

Case Study

Walters Gardens, Inc.

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Walters Gardens, Inc. is the largest perennial plant grower in the world, with its headquarters in Zeeland, Michigan. We thank Dave Walters, the president of Walters Gardens, Inc., for allowing us to share his experience of using our document imaging system.

General Company Background

The company was founded by Dave's father in 1951 and today Walters Gardens, Inc. maintains a workforce of more than 360 year-round employees. Their product line is comprised of nearly 800 varieties of perennials and they harvest approximately 15 million plants per year. Currently, they are adding 100 new items to their product line each year. In 1998, crews set a record by planting 313,000 plants in one day. When asked to what they contribute their success, Dave is quick to answer: "Quality and Service."

Recovering Office Space

The company first became computerized in the summer of 1983 and used a standard paper filing system, filing upwards of 2000 documents a day. Our document imaging system was installed to eliminate the excessive filing and storage of paper files. When they first looked at the system they were contemplating expanding the office because they were running out of room. The system eliminated enough files to put four additional workstations in the office with space left over for further expansion.

Like many people, they were hesitant to throw the paper documents out when the system was first installed. Instead, after initially installing the system, they kept the paper in boxes for retrieval, just in case the system failed and they needed to retrieve the paper document. According to Dave, "They have not had to go back in the box to retrieve anything."

Increased Productivity

According to Dave, when the system was first installed, they employed three part-time people to file paper and on Fridays everyone pitched in to get caught up during their busy season. Today, the picture is quite different. They no longer manually file paper. One employee works part-time to scan and file their electronic PDF documents onto their network. According to Dave, "One person accomplishes all of the filing done twice as fast as it used to take, including scanning and labeling the documents."

Improved Customer Service

The system was quickly expanded to encompass customer service to reduce the workload on their customer service representatives. In the past, when a customer would call, it would require the customer service representative to go get the file, call the customer back, make notes to the file and then return the document for filing. If the customer called back on the same day, much time was lost in retrieving the file because it had not been re-filed yet. "Now there is no reason to hang up and call back," according to Dave, "The document is found from their desktop PC, the customer is serviced immediately, and the document is back in place on the network as soon as the service representative closes the file."

A major advantage of our document imaging system is, "There is no waiting to view the documents. They show up on the monitor instantaneously. This is important because a customer can change an order twenty times in their business transactions." Dave also points out that, "They no longer have the problem of files being misplaced or lost on someone else's desk. That has been eliminated with the document imaging system."

Dave Walter's Observations About our Document Imaging System

When Dave was asked what he would say about our document imaging system, he said, "I would recommend the system to anybody. The learning curve is virtually non-existent. In fact, our main filing associate was computer illiterate. Now she would never give it up; she took to it like a duck to water. Nothing was easier to learn. As for the rest of the office staff, everybody else loved it right away."

When Dave was asked if he wished to add any comments, he stated, "The system did not work quite as expected, it worked better!"