Restore
Digital

Business Sector
Public Authority:
Emergency Service

Organisation
London Fire Brigade

About

London's fire and rescue service are the busiest in the country and one of the largest firefighting and rescue organisations in the world. Working tirelessly to make London a safer city, they not only respond to fires and other emergencies but enforce a strong emphasis on fire prevention and community safety.

Background

For an organisation with 7,000 employees and 113 fire stations across London, the cost and time involved in storing, transferring and maintaining paper files was placing increasing pressures on the Fire Brigade.

The three primary sources of paper at the Brigade were their mailroom, their HR records and their fire safety case files. These were becoming complex to manage in their current format and were increasing the risk of errors. With the Brigade moving to a SharePoint system they decided the time was right to review their entire document management processes.

Case Study

The Digital Mailroom

One major area to address were the volumes of paper mail received daily. Once post was distributed around the business it was simply compounding the volume of paper circulating the organisation. So, the idea of a digital mailroom was explored.

Prior to introducing a digital mailroom the Records Management team issued a survey to all department heads aiming to identify their general reaction, gain a clear idea of volumes, and to calculate the number of document exceptions i.e. those files that were not appropriate to be scanned.

After receiving a positive reaction to the survey, the digital mailroom was designed. All HQ and Fire Safety mail now arrives twice daily at the Brigade's head office and is separated into scanning or non-scanning pigeon holes. Depending on the nature of the document, once scanned they are either sent directly to the relevant staff inbox or to a shared mailbox, where the electronic filing in SharePoint is managed by an administrator.

Restore have provided the scanning solution currently in use at their digital mailroom along with a SharePoint release script enabling the automatic movement of files from their scanning software into the correct SharePoint library. In addition to the suite of scanning equipment and software, Restore also provided training for the Brigade's mailroom staff and continues to deliver the ongoing support and maintenance.

HR Records Scanning Solution

Managing their HR files for 7,000 employees in paper format had resulted in misfiled records in disparate locations. Plus, as legislation, including the Data Protection Act and business needs requiring HR files to be stored for a period of time, physical storage space had become an issue.

The Brigade's decision to move to SharePoint meant a solution was required to scan and upload all new HR files directly into this software. The Document Management staff took over responsibility for scanning all HR files and, utilising the SharePoint release script from Restore, began uploading all electronic documents directly into an individual employee's folder on SharePoint. This process would then alert the HR team to newly uploaded files requiring action.

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Fire Safety Case Files Solution

The Brigade's fire safety related documentation originates from all over London. The existing disparate management of these files had resulted in issues with the classification of buildings and related documents, making it hard to relocate information accurately.

The hard copy safety documents are now scanned at head office and stored in a triage area online. From there, the relevant fire safety officer can pick up their documents electronically, filing them into the appropriate SharePoint area and allocating the next action to the relevant Inspector.

The Results

During this implementation process the London Fire Brigade discovered there were very few document types that had to be kept in hard copy for more than three months. As a result, an electronic document capture solution that significantly reduces paper storage costs, increased the ease at which information could be retrieved, and enables faster cross site communication offering instant benefits to the Brigade.

In addition, staff saved time, particularly across the mail services area. With at least 1,000 different documents scanned each week, efficiencies were also evident within each department as less time was spent filing and retrieving information.

David Morris, Authority Document Manager continues "The invaluable benefit for us is the extra confidence we can have in the accuracy of our documentation plus our ability to share critical information across employees and sites with increasing speed".

With an official mail distribution policy in place, their capture solution now offers the London Fire Brigade the structure with which to further improve their document management processes, and other projects have increasingly automated their SharePoint filing processes.

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