DreamWorks
HP leads workflow automation solution, speeds operations

“We’re in the business of streamlining the production pipeline for making movies. We’re not in the business of managing document workflows. For that we lean on our relationship with HP.”
—Sean O’Donoghue, head of IT, DreamWorks Animation SKG, Glendale, Calif.

Objective
Transform document workflow processes to ensure access to the right information at the right time

Approach
Enlist HP expertise to advise and deliver a content management solution to accomplish business goals

IT improvements
• Leveraged HP MFPS as capture mechanism and onramp to digital workflow
• Automated version support ensures contract version control
• Automated notifications and status change flagging

Business benefits
• Impact decision-making process with powerful information search and retrieval capabilities
• Speed contract approval processes approximately one-third end-to-end with digitized workflow
• Improved visibility into both the broad and granular view of contract development
• Fingertip retrieval throughout the organization for digitized contracts and associated process history, annotations and status
• Audit trail and security for every document in compliance with security policy
• Increase employee productivity with capability to review contract material remotely at any time
• Avoid duplication of contract tracking efforts; inconsistent document handling; and version control challenges
• Eliminate waste of time, staff resources and paper in back-office processes

DreamWorks Animation SKG is known for pushing the boundaries of technology to tell a great story. That’s the production side of the house. Until recently, the back offices told a different story. Tom Seib, head of finance for DreamWorks Marketing and Consumer Products. If you walked into Seib’s office, you’d have seen files stacked everywhere. Binders, often six inches thick, covered his desk, sat in his chairs and spilled into the hallway. And he was just one of the people reviewing up to 200 contracts for approval in a given month. Manual processes impacted productivity and consumed resources—from staff time to office space—all along the chain.

DreamWorks decided to change all that. Long an HP customer for technology innovation in moviemaking, the company allied with HP again to streamline its back offices with an Enterprise Content Management (ECM) digital solution. Starting with the Consumer Products division, DreamWorks embarked with HP on a mission to automate workflows, reduce waste, cuts costs and unleash employee productivity.
“My ultimate goal is self-service problem solving—with contracts, and the discussions and documents associated with them—all viewable onscreen on mobile devices, so we eliminate workflow bottlenecks, drive out inefficiency and speed revenue generation,” Seib says. “HP brings us the expertise, technology and relationship commitment to realize that vision.”

**HP MPS business review uncovers content management opportunity**

DreamWorks Consumer Products is the division of DreamWorks that handles merchandising and promotional programs in support of the studio’s film releases and television animation. If you’ve ever seen a Shrek character item promoted at a local fast food restaurant or a toy or novelty for sale at a retail store, this group developed the contract making that possible. Finalizing a deal like that takes a lot of back-and-forth communication—hammering out contract details, processing versions through approval—that could take three months or longer.

Distributing style guides and artwork was another resource-intensive undertaking. DreamWorks used to publish books and discs for shipment all over the world. That process had become cost prohibitive, limited quantity, and didn’t give business partners timely access to the latest approved images.

DreamWorks recognized these processes rapidly becoming obsolete and ripe for change. Managing approved character images in new ways could help strengthen business relationships with differentiated licensed image offerings. More distinctive products and promotions provide an avenue to drive demand and grow the business.

DreamWorks is an HP Managed Print Services (MPS) customer for productivity-enhancing deployment and maintenance of HP LaserJet single and multifunction printers in conjunction with solutions for business efficiency. During a recent MPS business review, DreamWorks and HP stepped back from day-to-day details to take a strategic look at the animation company’s back-office workflows. That led to the Consumer Products content management project.

“When we looked at our production process for making movies, we saw highly integrated, highly efficient workflows based on the latest technology. When we looked at our back offices, we saw manual processes, high overhead and delays,” recalls Sean O’Donoghue, DreamWorks head of IT. “That spelled opportunity. HP knew how to help us create the transformation to meet that opportunity.”

**Teams at HP and DreamWorks guide project success**

HP brings enterprise content management solutions integrated with software partners well matched to project goals. The DreamWorks project included Hyland Software, provider of the award-winning ECM solution OnBase, along with Autonomy Intelligent Data Operating Layer (IDOL) server. HP and Hyland document capture and workflow solutions capture electronic and paper-based documents, integrate them into front- or back-end business applications, automate workflows and enable instant access to data stored in the secure and centrally managed repository. The full-text indexing for Autonomy IDOL provides more control to find needed information with its powerful search engine technology.

**Customer solution at a glance**

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“Our goal was to replicate documentation in an electronic format to streamline workflow and provide ready access to the information,” explains Sarah Kaleel, information technology project manager. “We had to document what the workflows were and then decide how these should translate into a digital environment. What documents will go into the system? What search and indexing capabilities are needed? When you go to find your file, do you look it up by the licensee name? How else? What’s more, we were integrating all that with another database containing licensee information, so people could search one system for all the information they’d need.”

The second project phase was to ship contract document archives to HP—boxes and boxes of them—for scanning into digital format. HP Enterprise Services managed the entire process scanning nearly 4000 contracts. Along the way, project teams collaborated on issues large and small. How should the digital files incorporate sticky notes—scanned along with the pages or in a separate spot at the end of a file? Good decisions regarding even such details were vital to success. “The DreamWorks, HP and Hyland project managers had a very close partnership,” Kaleel says. “We worked hand in hand, leveraging HP expertise every step of the way.”

Moving forward, HP MFPs will convert current paper documents into the new electronic workflow. Information processes are automated and document flow is optimized among people, applications and devices anywhere in the world.

With the new workflow solution now operational, the first change a visitor to DreamWorks’s Consumer Products office might notice is the absence of clutter. Gone are the rows of filing cabinets looming the halls and walls; clearing them out opened space for four employee work areas. Gone are the piles of files in Finance Director Seib’s office; he recently met with eight colleagues there and people filled the room rather than boxes.

But the changes are far more than cosmetic. Before, if someone wanted to see something from the contract archives, an assistant would have to go find that document—which might sit in a filing cabinet somewhere or in the review queue on someone’s desk. Older contracts would be stored offsite due to space constraints. With contracts active for three to four years, there was an obvious proliferation of files needed both for access and legal compliance. Now authorized employees have fingertip access—at the office, at home or on mobile devices on the road, freeing their office time for priority work. The information is indexed and searchable—not only the contracts themselves, but also all related correspondence, in a “supporting documents” preview window that opens onscreen without extra clicks. And now that contracts are digital, the long turn around for retrieval from storage is eliminated.

“I don’t know why you wouldn’t implement a digital solution, unless you like to be buried in mountains of paper and have your hallways lined with black filing cabinets.”

Tom Seib, head of finance for DreamWorks Marketing and Consumer Products

“Our objective is to have the right information at the right time,” O’Donoghue says. “That information can impact our daily interactions with license partners and provide a holistic view to support our business decision-making process.”

“Everything is in one place. Anyone can pull it at any time and it won’t conflict with other people looking for the same information. And it’s much more granular and secure,” Kaleel says. Staff members gathering in a weekly meeting used to bring differing paper versions of the same contract; now they all can look at the
same document online. Style guides are distributed electronically—eliminating printing and postage costs, time delays and limits on what images can be included.

The results: information access for business improvement

The digital workflow reveals the bottleneck if a contract review stalls. If a document waits too long for a signature, that’s transparent and can be easily addressed. “We’ve cut about a third of the business process cycle time out of contract development end-to-end. That translates into faster revenue generation,” O’Donoghue explains.

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Contracts are not only finalized more quickly, easy retrieval to previous contract information also enables better contracts. If a licensee has been late on payments, that information is readily available for consideration when setting new terms.

Better contracts moving faster through the system speeds revenue generation and enables business growth without staff increases. Less paper in the system supports DreamWorks—a company that recycles even its food waste—to meet environmental goals.

How is staff adapting to the new electronic processes? The visible changes from removing the files and clutter are clearly evident. DreamWorks expects ongoing results throughout the business from this enhanced access to information. “Everyone understood the previous inefficiencies,” Seib says. “We have our habits of working with paper, and we’ll go through gentle prodding to completely transition. Change is hard, but ultimately everyone sees the benefits of working smarter.”

Next steps: extend improvements to additional business functions

With the success of the content management deployment in its Consumer Products business, DreamWorks plans to expand the solution to other paper-intensive processes, such as accounting and purchasing. Next up for consideration is the Trademark and Copyright area. “I have teams breaking down my door,” Kaleel says. “They’re not allowed to get more filing cabinets and they’re crying for the software.”

Adds O’Donoghue: “We’re in the business of streamlining the production pipeline and digital workflow associated with making movies. We’re not in the business of managing documents and document workflows. For that we lean on the expertise of HP.”