

EUR Systems

Data center stays current and competitive with digital storage.

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Three decades in data gives a company a pretty good basis for evaluating technology. EUR Systems, in business for over thirty years, selected digital document repository (DDR) technology (also known as COLD and Enterprise Report Management) to manage the client records crucial to its business success.

EUR has about 220 employees and is located outside Harrisburg in south central Pennsylvania. About 90 percent of EUR's customer base are involved in the telecommunications industry, but the company maintains a diverse clientele among the remaining 10 percent. Other customers and projects include county governments, heavy equipment dealers and local payroll work.

Among EUR capabilities are document and record intensive services such as bill production, inserting and mailing. Half a dozen high-volume digital printers are in place to handle billing applications. "We also do cash collection and act as a lock box for some clients," said Roy Dubbs, supervisor at EUR. "And we have a customer service department that answers inquiries on behalf of our telephone clients."

Dubbs' responsibilities include the management of printing operations and more recently, management of Datawatch|BDS (Business Document Server) digital document access and retrieval technology. With Datawatch|BDS enterprises can efficiently tap into digital document repositories for on-demand viewing, printing and Internet access for remote viewing. Datawatch|BDS uses optical disk, CD and automated tape libraries to index, archive, retrieve and distribute computer-generated documents and scanned images. The system at EUR is

mainly a disk drive-based configuration, although they still use some optical technology.

EUR was introduced to Datawatch|BDS technology by Unisys. "A lot of our decision had to do with that initially, because we are a Unisys shop," explained Dubbs. EUR started out with Datawatch|BDS UNIX Edition in June 1994. In 1999, they upgraded their system to Datawatch|BDS for Windows. Dubbs and systems analyst Brenda Murdock estimate EUR handles some 2,640,000 images per month. Documents are mostly phone bills, but also include invoices, G/L reports and billing registers.

FAST RESPONSE GIVES COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

EUR is unique in its ability to customize solutions. "We aren't a package-type environment," said Dubbs. "When someone comes with specific needs, we customize to fit those needs. Of our 220 employees, 125 are involved in programming or development, enabling us to turn projects quickly."

Fast response not only impacts productivity, it also shapes customer satisfaction with a company. Quick access to customer documents is important to EUR, and Datawatch|BDS helps them maintain a high level of service. One of the biggest benefits has been the impact on document conversion and turnaround.

EUR stores records for customers, and bill look-up is a frequent request. There are millions upon millions of pages organized in EUR's digital archives. Before billing information was available on line, EUR would have to get the print tape and reprint to find information needed by a customer. Further delays of hours or even days could come if the printer was tied up. "Before

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implementing the digital repository, figuring out where the needed information might be was time consuming," explained Dubbs, "but now users can go in directly and see the account itself. Reports indexed by field descriptions such as report number, name and date, while bills can be located by account number, date or phone number.

"We don't keep mainframe records on line, so when someone questioned a bill, we had to go back to the print tape to find the answer," noted Dubbs. "It could take a day or more to get back to the customer with a response. Now, once billing files have been generated, those bills are ready to view immediately, instead of having to send them out to be created and then mailed to the customer. The quality of materials printed from Datawatch|BDS is better than what is printed from the microfiche," adds Dubbs.

IMMEDIATE ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Datawatch|BDS has made a look-up more convenient and easier compared to a tedious mainframe search. It also allows more convenient data storage with all information easily accessible from the NT platform. "We have gained the flexibility of using desktop PCs," said Murdock. "Anyone can just click the icon, and there are their bills, instead of searching through mainframe records looking for information. When a customer calls up with a question, it is very convenient to research the answer."

Once the mainframe files were located and created, they had to be outsourced for microfiche, but bills could be out of date before they could be prepared and sent to the customer for viewing. "Bills used to be on microfiche," Dubbs said. "We would have to mail microfiche copies so our clients could provide these records to their customers upon request, and this could take two to five days. In some cases, a customer service area might have 20-25 users needing simultaneous access to that information, and we would have to create twenty copies of microfiche."

From the time EUR did the billing and outsourced the files to microfiche, bills could already be on the street before EUR customers had the records they might need to service their customers. "Now we can put it all out there, allowing users to see it without having to create microfiche copies. Once billing production is completed, customers can go see the bills, even though shipping might not have laid a hand on them yet for mailing."

READY CUSTOMER ACCEPTANCE

EUR customers have readily accepted Datawatch|BDS, and initial training and ongoing telephone support have made them confident users. "Support for the system has been good," said Dubbs. "The training is very thorough and provides all the elements required to get to a comfortable level of use."

Customers just need to know a few features on the PC application to use it, and they find Datawatch|BDS to be very user-friendly," added Murdock. "We provide an operating manual for our customers and, if needed, a conference call. Our clients have responded very favorably to Datawatch|BDS. They find it very convenient to have information right at their desktops." She estimates some 500 desktops currently have access to the system, most of these located at client sites. Approximately 25% of EUR customers use Datawatch|BDS.

As their market becomes more interested in on line presentment and e-commerce, EUR is ready to do whatever is needed. "Being customer-driven, we still have to support what we are doing for them today," said Dubbs, "but we have some clients who are already paperless for all reports except for bills. Clients with offices around the country find electronic viewing helps eliminate costly shipping and distribution of paper. When the time arrives, and EUR clients are ready for e-commerce, we will again look to use the Datawatch|BDS product to help us provide that service."



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