual scanning of between 300-500 proof-of-delivery slips a day. Each slip took between three to five minutes to process and send to a web-based system. The company was having trouble keeping up, even with one dedicated member of staff scanning all day and four administrators indexing proofs. Eventually, to clear the growing backlog and to keep the company's promise of getting PoDs online for customers within 24 hours, Widdowson was forced to recruit a temporary member of staff to scan throughout the night. The job was not helped by the increasing unreliability of its scanning solution, which broke down approximately one week in every three.

According to Richard Baxter, IT Systems Manager for Widdowson Group: "Speed and reliability were proving to be big issues and the system in that state was adversely affecting our productivity and therefore our profitability."

The Solution

The logistics company decided to plan what it required from an effective document management solution as well as revolutionising its human resources (HR) system to adhere to new ISO standards. Widdowson looked at several options before choosing a bespoke solution from Xerox Global Services. Xerox specialists assessed Widdowson's needs and worked closely with Baxter's team to launch a new scanning and indexing system.

"As a logistics company, we have to ensure that our customers are given timely and accurate information about their orders," Baxter said. "To ensure this happens, we scan all documents and transfer them to our web site, enabling our customers to check their account status and proofs-of-delivery."

The Widdowson Group runs a policy to retain customer documents for a minimum of two years. The group now scan signed customer PoDs using information capture technology from Kofax and return the original to the customer. The scanned documents are stored digitally on a Stellent Server so that customers can check their personalised account status.

As well as designing the overall solution, Xerox Global Services also provided two of its latest Phaser printers and a Fujitsu scanner as part of the PoD processing system. The company can now process 1,200 PoDs a day and has reduced the number of staff needed to scan and index forms. The Fujitsu machine uses a colour laser to identify the PoD barcodes, with 98.6 percent accuracy. At least 95 percent of forms are now put online within 24 hours.

The Results

The project took around three months to complete and cost a sum that Baxter expects to see paid back within two years through saved overheads and improved efficiency. Employee training on the new system was important to ensure that barcodes are not signed over or damaged in any way.

Before the solution was implemented, the company would receive numerous enquiries from concerned clients about their proofs-of-delivery. In the year since the project went live not one enquiry had been made.

In addition to the new PoD system, Widdowson decided this also provided an opportunity to improve its HR system. Baxter wanted to build a company intranet to improve several essential processes within the organisation. Internet kiosks placed around the company's Leicestershire base allow staff to view the company work processes along with their own details securely and complete traditionally paper-based actions, such as booking time off and requesting new uniforms.

"We want to isolate the paper chain as much as possible," Baxter concluded. "This system will bring a mixture of benefits, including keeping staff up to date with the latest company news and hopefully making everyone's jobs that much easier."

Case Study Snapshot

The Challenge

- Scanning 300-500 proof of delivery slips/day was taking up to 40 man hours a day and Widdowson was struggling to get customers on to the system within its target of 24 hours

- Scanning equipment was proving unreliable and regularly breaking down

- Widdowson had been forced to recruit additional temporary staff on a night shift to deal with the growing backlog

- Regular customer queries regarding POD status

The Solution

- New document scanning and indexing solution

- Scanned documents available online for customers to check account status

- Latest printing and scanning technology

The Results

- 1,200 PODs scanned/day

- 95 % forms online within 24 hours

- Zero customer enquiries related to PODs in first year

- Project payback within 2 years through saved overheads and increased efficiency

xerox