



GEV moves closer to vision
of paperless office

GEV

Wholesale

Canon

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Overview

Commercial kitchen spares specialist GEV in Munich carries parts for over 450 manufacturers, holding an inventory of more than 50,000 items at any given time. The company is the critical link between suppliers, service companies and the kitchens themselves, which might be in professional catering operations or in social and healthcare facilities. Customers can find the relevant part for their needs via GEV's printed catalogues, or in the online web shop, where images, drawings and technical data facilitate the search process. Aiming to fulfil 97% of orders the same day, GEV ships an average of 240 parts packages a day, generating around 3500 sales invoices and shipping documents a month, and handling some 300 incoming invoices each month.

This model was generating a huge volume of paperwork and the company's manual document management system was leading to a large amount of time being wasted just searching for information. The company turned to Canon for a tailor-made solution that would improve efficiency and increase productivity. The Managing Director's vision of a paperless office has now become a reality, and in 2012 the company's materials for the 2011 financial year were delivered to its tax advisor on a single memory stick.

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In search of the paperless office

GEV's extensive product range and same-day service offer some organisational challenges. With a team of just seven, it is vital that staff can focus on the core business and not waste valuable time searching for documents. Managing Director Friedrich Staller monitors his team's workflow constantly, and identified that manual document management and processing was becoming an increasingly onerous aspect of daily working life for his team, with staff wasting up to four hours a week just finding information. When Staller calculated that this represented ten per cent of the team's working hours, the need for an electronic order processing and invoice handling solution was clear.

In fact, Staller had been wrestling with the problem for nine years, and had been investigating various workflow management solutions throughout that time. Despite testing several solutions, he found that none quite met his specific operational needs. "My ultimate goal was the paperless office", he recalls, "to process and archive everything electronically and to stop unnecessary printing of email." These goals were underpinned by the need for improved productivity and efficiency, which Staller knew could be achieved by allowing any employee to access and retrieve the information they need for their specific tasks.

The frustrations of the search for a solution helped Staller to refine his criteria. His summary of what he was looking for would no doubt be echoed by many small and medium businesses. "I wanted something robust, easy to operate and adaptable to our needs. There are lots of well designed solutions available, but for a small business like mine with seven employees, some document management solutions would never pay for themselves."

Getting the perfect fit

Staller turned to Canon for advice, and Canon recommended a tailor-made workflow system that incorporated enhanced Business Processes handling (e.g. Invoice Processing) underpinned with Canon's Document Management platform. Having reviewed the solution, he was relieved to find a scalable modular solution which he believed could be integrated seamlessly into his business model. GEV had an existing Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system

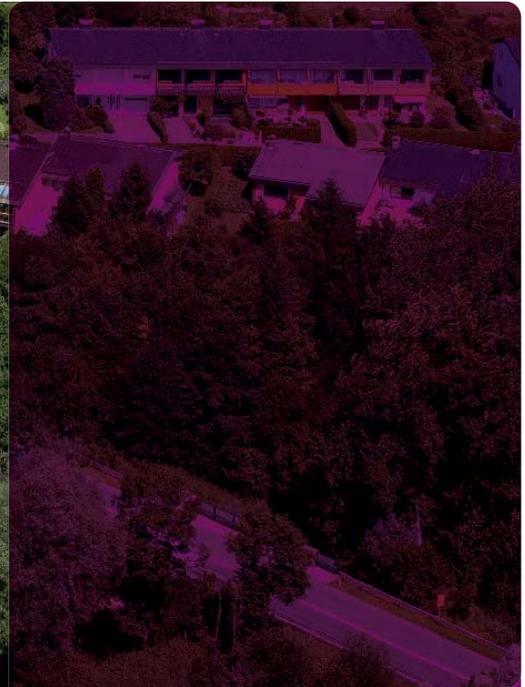
in place, integrating internal and external management information across the organisation, embracing finance, accounting, manufacturing, sales, service and customer relations management. This meant that the selected solution needed to be dovetailed with the ERP system, something that Staller says was easily achieved.

Since the implementation of the solution from Canon, all documents created in the ERP system are automatically sent to the electronic archive with accompanying labels tagged onto the documents to make them easy to identify and retrieve. No staff intervention is needed because the scripts run automatically in the background, triggered by the 'print' command and, once a document has been created, it can be easily searched for using a number of different criteria. As a result, the solution has increased the speed with which GEV's employees can access the right documents, making savings in terms of productivity and efficiency. Security has also been improved, with document users now able to set access rights for folders and documents, and there is no longer any need for duplicates of documents to be kept as they can now be accessed in one place.

He explains "It was vital that Canon's Document Management solution and our existing ERP system worked seamlessly together. The ERP system is critical for business functions such as accounting, and the document management solution has helped me to overcome some of the ERP system's limitations."

"For example, if a customer forgets to include a payment reference with a bank transfer, these payments used to go into a special account which I then had to filter through manually - a very time consuming process. In the ERP system, it was virtually impossible to single out all unpaid invoices for a specific amount, but since implementing the document management solution I can pinpoint the right documents in seconds. Another example is processing open credit notes. Bringing up a list from our ERP used to be a headache, but it now takes less than ten seconds. And it is possible to access all data remotely too, so I can check my accounting data even when I'm away from the office."

With minimal training, Staller was able to set up his own categories for archiving and he has also imported seven years worth



of historical GEV data into the document management system, confident that the system was fully compliant with any requirements of the tax authorities. The solution is also helping GEV to easily find email correspondence relating to documents by using rules to archive all correspondence directly into the document management system, again saving GEV's employees time.

The scanning feature and optical character recognition (OCR) engine in the solution enable scanned shipping documents and cash invoices to be saved as searchable files, which Staller says has helped GEV to optimise business processes. "We have two scan profiles set up on our scanner, one for single-sided documents and one for double-sided. That's all - the system does the rest, using free text search to recognise the most important fields on the invoices and delivery notes, before labelling them and automatically filing them under the relevant category."

Incoming invoices are also scanned or imported and then the data is captured using the Canon Invoice Processing element of the solution. Supplier names are automatically recognised and key data is automatically entered into the system, before being checked using OCR and the solution's set of rules and then validated by a member of staff. As a result, all supplier invoices, whether in paper or electronic form, can be automatically recorded and transferred to the document management system, with manual intervention only needed if an invoice does not conform to the solution's rules.

Saving on paper saves on time

According to Staller, just over a year on, time spent on document searches has been reduced to just 2% of the team's working capacity, an 80% reduction. He says:

"Productivity has increased enormously as a result of this reduction, and orders are booked into ledgers within a maximum of two working days." Based on this tangible time saving - equivalent to one full-time employee's hours - Staller estimates that the solution has paid for itself in less than twelve months. In fact, he is so confident in Canon that he has subsequently invested in a solution to link GEV's warehouse with the document management solution, making for easier workflow integration.

The drastically reduced search time has also enabled an improvement in customer service, with customer queries now being answered within seconds instead of hours. In addition to this, Staller also reflects on some unexpected cost savings that have been achieved thanks to the new system. "The 5000 monthly package shipments generate piles of dispatch notes, which we used to file as hard copies, filling about 16 ring binders a month! They were taking up a huge amount of space and we've now been able to eliminate that, so we're another step closer to that utopian vision of the paperless office."



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Friedrich Staller
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