

Integrated Solutions

Optimize ECM Payback

Installation Profile

Technology User: Gibraltar Industries, Inc. is a \$1.4 billion manufacturer, processor, and distributor of metals and other engineered materials for the building, vehicular, and industrial markets.

Problem: To meet requirements of Sarbanes-Oxley and annual industry audits, Gibraltar Industries was generating and storing massive amounts of paper, including AP (accounts payable) vendor invoices, sales invoices, shipping documents, general ledgers, and financial statements. Sifting through all of this paper to locate and review desired information was a time-consuming process, and many documents were often misfiled, further limiting productivity.

Solution: Gibraltar Industries deployed Cabinet NG, a document management software system, and KODAK i40 document scanners throughout its corporate office and 20 of its operating units. Managing documents electronically reduced Gibraltar Industries' physical storage costs and document retrieval times. The increased productivity the new system brought about, plus the standardized manner in which the solution was deployed, helped Gibraltar Industries achieve a 12- to 15-month payback on its technology investment.

\$1.4 billion Gibraltar Industries, Inc. standardized the deployment of a document management system and recouped its investment in 12 months.

Robert Barton, corporate financial systems manager for Gibraltar Industries, standardized the deployment of an electronic document management system to 20 company operating units.

Optimize ECM Payback

\$1.4 billion Gibraltar Industries, Inc. recouped a document management technology investment in 12 to 15 months by standardizing the solution deployment process.

by Ken Congdon

While usually good for fiscal reports and investor relations, corporate mergers and acquisitions often cause headaches for IT personnel. To truly consolidate intellectual property, IT must struggle to integrate disparate systems and technology applications — a tedious process that can take months or years to complete. However, sometimes this undertaking can introduce a company to new technologies and procedures that can have a positive impact on the productivity of the organization as a whole.

Take Gibraltar Industries, Inc. for example. This \$1.4 billion metal product processor and manufacturer was generating and storing tremendous amounts of paper, including AP (accounts payable) invoices, sales invoices, shipping documents, general ledgers, and financial documents in order to comply with Sarbanes-Oxley and industrial audit requirements. Not only did this documentation require significant physical storage space, but also sifting through all the paper to locate and review desired information was a time-consuming process that drained business productivity. The company knew it needed to gain better control of its information and began to investigate a few electronic document management (EDM) software packages to help reduce its dependence on paper. However, none of the technology solutions Gibraltar evaluated met the company's operational and budgetary requirements. Then, in 2003, Gibraltar Industries acquired Air Vent, Inc., a manufacturer and distributor of ventilation products and accessories. Air Vent already had a CNG-Safe electronic document management system

by Cabinet NG in place at its facility, and at first glance, the solution appeared to be a perfect fit to Gibraltar's need for a paperless solution. Gibraltar decided to scrutinize the product further to see if it could be leveraged for company-wide deployment.

TEST EDM EFFECTIVENESS WITH A PILOT SYSTEM

While the CNG-Safe system met the needs of Air Vent's corporate office, Gibraltar needed to determine if the system was flexible enough to work across several Gibraltar operations centers. In particular, the system would need to integrate with several disparate operating systems and technology applications in use at different Gibraltar locations. You see, Gibraltar was no stranger to acquisition — the organization acquired 27 companies in addition to Air Vent since 1995. While corporate IT was in the midst of consolidating systems across locations where it made the most sense, many of the disparate systems would need to operate independently until budgetary and IT resources became available to unify platforms.

Gibraltar met with representatives from Cabinet NG to discuss the capabilities of the software and witnessed a product demonstration that proved CNG-Safe was compatible with all operating systems under the Gibraltar umbrella. The product demo also showed that CNG-Safe could be integrated with most technology applications, including homegrown line-of-business systems, using a simple ODBC (open database connectivity) interface.

Satisfied with the basic specifications and

features of the document management software, Gibraltar decided to install a pilot CNG-Safe system at its corporate office first before committing to a multisite deployment. The pilot system was installed in Gibraltar's AP department and was only employed to electronically file AP invoices on the back end. For example, under its paper system, once an invoice was approved for payment and processed, it was ultimately filed by vendor and date in a file cabinet. This system would scan the invoice and save an electronic image of the document instead.

"We focused on digitizing the back end filing of vendor invoices first because we felt this application would allow us to realize a return on investment the quickest," says Robert Barton, corporate financial systems manager for Gibraltar Industries. "We wouldn't really need to invest any time to change our processes or redesign anything to use the document management software for this purpose. We were just eliminating the need to store those pieces of paper. Also, installing the document management system for the back end filing of vendor invoices would be the least disruptive to our employees."

The success of this pilot system was almost immediately evident as AP employees reduced their invoice retrieval times from hours per week to minutes. "When employees need to access an invoice to analyze an account or justify a balance, they now simply search for the invoice by number or vendor name on their PCs, and the corresponding document image is presented in a matter of seconds," adds Barton. "This is much more efficient than



“When employees need to access an invoice ... they now simply search for the invoice by number or vendor name on their PCs. ...”

Robert Barton, Gibraltar Industries, Inc.

weeding through rows of file cabinets and stacks of file folders. Plus, it frees up our AP staff to spend more time performing other job duties that add value to our business such as maintaining vendor accounts or following up on credit discrepancies.”

Given the positive results the EDM system brought to the invoice filing process, Gibraltar decided to expand the pilot system to electronically manage its corporate financial statements and ledgers. “Our financial statements and ledgers made up the bulk of the paper we were generating in corporate,” says Barton. “These documents required us to print and store 8,000 to 10,000 pieces of paper each month. Accounting employees also spent hours separating these reports and stapling them, while corporate executives wasted valuable time sifting through these documents to locate and analyze specific financial information. By managing this information electronically in CNG-Safe, this time is saved because statements no longer need to be sorted, and individual pages can be quickly located and reviewed.”

The productivity gains that resulted by incorporating CNG-Safe into the corporate office’s invoice filing and financial statement

processes provided Gibraltar with a 12- to 15-month payback on its pilot system investment. With this evidence in hand, Gibraltar was confident in moving forward with a company-wide deployment of the solution.

A COOKIE-CUTTER APPROACH FACILITATES EDM DEPLOYMENT

The green light was given to a 20-site installation of the EDM solution, and Gibraltar developed a plan that would facilitate the implementation process and optimize the payback period for the technology at each location. The plan began with a standardization of the hardware and software used to build the solution. CNG-Safe was the central software component of the solution, and Gibraltar selected KODAK i40 document scanners and Dell workstations and servers as standard hardware components. Gibraltar purchased all solution components up front, including 10 concurrent user licenses of CNG-Safe, one KODAK i40, and one Dell workstation and server for each of the 20 Gibraltar operating units. Buying the hardware and software up front allowed Gibraltar to take advantage of volume discounts. It also allowed the solution components to be preconfigured at corporate to allow for rapid deployment at each branch location.

Ease Of Use, Integration Important In Scanner Selection

When Gibraltar Industries, Inc. was searching for a scanner to complement its CNG-Safe document management software solution, it wanted a device that could not only capture clear images, but also would be easy for employees to use and deploy. “Our goal was to have each location up and running on the document management system within two days,” says Robert Barton, corporate financial systems manager for Gibraltar Industries. “However, scanning technology was foreign to most of our operation unit employees. We needed to make sure that the scanner we chose was intuitive from a user standpoint so that we didn’t put our timeline at risk while employees learned to use the scanning hardware.”

With these requirements in mind, Gibraltar made the KODAK i40 the document scanner of choice for all its locations. The KODAK i40 is a duplex device that scans 25 ppm (pages per minute)/50 ipm (images per minute) in monochrome, grayscale, or color. The scanner also includes one-button functionality that allows users to preconfigure nine scanning destinations (e.g. scan to e-mail, scan to PDF) on the device and

select one with the touch of a single button. With this feature, users don’t have to navigate through several software screens to select a destination for their images. They simply insert a document into the scanner, press a button, and the image is saved to the appropriate location.

KODAK i40 scanners also come equipped with Kodak’s Perfect Page with iThresholding technology. This software automatically deskews, despeckles, and enhances each document image, allowing users to get clear scans from poor-quality documents. Perfect Page with iThresholding also helps to boost employee productivity by reducing the need to rescan documents or alter scanner settings.

Finally, KODAK i40 scanners come bundled with ISIS and TWAIN drivers, allowing quick integration with all document management systems. Plus, USB 2.0 connectivity allows for the quick transfer of images.



Gibraltar Industries standardized its EDM system on the KODAK i40 document scanners.

For More Info. On Eastman Kodak

Go To www.kodak.com/go/di

DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT

Document Scanning • Workflow

The second part of Gibraltar's solution optimization plan involved having each location initially install the solution to address the back end filing of AP vendor invoices the same way corporate had. "We decided to have each location mirror the corporate deployment process because regardless of what accounting system a given location uses or the different procedures employed to process an invoice, the final step of filing an invoice in a folder was the same everywhere," says Barton. "Also, Gibraltar operating units generally handle more vendor invoices than the corporate office, so starting with the AP filing application would allow each location to enjoy the same, if not a better, payback on the initial technology investment. Once these preliminary benefits are realized, each location is left to expand the system throughout its offices as it sees fit."

Gibraltar's 'cookie-cutter' approach achieved the anticipated results. The pre-configuration of components made the installation of each document management workstation a quick two-day process. "For each installation, a Cabinet NG representative is sent to the branch location and spends half of the first day setting up the

document management to the operating unit's LAN," says Barton. "The second half of the first day is spent providing administration training to the designated local site administrator. The Cabinet NG representative then spends the entire second day providing group training on the document management system to all end users, and employees are actually up and running on the system at the end of this training session. The speed with which the solution was installed minimized the disruptive impact the implementation had on each location's business operations, which encouraged operating unit executives and end users to buy into the system."

LEVERAGE WORKFLOW TO STREAMLINE ACCOUNTING PROCESSES

Gibraltar is only about 75% complete with its company-wide deployment of the CNG-Safe document management system, but the company states the productivity gains already achieved have paid for the initial technology investment of several hundred thousand dollars — an estimated payback period of 12 to 15 months. Once the EDM solution is operational at each of Gibraltar's 20 operating units, the company has plans to further use

the technology throughout the organization. First, the company plans to leverage the workflow capabilities of CNG-Safe within the AP environment in each of its locations. For example, currently CNG-Safe is only used to scan and electronically store vendor invoices after all approval and processing procedures have been completed. Gibraltar wants to begin using the technology to scan each invoice as soon as it is received and use CNG-Safe to automatically route the invoice through the approval process. The workflow capabilities of CNG-Safe can also automate many invoice processing capabilities by routing each invoice to appropriate processors and extracting data off the invoice image to automatically populate fields in the accounting system. Furthermore, the solution's workflow capabilities can be used to share documents across locations, which will help streamline Gibraltar's invoice approval processes. □



Ken Congdon is the content management editor of *Integrated Solutions*. He can be reached at: kenc@corrypub.com.

SOME PAPER CAN BE FUN.
THE REST JUST HURTS YOUR BOTTOM LINE.



Manage Documents
in **QuickBooks®**
with **CNG-SAFE®**

Accounting and document management in one step. Call Cabinet NG to learn how document management can boost productivity and strengthen your bottom line.

800.621.6501 • www.cabinetng.com



Posted with permission from Integrated Solutions. Copyrighted 2006.

For subscription information, call (814) 868-9935 or visit www.IntegratedSolutionsMag.com.

#1-18079889 Managed by Reprint Management Services, 717.399.1900. To request a quote online, visit www.reprintbuyer.com.