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Case Study: Park West Landscape Gets ROI Fast with ViewWise®

Successful landscape development projects require the highest level of expertise and professionalism. Park West Landscape, headquartered in scenic Rancho Santa Margarita, CA, has been surpassing that requirement since their founding in 1979. They are among the leading landscape construction and maintenance companies in the Western United States and have 10 divisions spread out across the west to meet the demand created by their reputation.

Of course, success has its price, and one of the problems created by Park West's success involved paper. The 11 separate companies (including their headquarters) created paperwork havoc for their Accounts Payable (AP) Department. They required an electronic document management alternative that could meet their criteria to standardize the process for all 11 companies. They needed this at a price that would enable them to realize return on investment in a reasonable length of time.

There Has to be a Better Way

When Bret Frohlich, IT Manager for Park West, came upon the scene, his first job was to organize all the paper files in the warehouse. The 11 companies generate about 68,000 invoices per year. Park West is on a seven-year retention schedule and paper had been piling up to the point that they outgrew the available space in their HQ warehouse and they had to outsource excess storage.

Park West's onsite warehouse holds over 1,100 boxes. They stored 900 additional boxes offsite at a high monthly cost per box. Plus, they incurred additional charges whenever they needed to get something out of offsite storage. The first thing Park West did was reorganize the warehouse so they could save the outsource fees, but it still cost thousands of dollars to get their outsourced boxes back.

With the warehouse under control, Frohlich turned his attention to newly generated invoices to find why their existing imaging system was not meeting their needs. Park West did have an existing imaging system that had been operational since 2000. However, their existing imaging system didn't function properly at their divisions. They needed a system that would work quickly across their network, so their records would be immediately available company-wide.

The Old Method

Park West quickly realized that it took two months for an invoice to get into their existing document management system. In their old workflow, scanning was outsourced to an outside service bureau that would pick up all the paper once a week and return a disk the following week when they came to pick up the new paper. Frohlich also learned that not every piece of paper was making its way from the outer divisions to Headquarters. Each division had its own variation of how they treated the paper. Some even made their own set of copies as a safeguard.

The existing workflow generated excessive costs. Frohlich was able to pinpoint exactly where the money was being lost. For example, missed opportunities to obtain deeper discounts for rapid payment of invoices.

Frohlich added up all the costs of their existing inefficient system. He realized that Park West could save a significant amount of money by centralizing AP processing electronically.

The problem with centralizing AP processing was that their existing software couldn't enable efficient viewing by the divisions. The database consisted of a 68 MB applications file and 15 GB worth of storage. In order for a person at a satellite location to view a single file, they had to first download the whole 68 MB application and keep it running on their desktop to view files from the 15 GB of storage. It was impractical. They needed a network document management system that worked over the WAN in real time.

The Search for a Solution

When Park West evaluated the specific requirements of a document management software solution, they came up with the following: minimum specifications:

1. A SQL based product that would allow it to work over a WAN. Says Frohlich, "The difference between a WAN and LAN is huge!"
2. Multi-level security and multi-level storage that could be integrated with the existing Windows network.
3. Storage Management capability that would enable them to back up the new files without having to back up the entire 15 GB every time.
4. A Web-based client so users could connect to imaging without first having to install proprietary client software.
5. A responsive software vendor that offered the software at a reasonable price and took pride in highly responsive service and support.

In January 2004, Park West began researching various document management systems that would meet their criteria. They searched exhaustively, even asking the representative from their current imaging service bureau for advice. Ultimately, Park West discovered several companies that offered the solution they sought, but all were much too expensive. Solutions cost \$50,000 and up. Frohlich couldn't justify that high a price tag to management.

"Expensive solutions are for large companies. I couldn't find a solution tailored for a mid-sized company with all the right features, priced appropriately for a mid-sized company's expenditure capabilities," remembers Frohlich.

Always hopeful, he continued researching. One day, he searched Google under Document Software Vendors and got lucky. He found Computhink and their document management software called ViewWise. Frohlich says, "ViewWise had it all, plus, the AIP (Automated Input Processor) that would allow us to integrate with our existing Accounting System. That saves time retyping redundant information into the Document Management System. To top it off, the price was reasonable."

Choosing ViewWise

Park West had extensive conversations with Computhink over the telephone, and they closed the deal in April 2004 without ever having met face-to-face. "There was never a question that Computhink would have come out here if it was necessary," says Frohlich, "But I wanted to do the whole install myself across 10 locations. The telephone discussions we had before I bought ViewWise gave me absolute confidence that Computhink would be there for me after the purchase."

Park West bought ViewWise 5.5 in April and added the AIP in July. Now, their workflow is designed with the efficiency that Frohlich envisioned when he first started searching for a new document management solution. Since that time, expectations have risen and ViewWise has been flexible enough to meet a whole new series of requirements.

Noteworthy ViewWise Features

Now that ViewWise has been running for more than half a year, Frohlich can look back at his wish list and add the following ViewWise features he finds are most noteworthy in daily usage:

- 1. The SQL-based product works well over our wide-area network and the browser-based interface is very convenient.
- 2. We have ViewWise linked to our Intranet and we don't have to roll-out any client software.
- 3. The file-cabinet storage system is extremely flexible and intuitive to navigate.
- 4. The security functionality, which only shows users the files they have access to, keeps people from thinking about or requesting access to restricted areas.
- 5. The storage management functions, which allow us to back up just the current year and archive prior years.

Return On Investment (ROI)

Park West's original ROI plan was to break even in seven-to-eight months. When calculating ROI estimations, they believed it was important to make sure to consider all the cost factors that go into the equation. "There is paper, labor, vendor discounts, overnight charges, the cost of the scanning service bureau and that's just the beginning," Frohlich said.. Park West estimates the savings will pay for the document management system many times over, in the first year alone.

Conclusion

Says Frohlich, "Computhink support is excellent. Since I installed ViewWise myself, I really learned the ins and outs of the system, and they were able to solve a couple of unforeseen problems that challenged me."

"In the final analysis, ViewWise was the only product we could find that met the criteria at a reasonable price for a mid-sized company. I was shocked no one else had anything close to ViewWise, and I looked hard."

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About Computhink, Inc.

Computhink provides best-in-class Integrated Document Management (IDM) and image-enabling software for secure enterprise information sharing. Computhink's products best benefit Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) class companies operating on Windows, LINUX, or Novell platforms.

Computhink has over 4,000 worldwide customers in government, financial services, education, healthcare, industrial and utility organizations. Information about Computhink and its products can be found at www.computhink.com.