DreamWorks Animation

HP leads workflow automation solution, speeds operations

Industry
Entertainment

Objective
Transform document workflow processes to ensure access to the right information at the right time

Approach
Enlist HP expertise to advise and deliver a content management solution to accomplish business goals

IT matters
• Leveraged HP MFPs as capture mechanism and onramp to digital workflow

• Automated version support ensures contract version control

• Automated notifications and status change flagging

Business matters
• Impact decision-making process with powerful information search and retrieval capabilities

• Speed contract approval processes approximately one-third end-to-end with digitized workflow

• Improved visibility into both the broad and granular view of contract development

• Fingertip retrieval throughout the organization for digitized contracts and associated process history, annotations and status

• Audit trail and security for every document in compliance with security policy

• Increase employee productivity with capability to review contract material remotely at any time

• Avoid duplication of contract tracking efforts; inconsistent document handling; and version control challenges

• Eliminate waste of time, staff resources and paper in back-office processes

"From an end-to-end perspective, we've cut about a third of our back-end processes for contract approval out of the equation."

— Derek Chan, Head of Technology Global Operations, DreamWorks Animation SKG, Glendale, Calif.

DreamWorks Animation creates high-quality entertainment, including CG animated feature films, television and live entertainment properties. The Company has world-class creative talent, a strong and experienced management team and advanced filmmaking technology and techniques. When DreamWorks Animation SKG implemented a digital content management solution along with HP Managed Print Services, the world-renowned studio enhanced business growth by delivering the right information to the right people at the right time.

DreamWorks Animation SKG is known for pushing the boundaries of technology to tell a great story. That's the production side of the house. Until recently, the back offices told a different story. Tom Seib is Head of Finance for DreamWorks Animation Marketing and Consumer Products. If you walked into Seib's office, you'd have seen files stacked everywhere. Binders, often six inches thick, covered his desk, sat in his chairs and spilled into the hallway. And he was just one of the people reviewing up to 200 contracts for approval in a given month. Manual processes impacted productivity and consumed resources—from staff time to office space—all along the chain.

DreamWorks Animation decided to change all that. Long an HP customer for technology innovation in moviemaking, the company allied with HP again to streamline its back offices with an Enterprise Content Management (ECM) digital solution. Starting with the Consumer Products division, DreamWorks Animation embarked with HP on a mission to automate workflows, reduce waste, cuts costs and unleash employee productivity.

"My ultimate goal is self-service problem solving—with contracts, and the discussions and documents associated with them—all viewable onscreen on mobile devices, so we eliminate workflow bottlenecks, drive out inefficiency and speed revenue generation," Seib says. "HP brings us the expertise, technology and relationship commitment to realize that vision."

HP MPS business review uncovers content management opportunity

DreamWorks Animation Consumer Products is the division of DreamWorks Animation that handles merchandising and promotional programs in support of the studio's film releases and television animation. If you've ever seen a Shrek character item promoted at a local fast food restaurant, or a toy or novelty for sale at a retail store, this group developed the contract making that possible. Finalizing a deal like that takes a lot of back-and-forth communication— hammering out contract details, processing versions through approval—that could take three months or longer.

Distributing style guides and artwork was another resource-intensive undertaking. DreamWorks Animation used to publish books and discs for shipment all over the world. That process had become cost prohibitive, limited quantity, and didn't give business partners timely access to the latest approved images.

DreamWorks Animation recognized these processes rapidly becoming obsolete and ripe for change. Managing approved character images in new ways could help strengthen business relationships with differentiated licensed image offerings. More-distinctive products and promotions provide an avenue to drive demand and grow the business.

DreamWorks Animation is an HP Managed Print Services (MPS) customer for productivity-enhancing deployment and maintenance of HP LaserJet single and multifunction printers in conjunction with solutions for business efficiency. During a regular MPS business review, DreamWorks Animation and HP stepped back from day-to-day details to take a strategic look at the company's back-office workflows. In contrast to its highly integrated, highly efficient workflows for making movies, what DreamWorks Animation saw in its back offices was manual processes, high overhead and delays. That led to the Consumer Products content management project.

"Through our standard quarterly business review process with HP, Managed Print Services has helped us in making sure that we are efficiently using our assets," explains Derek Chan, Head of Technology Global Operations. "HP identified that the back office was starting to hinder opportunities on the production side and recommended a more productive process."

Teams at HP and DreamWorks Animation guide project success

HP brings enterprise content management solutions integrated with software partners well matched to project goals. The DreamWorks Animation project included Hyland Software, provider of the award-winning ECM solution OnBase, along with Autonomy[1] Intelligent Data Operating Layer (IDOL) server. HP and Hyland document capture solutions take electronic and paper-

based documents, integrate them into front- or back-end business applications, automate workflows and enable instant access to data stored in a secure and centrally managed repository. The Autonomy IDOL full-text indexing and powerful search engine technology provides more control in finding files.

"Our goal was to replicate documentation in an electronic format to streamline workflow and provide ready access to the information," explains Sarah Kaleel, Information Technology Project Manager. "We had to document what the workflows were and then decide how these should translate into a digital environment. What documents will go into the system? What search and indexing capabilities are needed? When you go to find your file, do you look it up by the licensee name? How else? What's more, we were integrating all that with another database containing licensee information, so people could search one system for all the information they'd need."

The second project phase was to ship contract document archives to HP—boxes and boxes of them—for scanning into digital format. HP Enterprise Services managed the entire process, scanning nearly 4000 contracts. Along the way, project teams collaborated on issues large and small. How should the digital files incorporate sticky notes—scanned along with the pages or in a separate spot at the end of a file? Good decisions regarding even such details were vital to success. "The DreamWorks Animation, HP and Hyland project managers had a very close partnership," Kaleel says. "We worked hand in hand, leveraging HP expertise every step of the way."

Moving forward, HP MFPs will convert current paper documents into the new electronic workflow. Information processes are automated and document flow is optimized among people, applications and devices anywhere in the world.

With the new workflow solution now operational, the first change a visitor to DreamWorks Animation's Consumer Products office might notice is the absence of clutter. Gone are the rows of filing cabinets; clearing them out opened space for four employee work areas. Gone are the piles of files in Finance Director Seib's office; he recently met with eight colleagues there and people filled the room rather than boxes.

> "I don't know why you wouldn't implement a digital solution, unless you like to be buried in mountains of paper and have your hallways lined with black filing cabinets."
>
> – Tom Seib, Head of Finance for DreamWorks Animation Marketing and Consumer Products

The changes are far more than cosmetic. Before, if someone wanted to see something from the contract archives, an assistant would have to go find that document—which might sit in a filing cabinet somewhere or in the review queue on someone's desk. Older contracts would be stored offsite due to space constraints. With contracts active for three to four years, there was an obvious proliferation

Customer at a glance

Application
Content Management Solution

Hardware
• HP LaserJet printers and
  multifunction devices

Software
• Autonomy IDOL
• Hyland OnBase

HP services
• HP Managed Print Services
• HP Enterprise Services

of files needed both for access and legal compliance. Now authorized employees have fingertip access—at the office, at home or on mobile devices on the road, freeing their office time for priority work. The information is indexed and searchable—not only the contracts themselves, but also all related correspondence, in a "supporting documents" preview window that opens onscreen without extra clicks. And now that contracts are digital, the long turnaround for retrieval from storage is eliminated. The right information is available at the right time.

"Everything is in one place. Anyone can pull it at any time and it won't conflict with other people looking for the same information. And it's much more granular and secure," Kaleel says. Staff members gathering in a weekly meeting used to bring differing paper versions of the same contract; now they all can look at the same document online. Style guides are distributed electronically—eliminating printing and postage costs, time delays and limits on what images can be included.

The results: information access for business improvement

The digital workflow reveals the bottleneck if a contract review stalls. If a document waits too long for a signature, that's transparent and can be easily addressed. "From an end-to-end perspective, we've cut about a third of our back-end processes for contract development out of the equation," Chan says. "The search-and-find missions are essentially gone." That translates into faster revenue generation.

"Our overall approval process cycle time has gone down dramatically. The search-and-find missions are essentially gone."

– Derek Chan, Head of Technology Global Operations, DreamWorks Animation

Contracts are not only finalized more quickly, easy retrieval to previous contract information also enables better contracts. If a licensee has been late on payments, that information is readily available for consideration when setting new terms. Better contracts moving faster through the system speeds revenue generation and enables business growth without staff increases.

How is staff adapting to the new electronic processes? The visible changes from removing the files and clutter are clearly evident. DreamWorks Animation expects ongoing results throughout the business from this enhanced access to information. "Everyone understood the previous inefficiencies," Seib says. "We have our habits of working with paper, and we'll go through gentle prodding to completely transition. Change is hard, but ultimately everyone sees the benefits of working smarter."

Next steps: extend improvements to additional business functions

With the success of the content management deployment in its Consumer Products business, DreamWorks Animation plans to expand the solution to other paper-intensive processes, such as accounting and purchasing. Next up for consideration is the Trademark and Copyright area. "I have teams breaking down my door," Kaleel says. "They're not allowed to get more filing cabinets and they're crying for the software."

Adds Chan: "HP as a strategic partner of ours provides everything from desktop PCs, notebooks, servers and networking. We couldn't do what we do without HP."

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[1] Autonomy is an HP Company.

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