An IMSCAN Case Study

Grattan Plc

Grattan Plc is part of Otto Versand, the world's largest home shopping company. It is currently the third largest homeshopping company in the UK and has its headquarters in Bradford, West Yorkshire.

Established in 1912, the company trades under three brands - Grattan, Lookagain and Kaleidoscope - selling a wide range of products including womenswear, menswear, childrenswear, furniture, electrical appliances, toys and gifts. Most products are delivered direct to customers homes via the company's dedicated logistics division Parcelnet and there's a number of ways to pay for them including personal accounts, debits and credit cards.

"The IMSCAN document management system has saved us that most precious of commodities in the business world today – time!"

Carl Bridgewater
IT Project Manager, Grattan

14,000 Documents A Day

For all deliveries, Parcelnet generates a courier manifest that Grattan uses as a proof of delivery notice and for handling customer queries. Carl Bridgewater, Project Manager in IT, explains the consequences, "Anything up to 14,000 documents are returned to us each day from deliveries across the UK and each of these manifests can contain up to 14 transactions. Until recently, all these documents were stored in filing cabinets."

And a lot of filing cabinets! 110 cabinets were needed to store just three months worth of manifests. "Because of Grattan's various customer-friendly pay schemes, such as buy now – pay later, many customer queries are not actually received until several months after the original transaction. If a query came in and the manifest could not be found we were not able to prove that delivery had been made promptly and with sound goods and, consequently, we had to settle claims when perhaps we wouldn't have had to if we had the right information to hand," says Bridgewater.

He continues, "On average, each customer query involved six visits to the filing cabinets before the query could be resolved. This was mainly because the manifest might not even have been returned and filed yet or even that the manifest had already been removed by another clerk. Each of these visits took an average of 2 minutes to complete. That's an average of twelve minutes per query. And considering we take an average of around 1,000 queries per day, an awful lot of time was spent to-ing and fro-ing compared to actually resolving issues."

Listening To Requirements

With so many documents coming from so many locations there was little chance of Grattan's clerks knowing if the manifest was even in the filing cabinet at any given time. Similarly there was no way of managing the progress and performance of couriers. "We had had enough," insists Bridgewater, adding, "There had to be a better way of handling the situation but the sheer size of the task meant that we knew changing the way we operate might create more problems than it solved. Fortunately, we came across IMSCAN.

"It was quite refreshing to meet a software company that listened to our requirements and recommended a solution that, quite simply, would work."

Bridgewater, "A key benefit has been a link between IMSCAN and our mainframe system that means queries are not directed to our customer service clerks until a manifest has been returned. Consequently we can monitor the performance of

couriers and sharpen up their return speeds and also identify problems much more quickly."

IMSCAN can handle electronic documents in virtually any format as well as scanned documents. It indexes and stores documents making them available for retrieval using a wide variety of techniques, for maximum network availability and security. Once retrieved, these documents can be viewed, printed, faxed or emailed depending on the requirement.

Over the first seven months of operation 21.7 million documents were scanned into IMSCAN. "We now have up to twenty people on the network each day using IMSCAN and they are making up to 50,000 searches every month. Indeed, thanks to IMSCAN, we can now comfortably handle over 1,000 queries a day with each one taking no more than a minute. A vast improvement on the twelve minute average we had become used to!" remarks Bridgewater.

The annual input for Grattan is expected to be around 38 million documents. "The massive space saving in terms of filing cabinets and the subsequent tidier office area has been a huge benefit. The sheer volume of paperwork that had to be kept at hand was threatening to take over my department. The effect of a tidy environment on the overall morale and efficiency of our clerks cannot be under-estimated," says Ray Wadkin, Grattan's Admin and Systems Manager.

One of the key concerns for Grattan was the prospect of introducing a modern PC-based imaging system to clerks that were used to working with character-based dumb terminals. "There was a significant learning curve required for clerks to use the system effectively. However, as it turned out, IMSCAN's intuitive and logical ease-of-use, together with a comprehensive training programme, rapidly overcame this problem. Users could see the benefits immediately and were keen to exploit the system to its full capabilities in order to increase their own working standards and productivity."

Collaboration & Optimisation

As well as necessary training, Carl Bridgewater identified the importance of organising the physical workflow of documents effectively. "Before implementing the document management software we carried out a complete analysis of our own document procedures to ensure the most efficient use of IMSCAN. IMSCAN themselves assisted us in this process and ensured its system was optimised for Grattan's use."

"We can see the potential for adding key new applications to the system. We are looking to add proof of delivery documentation from third party carriers that will give us even greater visibility into our logistics operations. Also, we would look to add the ability to actively query third party transactions."

Carl Bridgewater concludes, "The implementation of IMSCAN has revolutionised Grattan's courier claims department. We are now able to respond accurately and almost immediately to virtually any query and this has helped to increase profitability as well as efficiency. Our association with IMSCAN has been very positive throughout and we consider our relationship with them an important long term partnership that has been of huge benefit to the company. More than anything else, the IMSCAN document management system has saved us that most precious of commodities in the business world today – time!"

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IT Project Manager, Grattan

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.

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