

Ensuring compliance

Utility company improves its bottom line with records management solution

As a state owned water company required to comply with Australia's Public Records Act, South East Water knew it was time to switch its outdated and unsupported records system to a solution that would address the growing concern of electronic records. The utility company realized what a comprehensive solution it would require—South East Water provides water and sewerage services to more than a million people across 3,500 square kilometers, with more than five million documents in storage.

The records exist as a result of South East Water's many different roles—including the promotion of water conservation, the distribution of drinking water, meter reading, handling call centre enquiries and emergencies, and the operation of eight sewage treatment plants. One of Melbourne's three metropolitan water businesses, South East Water manages AU\$1.2 billion worth of assets.

Building on an existing infrastructure

South East Water had been using unstructured folders on network drives, business unit by business unit, to manage records. "This proved to be a nightmare whenever the organizational structure changed. There was a lot more hard copy material in those times, which made it difficult to find records in a hurry!" says Marcus Darbyshire, Chief Information Office at South East Water.

"For us, the implementation of Livelink ECM and Livelink ECM – Records Management was about replacing old, unsupported systems. Without moving to these products, our business wouldn't have survived. We have ensured security and visibility of information, are compliant with legislative requirements, and we no longer have to worry about lost or misplaced documents."

Marcus Darbyshire,
Chief Information Officer,
South East Water

"Most of our objectives for this project were related to legislation requirements," adds Mr. Darbyshire. This included a corporate document classification scheme to identify and group all records for retention and disposal, as well as detailed quality procedures to transfer records for permanent retention by the Public Records Office of Victoria.

South East Water also needed to create a Vital Records Register and establish procedures for recording, maintenance and disposal of documents lodged under the Freedom of Information Act and the Whistleblowers Protection Act.

To deliver all of the above, South East Water chose Livelink ECM-Records Management from Open Text. In the process, the organization was able to leverage its earlier investment in Livelink ECM. Open Text solutions already provide enterprise-wide document and quality management at South East Water and interface to the company's billing, Customer Relationship Management (CRM), contracts management, and GIS/Maps systems.

Driving change from the top down

The implementation of Livelink ECM – Records Management was driven by the Managing Director of SEWL through the Executive Team that Records Management with the message that records management is a company wide issue. An executive sponsor was chosen for the project, who was instrumental in driving the push for the project to succeed.

An external consultant had initially conducted a needs gap analysis to provide South East Water with a suitable classifications structure, and helped them map out the migration from the old system to the Livelink ECM solution. A records manager was hired to oversee the training of the records officers and to ensure the smooth implementation of the project over the first few months. At the second stage, the company went through some business process re-engineering and training was undertaken where adherence to standards, guidelines, and other papers was deemed critical. The third stage involved the Livelink ECM configuration, data cleansing, and data conversion.

Industry

Government and Public Sector

Customer

South East Water Ltd.

Business Challenges

- Comply with legislative requirements
- Replace outdated, unsupported and non-compliant systems
- Address the growing need for electronic records
- Eliminate lost or misplaced documents
- Reduce workflow time

Business Solution

Livelink ECM
Livelink ECM – Records Management
Formark Authorlink Lite
IGC Brava! Markup

Business Benefits

- Compliance with the required government regulations
- Security and visibility of record documents
- Increased employee productivity as latest document versions are available 24x7
- Improved customer response times

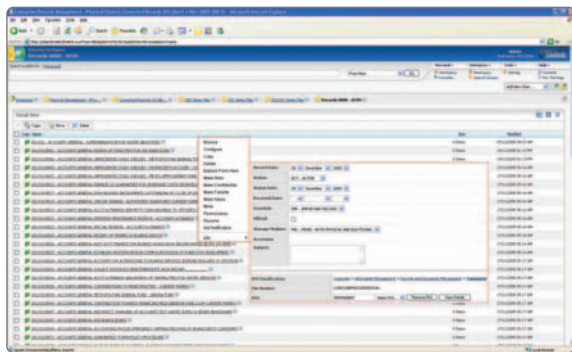
At every phase of the deployment, company-wide consultation was undertaken to ensure buy-in of the records management solution, says Mr. Darbyshire. “Everyone in the business is responsible for being proactive, and this went a long way to ensuring employee uptake. For our records officers, monthly refresher training and monthly problem solving sessions have ensured that our staff stay focused on the solution at hand.”

“If you don’t have someone in the business who is familiar with how to achieve your objectives such as compliance and risk mitigation, get someone! Executive sponsorship and having someone from the business who is prepared to be enthusiastic are so important to the success of a project such as this,” notes Mr. Darbyshire.

Due process followed

South East Water uses the records management solution, integrated with Microsoft® Office and Windows Explorer, to provide a central repository for all vital records, allowing for collaboration and records management principles to be applied. All incoming records (customer correspondence or otherwise) are scanned and stored electronically in Livelink ECM, routed through a workflow to ensure SLA’s are met and due process is followed. Metadata attached at the time of scanning assists searching for items in the future.

To ensure legislation compliance, South East Water set a corporate protocol for the control of versions in network drives and the Livelink ECM repository, and a review process for all secondary storage holdings to identify which records can be safely destroyed in accordance with government regulations. The solution is helping the utility company to ensure compliance with government requirements such as the Public Records Office Act, Freedom of Information Act 1982, and the Whistleblowers Protection Act 2001.



All employees are licensed to use the new system, although a smaller selection of users in each business department use it as one of their primary job functions, including project managers, records officers,

customer-facing staff, and property and asset planners. Mr. Darbyshire notes that employees have had a generally happy response to the new system as the user interface is more fluid and easier to navigate than the previous system.

Enhanced customer service

“The process of customer correspondence is a good example of how the Livelink ECM solution made a difference to South East Water’s operations,” says Mr. Darbyshire, “as it touches our customers, our responsibilities to meet SLA targets, the management of electronic records, and our human workflow principles.” Paper records arrive, are scanned into Livelink ECM with a ‘correspondence’ category attached, and the customer number is stored in this metadata, which assists in searching for items later. A workflow is triggered with that scan as an attachment, and arrives at an operator’s assignments for action. Any reply generated to the customer is also stored in the Livelink ECM system. Reporting driven off the active workflows in the system ensures adherence to SLA targets for response times, and the original paper record is sent to an offsite archive, and tracked through the records management system for appropriate retention.

“Our response times to customers have been sped up, as information—structured or unstructured—is now available 24/7 every day of the year,” says Mr. Darbyshire. “It can really be a one-touch system; in the single Livelink ECM repository, we hold most of the customer information that our employees need to effectively perform their jobs.”

“For us, the implementation of Livelink ECM and Livelink ECM – Records Management was about replacing old, unsupported systems. Without moving to these products, our business wouldn’t have survived,” says Mr. Darbyshire.

“We are now seeing less vital records being stored on shared drives, and the business is asking for further training in our ECM solution—these are all good indicators that the project has been successful. We have ensured security and visibility of information and are compliant with legislative requirements. Our staff can be confident of working on the latest versions of documents and can access them from anywhere, at anytime. We no longer have to worry about lost or misplaced document and we have seen time savings by using electronic workflow instead of a manual process.”

Moving forward

South East Water is now looking to integrate Microsoft Office SharePoint® 2007 with their Livelink ECM solution to fulfill their strategy of having a single portal. The company also expects to move ahead with the next phase of the records management project, investigating optimum recordkeeping of electronic items, such as the enterprise’s email records.



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