

Mossclare Housing Ltd.

Case Study



Enabling an Excellent Housing Service

Mossclare exists to “lend a helping hand to the homeless“ by the provision of a caring and enabling housing service. The organisation’s aim is to supply affordable, yet high quality housing. Mossclare operates in the City of Manchester and the surrounding areas.

Mossclare Housing Ltd. is a charitable, not for profit housing association committed to providing a high quality, high value housing service to communities and individuals in Greater Manchester. This includes the City of Manchester, Tameside and Trafford. Mossclare was founded in 1967; today the association manages around 3500 buildings and apartments. All administrative maintenance for managing the properties are handled by the 100 employees of Mossclare. Many of the buildings were previously the property of the city.

The organisation’s aim is to provide rented accommodation specially suited to people that are inadequately housed or homeless as well as managing shared ownership accommodation. Each potential development scheme is assessed to ensure up-to-date design and contractual guidance is followed.



Requirements and Organizational Framework

Before introducing a Document Management System (DMS), about 150,000 pages of paper had been collected in their paper archive. Every Mossclare employee must be able to comprehensively advise potential tenants. To make this possible, all of the company's documents must be easily retrieved and viewable by multiple employees at the same time – without spending valuable time on copying or searching for documents on a colleague's desk.

Their existing software, Link2 (a housing property management system), should remain in place, and documents should be readily accessible from within this system. Employees work on about 70 computers running Windows 2000. They planned on storing all kinds of information about real estate properties and existing and interested tenants in the DMS system. This means that many different types of documents from a variety of sources would need to be processed. Multiple employees working in different departments would also need to access the information.

It was envisaged that with DMS, this would all be easier and faster. Mossclare wanted to implement a DMS that would centralise all information and control the workflow around the organisation. They also needed a solution with a low Total Cost of Ownership and high functionality.

Details on all properties, rental agreements, tenants, new applicants and new building projects needed to be easily and quickly retrievable by all staff, thereby increasing internal efficiency and improving the level of service provided for tenants. Duplicate storage in different departments was to be avoided.

Documents in the Mossclare archive generally come from the areas of rentals and property management. This property information includes photographs and architectural plans as well as details about any necessary measures for repair and maintenance. A maintenance audit is conducted every year on each property, to ensure that all properties maintain to the highest standard. In addition, the documents contain rental agreements and receipts, account payables, details about tenants and general correspondence including faxes, letters and e-mail.

Solution

With DocuWare's help, all relevant documents are stored in an electronic file cabinet. Mossclare's staff all work with DocuWare and have direct, simultaneous access to all the documents they need. The existing paper archive was digitised by an external scanning service provider. All documents are completely current and constantly updated, for all to see.

To give authorised personnel the quickest access possible to documents placed in the archive, incoming paper documents are scanned in the mail-room, while faxes and e-mail are captured digitally. Documents now only move through their offices electronically. To generate this workflow, they used specific indexing. All the details about tenants, information about their 3500 buildings such as architect's plans or other necessary repairs and maintenance measures, correspondence between employees and tenants such as letters, faxes, inquiries and contracts - all this is handled the same way today.

Mossclare has to remain up-to-date with data information retention regulations regarding the manner in which a tenant's details are handled. An applicant is put on a waiting list and the organisation matches the applicants to a property in their preferred area. If an applicant reaches the number of points required, they are offered a property; the applicant then becomes a tenant and signs a rental agreement. As stated previously, Mossclare works with the community to provide more affordable properties, helping to improve those communities.

The Task

- Space saving
- More efficient working
- Reduce retrieval time
- Centralisation of documents for better workflow

Implemented Modules

- Active Import
- Autoindex
- CDMAKER
- Recognition

Benefits

Retrieving documents is now very efficient. The staff can find and submit requested documents without ever leaving their desks, never having to waste time searching for missing documents since nothing ever leaves the records room or needs refiling.

DocuWare is helping to avoid many of the operational problems previously experienced and common to associations of this size, such as those caused by the lack of communication between co-workers, duplicate filing by different teams, and a general shortage of physical space.

With DocuWare, a user can track and follow the history of a tenant and property, from the planning stage to handing over the keys. Staff members can reallocate their time to consulting tenants in detail instead of looking through files. For customer service, this means that information can be quickly and comprehensively tapped into, whether it is to aid an interview or answer an inquiry. Tenant requests can immediately be processed. Providing tenants and potential tenants with this kind of knowledgeable support is rewarded with customer trust (faster service, well-informed advice) as well as a rise in employee satisfaction, since they are able to cover a wide spectrum of tasks without spending their time searching for information.

With DocuWare, employees can access all documents simultaneously. Tenants are thereby helped in a competent, quick and comprehensive way. Because of the enhanced service, customer satisfaction has increased significantly.

Time saved from not searching for information and space savings are also helping to improve things in the world of property management. Building and maintenance measures can be more easily monitored and controlled since the available information is always the most current and, whenever needed, anyone can access documents from into the past. Tenant inquiries can be immediately answered. Since copying and paper materials are eliminated and the space needed to house electronic data is far less, DocuWare does not only save time, but real, hard costs.

Marilyn Evans finds it difficult to estimate how much the organisation saved, since so many processes were improved by both a qualitative and quantitative nature. Yet based on her estimate, she believes that their investment was amortised in less than 2 years. In general, she describes the introduction of DocuWare at MossCare as an "IT success story."

The Benefits

- Better sharing of information
- Increased quality of service, both internally and externally
- Reduction in filing

Conclusion

In 2001 a DocuWare solution was installed. With the help of this DMS, their search times were vastly reduced. Documents are now retrieved with a click of a mouse and are always available in their electronic archive. Filing away copies of documents is now a thing of the past. Mossclare's staff can access DocuWare file cabinets directly out of their software, Link2. Various departments are now using DocuWare at Mossclare: From Accounting to Customer Service, Property Management to Sales and Development.

Departments work with DocuWare in the following way: The Accounting team uses bar codes to scan all supplier invoices — they now have a lot less paper documents.

Housing Services scan all tenant information and will shortly be rolling out a file cabinet for applicant details. For example, all rent letters that are printed are automatically sent to DocuWare and are also attached to their Link2 property management system, all with no user intervention. DocuWare is linked to the property management system, so that all documents stored in DocuWare can be retrieved from anywhere in Link2 as well.

The Development team is just rolling out their approach for scanning all plans and documents pertaining to the properties they have developed. The Maintenance department scans all gas company certificates, while the Sales team scan everything related to the sale of Mossclare's properties. Office staff scan information required for their Intranet, which is the central communication channel for the organisation.



"This has been an IT success story for Mossclare. On the one hand staff has embraced this one piece of technology better than any other. On the other hand we are now able to offer a much better service than ever before."

Marilyn Evans, ICT Manager, Mossclare Housing Ltd



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