



Success story

Forest City Realty Trust, Inc.

Industry

- Real Estate

Solutions

- OpenText™ Content Suite Platform
- OpenText™ Application Governance & Archiving for Microsoft® SharePoint®
- OpenText™ Document Access for SAP® Solutions

Results



A single source of truth
for enterprise content



Seamless integration
with other systems in IT
infrastructure, including
Microsoft and SAP



Enhanced **collaboration**



Time savings and
increased mobility

FORESTCITY

Real estate firm streamlines operations

Forest City supports organization restructure with OpenText™ Content Suite Platform

"As we become more standardized and put records management policies and procedures in place, and provide a more seamless environment with Microsoft SharePoint and SAP applications, I think we're going to see the business really gaining a lot more operational effectiveness."

Kevin Vertrees

Vice President of Information Technology
Forest City





Real estate firm streamlines operations

Operational efficiency is driving Enterprise Content Management (ECM) for Forest City. As a new real estate investment trust, Forest City is powering reliable, unified access to information with OpenText™ Content Suite Platform.

REIT conversion brings opportunity for operational efficiencies

To develop and manage commercial and residential properties across the U.S., Forest City handles hundreds of thousands of documents, from architectural blueprints and construction files to loans and leases. Not surprisingly, challenges bubble to the surface when it comes time to find the files.

“We’ve had disparate silos based upon the way that our business was organized,” said Kevin Vertrees, vice president of Information Technology for Forest City. ***“A lot of time, information is in people’s heads ... you have to know the people who have access to the information instead of letting the systems provide it.”***

Forest City is a large company with more than 2,600 employees, offices in several metropolitan U.S. cities and headquarters in Cleveland, Ohio. Difficulties arise in transferring files from one side of the business to the other—specifically, from development to management. However, converting from a corporation to a public real estate investment trust (REIT) provided an opportunity for Forest City to look at new ways of working together.

“Traditionally we’ve been organized along strategic business units,” explained Vertrees. ***“Now, we see this restructuring as a way for us to get more operational effectiveness and to be more competitive.”*** As long-term users of OpenText technology, Forest City recognized an opportunity to expand and strengthen its ECM reach across the organization.

Centralized convenience and collaboration

To drive collaboration, Forest City manages documents and workflow with OpenText™ Content Suite Platform, which provides comprehensive, integrated solutions for information governance. Most recently, Forest City upgraded Content Suite, securing new capabilities—including faceted browsing—and efficient integration with SAP and Microsoft business systems. ***“We’re trying to standardize where information is stored, how it is categorized and how we tie that to some of the key dimensions in our business intelligence platforms to get a more unified, easily accessible view,”*** said Vertrees.

Records management and archiving

OpenText ensures Forest City files are secure, centralized and auditable. ***“You can limit the access in ways that you can’t through other enterprise content management systems,”*** said Vertrees. Also, the real estate company plans to leverage OpenText™ Records Management capabilities to automatically delete files that have met retention requirements.

Microsoft® SharePoint and SAP integration

Centralized OpenText storage and retrieval is transparent for Forest City professionals who are free to work within familiar platforms. OpenText™ Application Governance & Archiving for Microsoft® SharePoint® provides integrated, end-to-end management of SharePoint sites and documents across the enterprise. OpenText™ Document Access for SAP® Solutions enables accounting personnel to access all materials within the transactional platform. ***“They can be working in whatever tool that they’re comfortable with and still get access to the content that they need,”*** explained Vertrees.

“It’s just ease of communication, sending documents. It’s like night and day. I wouldn’t want to go back to the old world.”

Joan Glenn-Katzakis
Associate General Counsel
Forest City



Secure file sharing and mobility

"OpenText really is one of our true extranet collaboration platforms," Vertrees said.. While SharePoint supports internal collaboration, OpenText Content Suite extends information and related workflows to joint venture partners and contractors.

To simplify collaboration with external parties and support overall flexibility, Forest City is eyeing OpenText™ Tempo™ Box, secure file sync and sharing for the enterprise. ***"There's a whole opportunity there,"*** Vertrees noted. ***"As we put more workflow and approval processes on the Content Suite Platform, mobility is going to be something that internal users desire, as well as our outside partners."***

Seamless progression, strategic technology

Early success with unified content management at Forest City helped to shift upgrading to the latest Content Suite Platform from an IT, technical project, to an enterprise-wide business effort. ***"Legal is sponsoring this next phase of the OpenText initiative, bringing in all of the REIT documentation, and also looking to put in standard business practices around records management. There are a lot of eDiscovery capabilities that we can take advantage of to help meet the legal requirements,"*** Vertrees explained.

Forest City's legal team spent six months and thousands of hours collecting documents totaling 33,000 pages from repositories across the organization for the REIT conversion. ***"They saw a huge opportunity to bring it in to OpenText Content Suite Platform to make it easier for the associates to find and share information going forward,"*** Vertrees noted. ***"They are big OpenText users today."***

Several business units are now driving OpenText expansion, Vertrees continues, revisiting taxonomy, building workflows and asking how to unify processes within the restructured organization. ***"Even though we have been using the systems, as we become more standardized and put records management policies and procedures in place, and provide a more seamless environment with Microsoft SharePoint and SAP applications, I think we're going to see the business really gaining a lot more operational effectiveness."***

Efficiency

Handling properties through the lifecycle of development through management is now more unified and organized for the restructured Forest City. Information that used to be misplaced on the path between teams is now accessible in one location. ***"Saving that information in the central repository of OpenText Content Suite Platform will allow us to do that handoff in a more seamless manner,"*** Vertrees noted.

Working with one source of truth saves time for busy Forest City professionals as well. As Associate General Counsel at Forest City with responsibility to support commercial leasing, Joan Glenn-Katzakis used to sort through piles of paperwork. ***"Now, once all the negotiations are finalized, relevant documents are right there and very accessible,"*** she said. ***"That saves me a ton of time."*** She can even address issues on the spot when a client calls rather than leaving her desk to pull files and return calls. ***"It's just ease of communication, sending documents. It's like night and day. I wouldn't want to go back to the old world."***

Denise Hall, who heads up the Lease Administration Department for accounting, agrees. She describes documents as the lifeblood of her team and remembers when it didn't flow so smoothly. With 40 years at Forest City, Hall weathered the days before using Content Suite Platform.



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Kevin Vertrees
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“They were quite painful,” she noted. “You could spend countless hours trying to locate files just to do your job. Having everything at your fingertips right from your desktop is wonderful.”

When Forest City professionals are not at their desks they still have easy, reliable access to business files. Legal folders can be voluminous, so for Glenn-Katzakis transporting them wrested substantial effort. ***“Now, with OpenText Content Suite Platform, I can work from home remotely because I can access all my lease documents online,”*** she said.

“Users these days want mobile access,” Vertrees noted. ***“They want to be able to use whatever device they prefer to participate in workflows, to get access to the information whenever they require it. And OpenText has the capabilities.”***

Business-driven technology

As solutions that satisfy user needs and bolster company strategies, OpenText ECM technology supports Vertrees' IT vision for integration within strategic business operations. ***“We are trying to get away from being viewed as just a back-office function into something that is enabling the business to grow and compete in the marketplace,”*** he said. ***“OpenText allows us to do that, as we can create these information ecosystems.”***

He expects to continue the relationship. ***“OpenText has been a strong partner of ours. I like the OpenText vision. It’s not just the content, but it’s embracing enterprise information management and getting into the process side of things, to enable B2B collaboration. Those are things that we’re trying to do within Forest City, so OpenText partnership and vision is something that excites me and that we’ll continue to evolve.”***



About OpenText

OpenText, The Information Company, enables organizations to gain insight through market leading information management solutions, on-premises or in the cloud. For more information about OpenText (NASDAQ: OTEX, TSX: OTEX) visit opentext.com.

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