

An IMSCAN Case Study

ASD Plc

ASD metal services is part of the internationally recognised Klöckner & Co family and is the largest independent metals stockholder in the UK.

The organisation comprises three core divisions and a number of specialist units. The nation-wide spread of ASD's 38 branches, diverse product ranges within each division and the broad array of processing facilities available at ASD provide an unrivalled ability to meet the individual requirements of the client.

ASD has established a strong market position through adherence to its mission statement – The Quest for Excellence is the Target. With users of steel products increasingly requiring a wide range of processing and specialized services, ASD stands out by holding vast stock levels as well as the broadest range in the industry. In addition the company adopts a strict customer service philosophy that ensures it consistently meets its customers' requirements as well as charging competitive prices for all its products.

Total Quality Service

Of course, delivering a total quality service along with quality products is no mean achievement. The company has analysed all areas of the business and best practices have been adopted across the board. One of the more complex aspects of the business, unique to the steel industry, was to implement a viable solution for handling Steel Test Certificates. Sean Wilcock, ASD's IT Manager, explains, "Every time we buy steel from a manufacturer it comes with a test certificate. This document details all the required information regarding that particular batch of steel, such as chemical and mechanical properties. The very nature of the steel manufacturing process means that every batch is slightly different. Each batch's specific properties make it suitable, or unsuitable, for a certain type of building or component."

The task facing ASD was to devise a system whereby the test certificate could be easily retrieved in order to accompany the steel to the customer. "To complete the picking process the test certificate is retrieved prior to the goods being dispatched. The last thing you need at that point is someone searching through documents in a filing cabinet while the driver is waiting," says Wilcock.

In 1992, ASD became the first steel stockholder to implement an electronic document management system. "This was a straightforward system," he explains. "We simply scanned the A4 certificate and indexed it based on our stock number and product codes to allow retrieval." This system, which was supplied by a local software vendor, was used for several years until it became too expensive to maintain. "The system required specific non-standard hardware which was becoming harder and harder to maintain. It was also becoming hard to justify because it could only handle test certificates and the business was rapidly moving into a situation where it needed to increase its document management usage," Wilcock confirms.

It was at this time that ASD carried out a review of many of the leading document management products on the market before selecting integrated document management and workflow software specialists, IMSCAN Systems. "IMSCAN seemed to provide all the advantages of a modern document management system for the best value. They also had no difficulties adapting their system to meet the specific requirements of handling test certificates and integrating it with our warehouse



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management and despatch control systems.”

Sean Wilcock continues, “A further advantage of IMSCAN was its open architecture. Rather than being confined to specialist hardware, the system is fully compatible with standard PCs, scanners and printers. The system also provides more reliable filing and faster retrieval at the back end.”

ASD selected the IMSCAN system that includes IMSCAN’s Scanning & Capture module for easy scanning to a central server and IMSCAN’s Data Management facility that captures electronic information and collates it with the relevant scanned images. Here, the image files are indexed and published to a server where they’re ready for access across the user network. Within IMSCAN, original documents can be viewed, printed or faxed direct from the system by way of a simple intuitive retrieval screen available straight from the user’s desktop.

Extra Dimensions

The implementation of IMSCAN has provided extra dimensions to ASD’s document handling system. “We are now able to print a delivery note at the same time as the test certificate is printed and these are merged to form what we call a mission order. The retrieval, printing and collation of these documents has massively increased the speed of the overall distribution process,” Wilcock says.

The system has proven popular with everyone involved with it. “Another major advantage for the users over the previous system is that IMSCAN is a true multi-user network system. With our old system, we could not do more than one thing at a time. If the system was printing, no-one could do anything else. With IMSCAN we can print, scan and retrieve simultaneously from any point on the network,” he explains.

The Bottom Line

Now that IMSCAN has demonstrated its power, flexibility and ease of use to ASD, the company is in the process of developing further applications that will assist in increasing its overall efficiency and productivity. These include implementing electronic document management systems to handle proof of delivery notes and financial and administration documents. There are also plans for a unique building and equipment photograph indexing system that will assist the operational development department.

ASD are very happy with its choice of document management system. “IMSCAN has given us the flexibility to match our document management systems with our actual working practices. It is very popular with the users and I put this down to the system’s ease of use and stability. Furthermore, the solid, feature-rich software architecture allows us to base our long term document management requirements on the IMSCAN system,” concludes Wilcock.

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Find Out More

Discover why some of the UK’s most successful businesses are using IMSCAN to help their organizations operate more efficiently and gain a real competitive advantage.

Choose IMSCAN and help your business move ahead.

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