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CASE STUDY

REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT INDUSTRY

The Woodlands Development Company

Developing efficient digital processes with eCopy

CHALLENGE

- Inefficient process for managing the volume of paper documents exchanged between outside agencies, builders, and title companies
- The review and signature approval cycle was dramatically slowed down by routing documents through fax machines and internal mail
- No consistent workflow with a clear audit trail that led back to the user
- Physically filing and retrieving paper documents from filing cabinets and storage facilities was plagued by human error

STRATEGY

- Installed multiple Canon digital copiers equipped with eCopy ScanStation® to existing network infrastructure
- Employees can easily use the eCopy touch panel to scan and e-mail original quality paper documents
- Installed the eCopy Connector for Microsoft® SharePoint® document management system to electronically file documents

RESULTS

- Simple and the intuitive user interface means little to no training required for new users
- Reducing the time consuming process of routing faxes and internal mail to obtain signatures increased productivity

- Users receive a copy of the scanned document in their “Sent” folder in their company’s e-mail system

ABOUT THE WOODLANDS DEVELOPMENT COMPANY

Located 27 miles north of downtown Houston, Texas, The Woodlands is a planned master community that has been recognized both nationally and internationally as a model for new community planning and development. The project was initiated in 1974 by Mitchell Energy and Development Corporation. The Woodlands was sold by Mitchell Energy in 1997, and the new company that was created was The Woodlands Operating Company, L.P., which is now operated as a d/b/a, The Woodlands Development Company.

The Woodlands features a wide variety of homes, outdoor recreation, schools, shopping, and amenities in an idyllic forested setting. Situated on 28,000 acres, The Woodlands is comprised of a series of villages and individual neighborhoods. In all, more than 5,000 acres of green space has been set aside in The Woodlands for parks, open spaces, forest preserves, golf courses, and nature trails, making it one of the greenest communities in the country. In addition to homes and schools, the project hosts more than 1,100 businesses, ranging from multinational corporations to entrepreneurial startups.

“eCopy surpassed our expectations. Because the user interface is so intuitive and the touch screen is so convenient, we knew that it would quickly become an essential tool to make us more efficient and effective. It has done just that.”

— **Mike Hill**

IT Manager

Insurance Technology Corporation, on-site
The Woodlands Development Company



The Woodlands Development Company Case Study

“We plan on rolling out eCopy every time we deploy a Canon copier. The implementation is easy and eCopy makes terrific technical resources available should we ever need their assistance.”

— **Mike Hill**

IT Manager

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PAPER-BASED INFORMATION WAS STARTING TO CAUSE A PROBLEM...

With a massive and long-running project such as The Woodlands, paper has been a significant part of the business processes employed by The Woodlands Development Company since its inception over 31 years ago. Business communications with outside agencies, including builders and title companies, as well as internal communications rely heavily on signatures as they wind their way through the process. As a result, The Woodlands Development Company depended heavily on faxing and internal mail to move documents through their review and approval cycles.

According to IT Manager Mike Hill, “Faxing and internal mailing of critical documents not only slowed down our business processes, but also failed to provide a good audit trail. Additionally, filing paper documents is time consuming and fraught with error, and paper documents can often be difficult to retrieve, due both to their sheer volume as well as to the ease with which they can be misfiled.” As a result, Hill was anxious to transition The Woodlands Development Company to digital business communications processes in order to improve efficiencies and reduce costs.

THE WOODLANDS DEVELOPMENT COMPANY DEPLOYED...

multiple Canon multifunction copiers equipped with eCopy ScanStations. These ScanStations are available for access by over 300 employees in performing their daily job functions. Hill says, “eCopy has put scanning within easy reach of every one of our employees. As a result, our business processes have undergone significant change.” Hill indicates that prior to deploying eCopy, the company frequently used the interoffice mail system to forward correspondence and route documents for signature. Additionally, documents requiring signatures from outside parties were routinely faxed. Now, e-mail is the preferred communications medium. The learning curve, according to Hill, is almost nonexistent, with most employees being able to walk up to an eCopy equipped copier and e-mail paper documents. And by implementing the eCopy Connector for MS SharePoint, the company is able to leverage the investment in their existing document management system to electronically file documents that can be easily accessed by employees without any training.

EMPLOYEES CAN ENJOY A MUCH MORE SPACIOUS ENVIRONMENT...

The Woodlands Development Company has deployed 23 eCopy equipped copiers throughout the organization. Hill says, “In addition to streamlining our review and approval processes, we now use eCopy to digitize a wide range of paper documents so that they can reside on our network. And, we have virtually eliminated the expensive and time-consuming process of securing signatures via fax and internal mail. In fact, we have found that most people, both internally and externally, prefer to process these documents via e-mail if the capability is available.”

Hill also reports that filing and retrieving documents is now much more efficient, and as an added benefit, documents scanned to e-mail are retained in the user’s “Sent” file, adding extra convenience. To make the system even more efficient, Hill plans to use eCopy to file documents in the company’s SharePoint document management system using the eCopy Connector for MS SharePoint. Hill is a believer in the value that eCopy brings to a busy environment, such as that found at The Woodlands Development Company.

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