Allison Marine Contractors, Inc.

DocStar®

Offshore Marine Support Company Finds Buried Treasure In DocStar

Company Facts

Overview

- Location: Amelia, Louisiana
- Industry: Oil and Gas
- Specialty: Offshore Marine Contractors
- Number of Employees: 300+
- Website: www.allisonmarine.net

Success Highlights

Challenges

- Headquarters location was overwhelmed by physical document storage needs
- Employees in remote locations had limited access to electronic files
- Manual processes were prone to mistakes and inefficiency

Solution

- DocStar® Enterprise Content Management (ECM) with NetConnect

Benefits

- Gained near-instant access to more than one million documents from any location
- Saved time, money, and effort associated with file storage and searches
- Made auditing process easier
- Increased visibility into invoice approval processes
- Simplified company expansion

Allison Marine operates in one of the nation's most critical industries—oil and gas production. It's not unusual for their warehouse to contain decks. Not the kind you host a 4th of July BBQ on, but the kind you land a helicopter on in the middle of the Gulf of Mexico.

But there's one thing that Allison doesn't house anymore: Lots of paper in lots of filing cabinets. "When I took over in the accounting department, we had one entire room crammed with filing cabinets. Top to bottom, front to back in columns," says Jackie Kitchen, Allison's controller.

"At the time, we had three companies, today we have seven. We've grown so much; I can't even imagine how we would have handled all that paper without DocStar ECM. We'd have probably needed tons more room and lots more employees to keep up.

A buried treasure

The story of DocStar and Allison Marine got off to an unusual start. The company purchased the DocStar ECM system back in 2002. Instead of reaping the system's benefits right away, it just sat there. In fact, it was ignored for years. That is, until Jackie Kitchen took over.

"I remember telling our old office manager that I was going to start using DocStar. She couldn't believe it. She hadn't been involved in the purchase decision and thought the system was too hard to use. Truth was, nobody ever gave it a chance. Once we got going, it only took us two weeks to get the system where we wanted it. Then we hired one person to start scanning in all the old accounting files to get rid of them. Pretty soon, we had a whole new office."

What started in Accounting with payables and then receivables eventually moved on to encompass all financial documents within the company. The controller's aim is to eliminate filing altogether. Jim Williams, Allison's DocStar consultant since the beginning, estimates that Allison Marine has scanned over a million documents into DocStar ECM.

Allison Marine is headquartered in Amelia, Louisiana, with other locations in Lafayette, Lake Charles and Morgan City, Louisiana, and in Houston, Texas. Once permission levels are set, authorized users at these locations can pull up documents via DocStar NetConnect—this allows them to access the system's server located in the Home Office right on their desktop. Allison has over 300 users on DocStar ECM.

> "We are completely dependent on DocStar ECM. Everyone loves it. Our president loves it. Even our auditors are impressed with the system."
>
> —Jackie Kitchen, Controller | Allison Marine Contractors, Inc.

Up and running in 15 minutes

DocStar ECM was designed to be easy to use. For example, to find a particular invoice, a user can search in many ways; by invoice number, amount, client, date—any keyword that has been associated with the document.

"You could take in any new employee, and they can start using the system in about 15 minutes. They don't even have to be familiar with computers. In fact, the person we hired to scan in the original documents could barely use email at the time. She eventually became so familiar with our company, our documents and our procedures by using the solution that she's been promoted.

Using a front-end scanning approach, Allison Marine saves time and money on an ongoing basis. Costly mistakes are minimized, as is the need for more space and people resources. Where appropriate, templates can make the system even faster to use. Allison Marine uses templates to quickly input AP and AR invoices, credit memos, payroll stubs and 941 deposits into DocStar.

Next up—deeper deployment

Just recently, Jackie discovered DocStar ECM's automated workflow system. This feature allows an invoice to move smoothly and swiftly through the organization's approval process. "We have a 'Bermuda Triangle' where invoices awaiting approvals just seem to disappear. With the automated workflow, we'll know exactly who has each document—no more Bermuda triangle."

The company is also moving to a new enterprise accounting system, and Jackie is looking forward to the workflow process integrating with that system as well.

"We are completely dependent on DocStar ECM. Everyone loves it. Our president loves DocStar. He can pull anything he wants in just a minute without having to call anyone to pull the file. Any piece of paper anyone gets, they put into the system. Even our auditors are impressed with the system. In our business, audits can take months. But the auditors are almost no intrusion to our daily operations. All we do is sit them at a terminal and off they go."

It's the same with any user on the system. They're totally self-sufficient. "They don't have to call and wait for us to pull a file and we don't have to spend the time servicing their requests."

Jackie Kitchen sees further expansion in the use of DocStar ECM to produce even greater efficiencies across the company. She is working hard to get the project management department to incorporate the solution into their daily routines.

About DocStar

Helping businesses translate vision into action for more than 20 years, DocStar delivers a flexible and innovative enterprise content management and process automation platform. Easy to implement and use—both in the cloud and on premises—DocStar proven technology and global process expertise empowers organizations to operate at peak performance, navigate change, and grow.

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