



When **The Jockey Club** decided to create a shared finance centre to manage its 15 racecourses more efficiently, an electronic document management system was the obvious next step to allow remote access to invoices. Having studied the form of prospective technology partners, the Club placed its bet on EASY Software

The Jockey Club www.thejockeyclub.co.uk is a centuries-old British horseracing institution, founded in 1750 to promote British racing, and the interests of members and enthusiasts. Today, under a modern corporate structure, it continues to lead investment and innovation in British racing as the largest commercial group in the sport.

The Jockey Club is headquartered in central London, in the same offices as the British horseracing authorities. Its 15-strong racecourse portfolio is the largest in the UK by turnover, attendance and contributions to prize money. It also owns Jockey Club Estates (a property and land management company), The National Stud (a thoroughbred breeding and education arm in Suffolk, transferred from the Government in 2008), and the charity Racing Welfare.

As a successful business, The Jockey Club shares many of the same values of other commercial companies – including the need to run efficient back-office operations, and a desire to keep growing revenues by attracting new members and keeping audiences engaged. In 2011 it introduced racing's first ever loyalty programme, Rewards4Racing; it also continues to be a lead investor in the Racing for Change project.

Heavy going

As an organisation, The Jockey Club employs around 500 people, across 20 locations in the UK. Until 2008, back-office processes including financial accounting were handled locally: each of the 15 racecourses operated and managed its activities independently, in silos. Everything was processed manually, on paper, and records were stored in physical filing cabinets.

As part of the Club's drive for modernisation and a more corporate ethos, a decision was taken to consolidate all of this activity into a shared financial centre in Cheltenham. But for this to work the Club needed to invest in an electronic document management system, so that files could be accessed remotely.



THE JOCKEY CLUB

"Previously processes were 100% manual, relying on paper documents in filing cabinets. This was very resource-intensive and extremely inefficient," says Rob Topping, projects & process manager on the IT delivery team at the Cheltenham finance centre. "Just trying to locate a particular invoice could take anything from five minutes to an hour of someone's time, spent searching through the archives to satisfy a supplier query. This inefficiency was replicated across multiple sites."

To support the move to a centralised, shared function and maximise its efficiency, The Jockey Club needed a system capable of scanning purchase invoices across the group and storing them in a central electronic archive which could be accessed remotely. As the Club used the Microsoft Dynamics GP ERP system, it was important that the new document imaging and management could be integrated with this, allowing documents to be called up through the core business system.

"They're always there if ever we need help - though that's pretty rare! The software just works - it has an extremely low failure rate"

Rob Topping, projects & process manager on the IT delivery team at the Cheltenham finance centre



A two-horse race

After surveying the market, The Jockey Club chose two complementary solutions from electronic content management specialist, EASY Software: EASY CAPTURE, for the scanning of purchase invoices across the group, and EASY ARCHIVE for storing the electronic documents.

"We looked at two potential system providers recommended by our IT supplier," Mr Topping explains. "We chose EASY Software due to the ease of use of its scanning and retrieval solution, and because EASY is a Microsoft partner. This meant its software already had links to the Dynamics ERP system we use, something they could demonstrate immediately."

Setting the pace

Since adopting the electronic document management solutions, The Jockey Club has achieved the considerable efficiency gains it was looking for. "If there's a query or an audit, it's easy to pull up the imaged documents instantly instead of having to trawl through filing cabinets," Mr Topping says. "Everything is much more streamlined, and of course we now have backups of all of the documents."

These additional efficiencies have been put to good use. Rationalisation at the time of the move to a shared finance facility had already enabled a consolidation of administrative roles, and now the ability to access finance documents quickly means the remaining shared-service team can process documents much more quickly. "EASY has taken away the more mundane archiving and retrieval work, and because we can locate content so quickly the team is able to process a lot more invoices," he notes. The volumes handled are typically in the region of 100,000 documents a year.

Gradually, the Club is also reclaiming space once given over to paper storage. "We still have to keep any paper that hasn't been scanned, for a minimum of six years, but those volumes are no longer growing," he says.

Spurred on

The Jockey Club has been so pleased with the additional productivity since adopting the EASY solutions that, seven years on, it is now upgrading its systems to take advantage of additional functionality that will further boost the benefits.

"We're upgrading our ERP system, so we needed to update our EASY systems at the same time," Mr Topping explains. "This has given us an opportunity to add new features - for example a PDF conversion capability that will make it possible to 'read' the contents of scanned documents, rather than just fields that have been mapped onto our ERP system." So, if a member of the team wants to look up invoice relating to 'software renewals', for example, they can search the electronic document archive much as they would be able to search the Internet or an internal database.

In addition to the PDF reader facility within EASY CAPTURE PLUS, which uses optical character recognition technology to read and index content in a scanned document, The Jockey Club will also benefit from a browser-based interface (EASY WEB), making it easier to look content up from mobile devices. The upgraded system also includes Active Directory integration, making access to electronic documents even more seamless as part of users' every-day tasks.

An accumulator

Using electronic document management has been so easy and so beneficial to the finance centre that The Jockey Club is now considering how other parts of the organisations might benefit from similar facilities for storing and accessing records. But it is still early days in the discussions.

Experience has shown that having the support of EASY Software close at hand means the transition to new technology is painless.

"They're always there if ever we need help - though that's pretty rare! The software just works - it has an extremely low failure rate," Topping remarks. "We've probably only had to contact them a handful of times in a given year, and usually that's only because we want something to be tweaked, workflow to be adjusted, or some extra functionality to be added," he says. "Whatever the reason, they're always very responsive and willing to help - and their technical knowledge and understanding of the industry is second to none, so we know we're in good hands."



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