Human Resource Management that Makes Sense

Simple customization of M-Files by GESTFORM and Capgemini results in a low cost, flexible, and user-friendly solution

"There is a growing trend for HR outsourcing. Some years ago, companies would outsource processing of a single task, like payroll, but now it has widened to include everyday administration," explains Marie-Hélène Lanoe, Director of Sales at the business consultancy GESTFORM. "More and more companies are looking for these larger solutions. A third party provides essentially the same business processes as an internal HR department, but much of the paperwork is now electronic and the workflow automated."

GESTFORM is capitalizing on the increasing demand for outsourcing Human Resources. A group of nearly 300 specialists play the role of an HR department for numerous firms throughout Europe, notably among them is one of the world's largest business consultancies, Capgemini. It was in partnership with Capgemini that GESTFORM first developed its distributed HRM (Human Resources Management) file system, called St@ff. GESTFORM perfected the approach at Capgemeni's branch offices, testing the software with over eight million personnel documents.

Optimizing HR efficiency

Similarly, with St@ff they can fill out HR forms digitally from their workstations. The forms save as regular documents and at the same time the filled-in blanks are also recorded in database fields. In effect, the automated forms perform the data entry and processing that would have eaten up time in an HR department using paper forms. Filling out an electronic form also sends a work request to the appropriate administrator, immediately initiating a new HR process.

And the St@ff solution proves that all of this can be achieved for relatively low cost by using already existing platforms. File queries operate through a simple interface that runs in an Internet browser and can be flexibly changed. File handling and workflow rules are implemented with a common document management solution for Windows already on the market.

Employing the logic of M-Files

GESTFORM built St@ff on document management solution called M-Files. Easy-to-use yet powerful, M-Files has grown in popularity due to its ability to be customized for specific applications throughout a wide range of industries, as well as its affordability.

Instead of the typical system of folders and subfolders that implicitly classifies files based on a "location," M-Files employs a different and more robust logical

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approach. It allows users to define metadata key words and properties for each stored file, analogous to placing tags on a blog post.

With a wide range of user-definable properties, including document type, author, date, project number, and literally any other custom category, a file gains a unique identity that independent of file location. Managers can use any combination of these properties to search through all of the company's digital content, sorting through documents in different ways.

This metadata-driven approach makes for faster retrieval of documents, In GESTFORM's test run at Capgemini, the development team monitored use of 7000 documents over a six-month time frame. The results indicated that, on average, each employee searches for each file 10 times per year. When employees manually search through file cabinets – or even hunt and peck through various folders on hard drives and servers -- it places a drag on nearly every office process. M-Files, on the other hand, retrieves the right document in a matter of seconds, usually through a search on one or two keywords.

This efficient system of classification has made M-Files the shortest road to digital document management for a wide range of office settings, from manufacturing and engineering to government and health care. In addition, GESTFORM discovered that M-Files has strengths that are especially important in the world of human resources.

The graduated access requirement

"We originally benchmarked many electronic document management solutions, but we selected M-Files because it was the only system that offers two major advantages.

"The first is the ability to give file access to a large number of users without it being extremely expensive," explains Lanoe, "and the second -- which is ultimately more important for St@ff's functionality -- is how M-Files controls who may find and view particular documents in the system. We have the capability to very accurately manage who gains access to confidential HR documents.",

"Managers need to be confident that all the personnel information contained in the system will only be accessible by authorized individuals," she says. Boundaries of confidentiality also need to be defined around different roles and for different purposes. Only an HR director can see items with personal tax ID numbers, for instance. Employees should be able to see their own contracts and wages, but not those of their coworkers. Current managers can browse through recent worker performance reviews, but not those from previous managers.

M-Files supports Microsoft Active Directory, so existing Windows user accounts and user groups – along with their password authentication -- can be used to access M-Files and define file access permissions.

GESTFORM can overlay different access permissions to different sets of files according to the specific business rules of the organization, just by defining some additional metadata tags and applying the appropriate permissions to groups of users on the network.

Far and away

Through its virtual St@ff solution and its real-world HR staff in Paris, GESTFORM takes on the typical responsibilities of an internal HR department, such as

preparations of employment contracts, orientation for new hires, expense report processing, payroll, and documenting worker performance evaluations or disputes. Lanoe also points out the service also maintains accurate recordkeeping to keep up with governmental regulatory requirements, including filings to certain agencies and institutions associated with healthcare and welfare.

Outsourcing HR, she says, not only reduces day-to-day costs, it is a smart way to restructure company operations, simultaneously upgrading practices to paperless methods while also centralizing HR from multiple offices throughout the country.

"It is better for small branch offices now because there is no longer a downside to centralized HR as it was in the past. If HR is in Paris and your office is in Lyon, you had to wait longer for processing – sending in forms and waiting for a reply back. Now with electronic documents and automated workflow response is almost instantaneous for most HR tasks."

What makes HR outsourcing successful is remote access to information and real-time processing of requests. Employees and their managers should be able to refer to personnel information and navigate the system without a lot of effort to find the information or forms they need. The usability of the HR software is far and away the greatest asset of GESTFORM's approach.

About GESTFORM
For more information about GESTFORM and its St@ff Human Resource Management services, please visit www.gestform.com. See a demo of St@ff automatically translated into English: www.gestform.com//flash/staff/STAFF_english.htm. ◼

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