



Major infrastructure company increases data transparency and accuracy with Adobe and Arch

Country:

- United Kingdom

Industry:

- Infrastructure and Services

Challenges:

- Daily timesheet data collection from a wide range of locations
- Enforcing strict deadlines for submission
- User-friendly interface for consultants & supervisors to complete forms quickly and accurately
- Efficient and accurate data posting into SAP

Solution:

- SAP Interactive Forms by Adobe, delivered with FLM™
- PDF form allows live validation of work order codes
- FLM generates reminder emails to users if a form is not actioned within two hours
- Automatic posting of timesheet data takes place after approval

Results:

- Reduction in administrative work required for data-entry
- Less potential for error compared to the previous system
- Integration with Kaba electronic timekeeping system

www.arch.co.uk

www.amey.co.uk

Amey is an infrastructure and services organisation employing more than 10,000 people and with an annual turnover of £1.37bn. It serves both the public and private sector, with clients in the aviation, defence, education, rail and highways industries. It is a UK-wide company, with over 200 locations.

The main application using Adobe forms delivered in 2009 was a service to capture the timesheets for the company's fast-growing consultancy division which now numbers 1500 professionals. The Adobe form provides a user-friendly means for consultants to enter their detailed work records per part hour. This is then posted into SAP and subsequently analysed by SAP Business Intelligence analytics software. This is a vital process, providing a detailed audit trail for customers and Amey but also drives resource-based invoicing. It is therefore central to revenue generation for the company.

CHALLENGE

The previous system used at Amey was not standardised and relied on spreadsheets to collect data which were then emailed back for manual data-entry into SAP by an administrator. The use of spreadsheets meant that no live SAP data could be accessed by the form users, resulting in too many errors.

SOLUTION

Arch supplied Amey with their Forms Lifecycle Manager product (FLM™), a SAP-certified Powered by NetWeaver application, to speed the development process and provide complete management for the forms in use. The bulk of the implementation work was executed by Amey themselves.

The solution implemented means more detailed data is now available on hours worked and activities. This is captured using an Adobe form without paper and re-keying of data. Moreover, the information can be analysed using BI thus helping verify compliance with the EU working hours directive.

Andy Croston, the key developer in the project, says: "The system uses web service calls to check for existing completed forms avoiding duplication of data. We also use a copy function in the form so users can populate similar weeks automatically inside forms."

A key lesson learnt was that the HR organisation structure needs to be accurate and maintained in relation to job roles, cost centres and projects. This implementation contributed to a data cleansing operation by making it much easier for errors to be found and corrected by users themselves. Another key lesson learnt was the importance of thorough forms process design and specifications being signed off by process owners before implementation.

Amey then quickly developed another Adobe form for the capture of time and activities for daily operatives on sites. In this case the supervisor completes the form on behalf of the team. Clocking-on data from Kaba time capture devices is integrated directly into the form. The form checks that the employee's attendance is valid for a particular date. The supervisor then allocates time to works orders, checks are applied and it is then submitted to the area manager. Again customer billing is directly driven by this SAP Interactive form.

FLM is accessed via the SAP IMG, with user exits employed to enable entry of custom ABAP code to control the business logic of the form. One of the ways this has been used at Amey is to navigate the HR organisational structure in SAP, allowing the form's approval routing to be based on hierarchical relationships between employees rather than their SAP User IDs.

As Andy Croston observes: "The great thing about the HR navigation is that it means the form approval replicates the old human process." The benefit of this is the form routing can adapt to staffing changes without having to be altered manually. Elements of the form can also be made read-only during the stages of the approval process.

BENEFITS

The supervisors and consultants who use the forms have quickly adapted to the new system. Fewer man-hours are needed for data entry, as the automatic data posting eliminates the need for human involvement. The FLM posting engine automatically flags up any errors so they can be dealt with quickly without the system requiring constant monitoring.

The form user can now click a button, which returns the data collected by the Kaba system via a web service. This populates the form fields with the data collected by the Kaba system, greatly reducing the amount of time users spend completing the form, as well as increasing the accuracy of the data collection. There is, consequently, a form-based record of hours that automatically updates SAP and can be easily read, monitored and reported on, via the FLM form monitoring functionality. Any absence is also automatically highlighted for the reader's attention.

The web service capability of Adobe forms, plus their use of JavaScript in the form template design means that Amey can use web-based resources to integrate more custom-built functionality with minimum effort.

FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS

The system went live on 25th April 2009. As a deadline-driven form the system can process up to 800 users logged in and on Friday afternoon it is not unusual for there to be 500 simultaneous users. The forms record over 100,000 hours per month.

Stephen Butler, SAP Delivery Manager at Amey, says: "These new forms processes give the business much better visibility of data and better audit with less duplication. The end user has a very easy to use experience. Adobe forms drive the consulting business."

ABOUT ARCH

Established in 1996, Arch is a leading firm in the implementation of SAP Interactive Forms by Adobe and is the creator of the award winning product Forms Lifecycle Manager (FLM™).

Arch has worked with multi-national as well as mid-sized organisations to deliver forms-based systems across a variety of business functions and industry sectors. In recent years our work has been led by government projects, but we now see FLM becoming of particular interest in Utilities and Financial Services as well as more forward thinking commercial companies.

FLM will develop further in 2010 as the basis for Arch's Correspondence Generator for SAP which will exploit Adobe Flex as a front end for a truly engaging user experience.

Arch has its headquarters in west London and its development and support centre for FLM on the Stirling University Innovation Park in Scotland.



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