



SpringCM Gives Businesses Tighter Control of Documents

Supported by Microsoft® development tools and servers, SpringCM content management software-as-a-service helps information flow more smoothly.

Having plenty of information to draw upon can be great for a business—unless the volume of documents gets so large and complex that employees struggle to find the information they really need, when they need it. When important content is hidden away in filing cabinets or on individuals' desktop computers, the company's productivity and customer service often suffer.

A growing number of businesses are turning to document management technologies for help with these challenges. However, many companies shy away from incurring the high up-front expenses and IT staff time typically needed to install and maintain this type of system.

For these organizations, the ideal solution could be on-demand enterprise content management software from SpringCM. The Chicago-based company

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provides its applications via the Web in a software-as-a-service (SaaS) model, which enables customers to start using SpringCM capabilities in a matter of minutes—with no need to install and maintain the software internally. SpringCM has built and deployed its SaaS capabilities on a framework of Microsoft development tools and server technologies.

“We give companies the ability to centrally organize, manage and share information among their various locations—as well as externally with their customers and partners—while we handle all of the technical integration behind the scenes,” says David Dahl, chief technology officer at SpringCM. “This helps drive more efficient processes, better-informed decisions, greater customer satisfaction and lower costs throughout the business.”

Software Gets Up and Running Fast

Because it is delivered as a service on a monthly subscription basis, the SpringCM software is ready for customers to start using immediately upon setting up their account with just a few mouse clicks. SpringCM provides all of the document management functionality, data storage, security protection, infrastructure, support and training so that employees can focus on their business tasks. Users gain access to the organization’s documents through a Web

browser that provides tools for automating business processes, converting documents from paper to electronic format, searching and retrieving documents in the system, collaborating in teams to create and update content, and delivering that content to various sources through a range of channels. Documents can be entered into the SpringCM repository via the browser, electronic fax, as attachments in e-mail, and by other means.

Recognizing that its SaaS applications had to be exceptionally reliable, scalable and easy to adapt for a broad range of customer needs, SpringCM chose Microsoft platform technologies as a foundation. Microsoft Visual Studio® 2005 is the company’s application development environment, and SpringCM uses Microsoft Internet Information Services (IIS) 6.0 as the runtime environment for its SaaS deployments. Customers’ data is managed on servers running Microsoft SQL Server™ 2005.

“Developing in Microsoft Visual Studio has allowed us to get our software up and running quickly,” says Dahl, noting that SpringCM typically rolls out major product updates to its customers within six to eight weeks of conceiving a new set of features. “We’re able to concentrate on solving customers’ business challenges, not overcoming technical problems in the development process.”

He adds that the management capabilities within Microsoft SQL Server 2005, which help manage data traffic on the company’s Web server farm as customers are accessing their SpringCM accounts, are invaluable in helping balance the load across different server machines. These tools also allow SpringCM to perform routine system maintenance with no disruptions to customers. “Microsoft’s development, runtime and maintenance tools are simply terrific,” Dahl says. “They are enabling us to create more robust capabilities for our customers and bring them to market faster.”

Instant Access for Employees, Customers and Partners

Univar CHEMCENTRAL, a Chicago-based chemical distributor with annual revenues of more than \$1.4 billion, has used SpringCM software to streamline its handling of six distinct content processes that are integral to supporting the company's suppliers and customers. More than 2 million CHEMCENTRAL documents—with another 50,000 added each month—are now managed by SpringCM. In the years since CHEMCENTRAL first adopted this software, the company has increased its annual revenues by approximately 30 percent while its number of employees has stayed roughly unchanged.

Every shipment that arrives at a CHEMCENTRAL distribution center is accompanied by a certificate of analysis that attests to the quality of that chemical product. CHEMCENTRAL must provide a copy to each customer who receives part of the shipment—often more than a hundred locations. Storing these certificates on paper at CHEMCENTRAL's 39 U.S. locations, and hand-delivering or faxing copies to customers and plant personnel, was draining employees' time as well as hindering the company's customer service.

"If someone didn't receive a certificate, they would need to get on the phone to ask for it, and one of our administrative people had to go pull it out of a filing cabinet and fax it," says John Ruther, the company's director of outsourced services. "Logistically, it was just a huge hassle."

CHEMCENTRAL also sought to improve the distribution of its Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDSs), proofs of delivery, pricing letters, invoices and product update notices. Handling these documents manually was time consuming, and often made the information difficult for employees to locate.



Adopting the SpringCM content management software in a Web browser-based SaaS model has enabled CHEMCENTRAL to make all of these documents instantly accessible to employees, customers and partners regardless of their location. Content flowing into the SpringCM application gets indexed and added to a central repository, from which copies can be distributed by e-mail or fax or in printed form. SpringCM also has created online file folders—called e-binders—for many CHEMCENTRAL customers so they can archive and retrieve various documents on their own.

The SpringCM content management system has helped CHEMCENTRAL reduce its labor costs associated with distributing MSDS and certificate of analysis documents by up to 70 percent. Also, preparing and sending product update letters to

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customers through the SpringCM system now takes about 15 minutes, compared with a full day of an administrative employee’s time to stuff and mail the letters by hand.

“By scanning our documents into the SpringCM online environment and providing them electronically to our external customers as well as our employees, we can fulfill requests for information much faster and with less effort,” says Ruther. “We have a detailed audit trail to verify where and when the documents were sent, which keeps our customers and our executives a lot happier.”

That is exactly the type of satisfaction that software-as-a-service is meant to provide, Dahl says.

“We take care of all the back-end details involved in moving the content where it needs to go, so our customers can just think about their business.”

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