



The DEAT—Pioneering paperless processes within the South African Government

Flourishing tourism industry is integral to the socio-economic growth of South Africa—and a thriving environment is integral to tourism. The mission of the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism of South Africa is to sustain a healthy equilibrium between the two, and thus create a better life for all—an elaborate mission that should not be delayed by cumbersome paper-based process. Thanks to Livelink ECM™ from Open Text™, the notion of a paperless office environment has now become reality at DEAT, enabling the organization to focus on its integral vision for the benefit of all the people of South Africa.

Organization

The DEAT, or the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism of South Africa, is a National Government Department responsible for the creation of a supporting environment that will enhance the ability of both the public and private sector to sustain and effectively manage the Natural Environment alongside responsible Tourism Development so as to contribute to a socio-economic growth that will benefit all the people of South Africa.

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Ernst Karg
IT Director, DEAT

The vision of the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism's entails a prosperous and equitable society living in harmony with natural resources. The agency's mission is to lead sustainable development of the environment and tourism for a better life for all.

Business Connexion is Africa's leading integrator of competitive, innovative and practical business solutions based on Information and Communication Technology. The company has a proven track record in designing and implementing business solutions for many of the continent's most successful public and private sector organizations.

Situation

Communication and collaboration are at the heart of equipping employees within any organization for success—and more so with large companies or Government departments, which may have hundreds or even thousands of employees in geographically dispersed regions.

The presiding Minister of The DEAT, Mr. Vali Moosa, recognized a need to restructure the way his department was conducting business—especially in terms of following a strategic vision to lead the way in Government towards a paperless environment and to set an example on how to effectively manage resources.

This strategic goal is defined in the following excerpt from the DEAT Strategic Business Plan for 'Effective and efficient government,' defining the departmental requirement/key objective to be: "An electronic document management system to provide the Department with effective document management and tracking, intranet, and records management and enable the effective management of documentation flow to and from Director General's office, including proper referrals to the Minister and Deputy Minister by improving turnaround time for documents to at least 2 weeks."

According to Thomas Robbertse, Business Manager at Business Connexion, a business solutions integrator enlisted to aid with project, the classic gap between business processes and the underlying technology systems existed within The DEAT: "Like any organization, employees within The DEAT have a requirement to collaborate with each other as well as external parties in order to fulfill their duties. Prior to seeking the document management solution, this process had been largely unstructured, difficult to manage, and was dependent on outdated modes of communication such as the postal system. Furthermore, the technology systems in place were ineffective, often presenting obstacles to users instead of enabling them to work more effectively."

Industry

Government and Public Sector

Customer

Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT)

Business Challenges

- Establish a paperless environment
- Develop an electronic system to enable the management and control of key documents throughout their entire lifecycle, including document authoring, review, approval, and dissemination
- Create a consistent document management process to ensure compliance with regulations such as the National Archiving Act and the Electronic Communication Technology Act

Business Solution

Livelink ECM

Business Benefits

- An integrated electronic document management system
- Standardization of workflows and documentation processes
- Reduced delays and improved approval processes—from 3 weeks to 3 days
- Enhanced document tracking and audit capabilities
- Improved efficiency and employee productivity
- More effective staff management

Solution

The DEAT set out to find and implement a solution that would deliver improved efficiency and better business processes while reducing the cost of conducting its activities. In particular, the department defined solution requirements to be as follows:

- A complete solution that would enable the management and control of key documents throughout their entire lifecycle;
- A consistent process for managing documents and ensuring compliance with regulations such as the National Archiving Act and the Electronic Communication Technology Act;
- A leading collaboration and knowledge management software with business content, information architecture, document templates, and workflows for each lifecycle phase backed by records management plans and reporting tools that provide a framework for managing documents;
- Ability to manage critical documents throughout a controlled lifecycle that includes document authoring, reviews, approvals, and dissemination;
- A complete solution that includes services to guide installation and validation processes backed by training and support needed to deploy the solution rapidly.

Livelink ECM (enterprise content management) from Open Text proved to be the solution that would set the foundation for the Minister's strategic vision and satisfy the list of requirements posed by The DEAT. The organization launched a leveled project to govern the supply, implementation, and maintenance of an integrated electronic document management system. Required software and hardware were purchased for the installation of Livelink ECM. Given the strategic importance of creating a paperless environment and implementing a document tracking and workflow system within The DEAT, the department enlisted the services of Business Connexion for the configuration and deployment of the system.

Benefits

The department's goal of creating a fully paperless business process has been achieved as a result of the project. Following the completion of the first workflow in the Livelink ECM system, the newly appointed Director-General of The DEAT, Pam Yako, concurred the success of the solution in terms of its alignment to business process and strategy, "The workflow has been sent all the way up to the Director General's office and the Director General approved, printed, signed, and sent it on—those of us who have been using the system are quite excited about what it can do for us."

There is currently a pervading sentiment within the South African government that The DEAT has pioneered paperless processes and that it now has a proven formula for other departments to follow. For the first time in The DEAT's history, two major offices—Marine and Coastal Management Cape Town (MCM) and DEAT Head Office Pretoria—have been able to

achieve meaningful collaboration within a structured environment—a far cry from the snail mail and unstructured approach of the past.

According to Ernst Karg, IT Director at The DEAT, the benefits resulting from the implementation of the Open Text solution include a better working environment as processes and workflow act as a guide to the department's employees: "Particularly in terms of document circulation, such as management decisions, we have seen a marked improvement while document turnaround has improved from three weeks to just three days. Significant savings in paper costs have also been enabled through the digitization of many of the paper-based processes."

Internet connectivity increases mobility—and now The DEAT has joined thousands of organizations that are reaping the Internet's advantages. The department has global offices and connections points, and currently, using Livelink ECM, employees can access and work on documents from any office location or even away from the office. Management can currently conduct more effective meetings by working with always updated electronic documentation. In addition, better information management makes it easier to manage resources and liaise with key people

The DEAT affirms that the approval process has now been reduced from 3 weeks to 3 days. To demonstrate the involved cost savings, consider the following example: if 5 managers, each paid on average R40000.00pm, are involved in the approval process of 4 documents a month, which requires 7% of their time, then the potential cost savings is R8mil or 80% over the year. This example is illustrated in the following table:

		Days in cycle	
		15	3
Nos of documents (12x4)	48		
Nos of managers	5		
Percentage of time required	0.07		
Average Monthly Salary	40000		
Cost of approvals		10,080,000.00	2,016,000.00
Cost Saving			8,064,000.00
Percentage Cost Saving			80%

Evidence to date indicates that the Livelink ECM-based solution leveraged the department's legacy systems; provided strategic support; enabled The DEAT to adapt to current market conditions; and provided the foundation for the department to become a key player in the globalization and delivery of information in the future.

Furthermore, the Livelink ECM solution has contributed to better governance within the organization through auditable 'paper trails' and improved record management. Accountability management has been introduced as evidence is gathered on action taken on documents by each employee in the document circulation process.

"The capability to share knowledge rapidly and seamlessly throughout the organization has been of tremendous benefit, making our employees more informed and more effective in their jobs. The quality and accuracy of documentation is improved, while document losses have been reduced through streamlined workflows and procedures," concludes Karg.



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