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Scanning comes in from the cold for Police

BEDFORDSHIRE POLICE

Background

- Bedfordshire & Hertfordshire Police Cold Case handle a huge variety of sensitive reports including court papers, witness statements and photographs.

Challenges

- They needed to digitise paper records to reduce quantity of paper held and produced.
- There was also a demand to make the record content available to staff outside of the primary location or in multiple places at once.
- An EDRM system was being used by one department but in a limited capacity.
- Desired an effective solution to physically locate files in order for the information to be shared electronically.

Solution

- EzeScan was configured to apply metadata to 'sort' digitised records.
- Audit, version control, retention dates and tracking documents were routinely taken care of by digitising record with EzeScan.

Bedfordshire & Hertfordshire Police Cold Case review team overcome an initial mistrust of scanning technologies to achieve space savings and process efficiencies with the help of EzeScan.

Bedfordshire & Hertfordshire Police Cold Case Review Team are responsible for managing information related to unsolved crimes including murder, attempted murder and rape, and so handles a huge variety of potentially sensitive data. Documents needing to be stored and accessed include reports, court papers, witness statements and photographs, many dating back several years.

The team moved from discussion and hypothesis around digitising some of its paper records, to delivering a viable proof of concept and subsequent operational deployment. Both occurred in a short space of time and with minimal resources. A project team of two tackled the following challenges:

1. To reduce quantity of paper held and produced
2. To make the record content more widely available to those who need and have authority to access it
3. To ensure that records were maintained in a secure environment
4. To have provided this as proof of concept with limited project support and minimal budget
5. To change the then current culture from one off storing paper to one that both scanned and made better use of the paper content. It was also to gain support for such an approach by senior management.

Its methodology and application are equally applicable across any organisation; corporate or government that needs to manage unstructured data as part of its overall records management strategy.

At the time there was no clarity about the scanning process or where digital records would be stored. There was awareness that one department in the organisation was using an electronic document record management solution (EDRMS) but it was only being used in a limited capacity to store documents collectively referred to as "corporate memory".

There was also an aversion to scanning because scanning had been previously outsourced and local records managers did not receive the level of service they had been promised. There was resistance, therefore, to any form of outsourced scanning.

Results

- Scanning hard copy records reduced the organisations demand on storage space and eradicated the cost of off-site storage.
- Digitising paper records also helped streamline the process of retrieving documents on demand and making them more readily available across the organisation.

The initial plan was to focus on weeding to reduce the amount of paper being held and to prevent retention of documents deemed to be of no value to the organisation. There was a desire to use technology more efficiently and to be able to scan records. The vision was to develop an effective solution to locate files in physical archive in order for the information held in them to be shared electronically.

A one month pilot to begin to upload volume crime and court files to the EDRMS commenced using EzeScan. EzeScan was configured to apply metadata to and "sort" digitised records, ensuring maximum business benefit from continuing to store them. The business benefits of digitising records were identified as including:

- Digitising paper records, and making them more readily available across the organisation, reduces the cost of storing hard copy versions and streamlines retrieving them on demand
- Efficiencies and security confidence could be better achieved by transferring documents electronically across the organisation, rather than manually
- Audit, version control, retention dates and tracking of documents were routinely taken care of by digitising record.

The proof of concept dispelled myths about the options for scanning. EzeScan can be completely tailored to meet the requirements of the user, and the operator is only required to learn a few basic steps. This is an option that can be deployed into an organisation very quickly provided the groundwork has been done and the options and the required outcomes have been thought through.

Scanning records reduces the demand on storage space, enables rapid viewing of scanned records and ultimately eradicates the cost of off-site storage. The organisation retains complete control over the records it creates, and more importantly, it is able to view and make use of the content of those records at any time.

Digitised documents uploaded to the record management system provided the organisation with confidence that documents had providence and integrity. This allowed for many original paper documents to be disposed of, releasing valuable estate space and providing efficiencies on archive retrieval and searching.

This combined EzeScan/EDRMS solution offers an 'invest to save' opportunity for organisations that need greater control over their own records management, by providing a process for creating digitised records from paper archives in a few simple steps.

About EzeScan

EzeScan provides fast, cost effective business process automation solutions including simplified document back scanning, accounts payable, data robotic process automation, forms data extraction, mailroom/correspondence automation and highly integrated EDRMS capture. With thousands of installations in Australasia, North America and the UK, EzeScan is your ideal digital transformation provider.

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