



Great Northern Corporation

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www.greatnortherncorp.com

One of the largest independent producers of corrugated packaging in the U.S. sends over 70% of their invoices electronically cutting related expenses and contributing to a reduction in open receivables.

The Challenge

Great Northern Corporation is one of the nation's largest independent producers of corrugated packaging. As a privately held company, it produces over one billion square feet of combined corrugated board annually, and has evolved from traditional box makers into packaging, shipping, merchandising and distribution experts.

Great Northern first established a relationship with MBM through its office equipment solutions and as MBM learned more about its business, discussion moved toward how MBM could help Great Northern identify significant cost reduction initiatives.

MBM learned that Great Northern was printing invoices on custom printed multi-part forms using outdated line printers. This process required an employee to separate the invoices, break out the multiple parts, insert the customer part into an envelope, then file and route the remaining parts. With over 2,100 invoices being processed each month at the Appleton location alone, the process was expensive and inefficient. "The equipment used to generate the invoices was being phased out and the supplies expense of custom printing these forms, especially at the quantities we needed, could no longer be justified. We knew there was a better way," said Pat Esslinger, IT Director at Great Northern.

The Solution

MBM's investment in understanding Great Northern's business processes allowed MBM to quickly introduce a solution that would completely eliminate this expense. In January 2009, MBM's PlanetPress solution was installed and within two months was performing an automated look-up of customer email addresses and fax numbers through its ERP system and sending invoices electronically wherever possible. Paper invoices are printed only if an email address or fax number is not on file.

Invoice processing was not the only customer-facing function that was affected. MBM's solution was also used to generate electronic bills of lading, quotes, estimates, and order acknowledgements at all of its locations. All combined, Great Northern now generates over 168,000 documents electronically each year, which previously had been printed, routed and filed manually.

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Pat Esslinger
IT Director

In 2009, Great Northern Corporation received certifications from both the Sustainable Forestry Initiative® and the Forest Stewardship Council®. These certifications are a testament to the efforts of Great Northern to be environmentally responsible in how it designs, manufactures and delivers its products. They are important factors in customers' decision making process when it comes to partnering with a company that demonstrates sound environmental practices. As a result of receiving the certification, MBM assisted Great Northern in updating all of its electronic forms, adding the required registration marks and supporting information to maintain its certification.

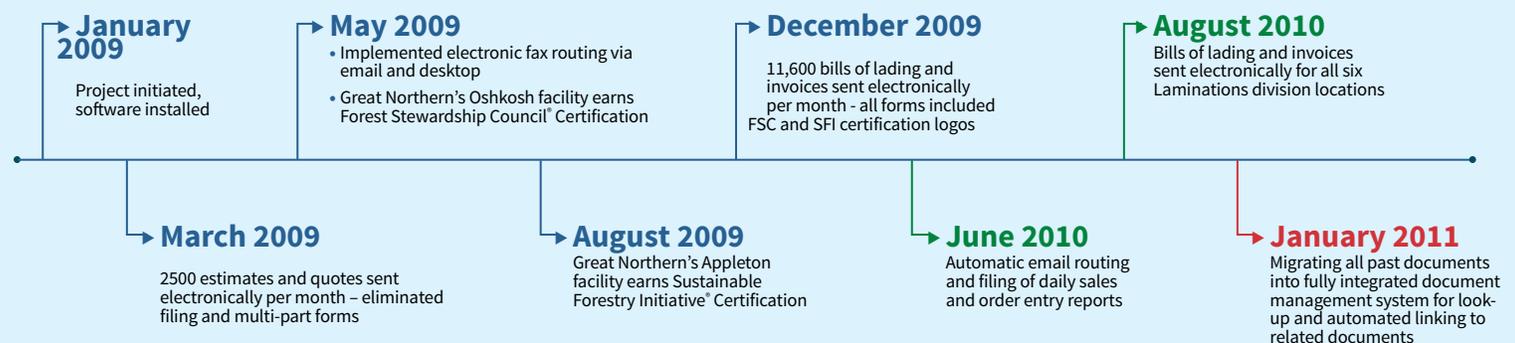
The Results

“What we appreciated most about MBM’s solution was its immediate impact. From the very start, we were seeing the value of the change,” commented Pat Esslinger. As a whole, Great Northern generates 76,000 invoices each year and, with over 70% of them now being sent electronically, not only have expenses been cut dramatically since Great Northern is no longer custom printing and mailing multi-part forms, but the effort also played a role in reducing Great Northern’s open receivables account.

Additionally, when a customer requests copies of past invoices and order acknowledgements, Great Northern is able to immediately retrieve and deliver these documents electronically. In a business where efficiency is critical, this level of customer service sets the company apart from its competition. “We are always seeking ways to make it easier for our customers to do business with us,” according to Pat Lovesee, supply chain manager at Great Northern. “What may have taken hours before, now only takes a matter of moments. Being able to look up and clarify payment questions for a customer, even when the transaction is over six months old, has become a simple streamlined task and our customers appreciate our improved response time.”

From Pat Esslinger’s perspective, partnering with a company that understands the need to be as efficient as possible does not go unnoticed. “One of the biggest challenges through the implementation was the fact that all of our locations operate a little differently than the others. MBM was able to tailor their processes to meet all of the different locations’ needs – and they did it using one single server,” said Pat Esslinger. “And that’s efficient.”

Great Northern Project Timeline



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