



ALABAMA FARMERS COOPERATIVE

STREAMLINES PAYABLES PROCESSES, AUTOMATES BILLING AND GROWS ARCHIVES WITH *doc-link*™

COMPANY

Alabama Farmers
Cooperative

BUSINESS

Wholesale Distributor,
Manufacturer and
Marketer of Farm Products

FINANCIAL SOFTWARE

Microsoft Dynamics® SL

Company Background

Alabama Farmers Cooperative (AFC) is a regional, federated supply and marketing agricultural cooperative. It was created in 1936 and operates for the benefit of its 47 member associations, which include approximately 80 retail locations with combined revenue of over \$540 million. AFC has grown to include more than 2,300 employees through a series of joint ventures and is now one of the largest farmer-owned agriculture related businesses in the Southeastern United States. AFC is the nation's largest distributor of vegetable and herb plants, serving markets in 49 states through its' Bonnie Plants division.

Challenge

AFC processes a large volume of corporate payables as well as the payables for its retail stores as a service. Seventy percent of the volume was from its retail stores. Prior to *doc-link*, managers would receive the invoices, approve them, then send weekly FedEx packages back to headquarters for processing. "Our existing process created a time delay and an expense for paper movement," said Wayne Holt, Chief Information Officer for Alabama Farmers Cooperative.

"The sheer volume of invoices was creating a problem for us at our corporate office as we simply were running out of physical space to store these documents," added Holt. "We were processing approximately 4,000 invoices per month between our corporate payables and the retail stores payables."

Solution

A critical requirement for the corporate payables would be a proven integration with AFC's financial system, Microsoft Dynamics SL. The company selected Altec's *doc-link* management enterprise system due to its integration with Microsoft Dynamics SL as well as its successful history with their high volume SL users.

For retail store payables, invoices continue to go to the retail stores first for approval. Once approved, invoices are faxed to the *doc-link* server at the AFC corporate office and received as an image file ready to be processed by the AP staff members using an in-house developed AP and GL package. "*doc-link* eliminated all of the paper from our process, saving us a tremendous amount of time and eliminating the clutter," said Holt.

Benefit

It didn't take long for AFC to realize the other areas of the business that could benefit from *doc-link*. "We process at least 200 AR invoices per day. We would print to paper, stuff envelopes and apply postage. Using *doc-link* we now print invoices to the system and then route the document to our retail stores via email. Sending 200 invoices now takes 15 minutes. Our stores get the invoice quicker and we get paid faster," said Holt. "We also print reports to *doc-link* that used to consume 800 pages per month - that's a lot of paper to print and file. If our managers want to review a report, they simply find it in *doc-link*."

Next, AFC expanded *doc-link* into the Human Resources and Personnel Departments. Health insurance documents such as Explanation of Benefits are now scanned, indexed and archived. AFC has over 71,000 EOBs in the *doc-link* system after 2 years of usage.

AFC has even begun to use *doc-link* for order processing improvement. Every year, AFC hosts a "booking show" that brings AFC vendors and customers together. A three-part form was used in the past so that each partner had a copy. Today, after orders are completed, AFC's customers come to the AFC booth and have their order forms scanned.

“
doc-link ELIMINATED ALL
OF THE PAPER FROM OUR
PROCESS, SAVING US A
TREMENDOUS AMOUNT
OF TIME AND ELIMINATING
THE CLUTTER.”

Wayne Holt
Chief Information Officer
Alabama Farmers Cooperative



Upon returning from the show, sales order entry staff key the data from the image into a custom program that feeds their Microsoft Dynamics SL sales order processing system. *doc-link* links the order number to the customer and to the vendor. This creative process has eliminated the three-part form, reduced the manual keying to the single index property in *doc-link* and eliminated all of the paperwork that used to be processed and filed. Holt added "We continue to find new ways to use *doc-link* to use help us work smarter."

"Today, we have over 835,000 documents in the *doc-link* system," states Holt. "When we first implemented the system we were focused on the corporate invoice processing problem and found that Altec's integration to Dynamics SL was extremely powerful. That part of the system has worked flawlessly. Then we realized that we could integrate *doc-link* into our inhouse developed AP and GL system for the retail stores payables."

"What I didn't initially realize was how much more we could do with this product. We have expanded the solution as the applications have arisen. *doc-link* is an integral part of our business now," concludes Holt. "I can't imagine doing business without it." ▲

“
WE CONTINUE TO FIND
NEW WAYS TO USE
doc-link TO HELP US
WORK SMARTER.
”

Wayne Holt
Chief Information Officer
Alabama Farmers Cooperative