

SUCCESS STORY

“From all the other PDF tools investigated, activePDF Toolkit enabled me to do what I wanted in the shortest time scale. The ease of integration of activePDF’s software was outstanding”
- Peter Bagnato,
Principal Systems Engineer.

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activePDF Tools Help the Department of Defense Reach Goal of Paperless Office

Company:	Office of the Secretary of Defense, US Washington Headquarters Services
Industry:	Government
Product(s) Used:	activePDF Server/WebGrabber/ Toolkit Professional

Company Overview

Washington Headquarters Services (WHS) is the Department of Defense (DOD) Field Activity that provides a broad variety of operational and support services to the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), specified DOD Components, selected other federal government activities, and the general public. Personnel and Security (P&S) is responsible for directing the civilian and military personnel programs, personnel security programs, and administration of the civilian and military Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaints program in OSD and other organizations that require personnel administrative support.

The goal of P&S is to ensure the personnel programs of these organizations meet the human resource management needs of each customer organization while complying with requirements mandated by established regulations and law. In complying with this role, P&S also helps formulate personnel policy; serves as a principal advisor to top management of the DOD concerning personnel management issues, principles, and programs; and assures that Congressional and other high level inquiries concerning personnel matters are carried out. Serving in this capacity, P&S is subdivided into 14 offices and divisions, each performing specific responsibilities to carry out the mission of P&S.

As an operational support organization, P&S uses computer and information to perform nearly all of its work. Most actions are transactions with high volumes as opposed to documents that are created in a typical Federal office or policy organization. IT resources, such as those being replaced via this project, provide mission essential office automation, human resource processing, e-mail, and web services; protects sensitive DOD workforce data; and meets increasing demands to process and make such data available to the OSD and WHS community. Heavy reliance is placed on the Pentagon and WHS Backbone, as well as its component servers and services, throughout the National Capital Region.

Business Challenge

The global move away from traditional paper documents to secure electronic formats has not gone unnoticed at the WHS/OSD.

Peter Bagnato, Principal Systems Engineer at Advanced Systems Development, explains that the Office was “unable to robustly generate properly formatted form letters and other correspondence utilizing preformatted HTML stored in an Oracle® Database”. The objective was to create a web-based application (called ARMS) that allows the tracking of Security Clearance adjudication information for the Executive level of the Federal Government. “Furthermore, due to PDF being widely accepted in the Department of Defense as the de facto document storage standard, we needed the ability to dynamically generate PDF documents on the fly for storage in a Document management system in an ongoing effort to bring the Department of Defense into a paperless work environment”, Peter added.

activePDF Solution

For the WHS/OSD, the main purpose of bypassing the physical letter writing was to bring the directorate into the PDF standard and to allow a web based (thin-client) capability of the system. Coupled with other activePDF server software, activePDF WebGrabber provides WHS/OSD with the ability to easily store preformatted and customized HTML in an Oracle database and seamlessly and dynamically create a PDF file from that stored data.

Peter outlines that the ease of integration of activePDF's software was “outstanding”. The application written is in ColdFusion®. ActiveEdit® is used to create HTML formatted text for the letter and this data is written to the database using a Cold Fusion template. Another ColdFusion template is used to pull that HTML formatted text and display it within a PDF file created using WebGrabber. The use of all three technologies (ColdFusion, activePDF, and ActiveEdit) is seamless and robust.

The WHS/OSD are using ColdFusion to manipulate and read the database, while running under a Windows® 2000 development platform and UNIX (HP-UX 11.0) production platform.

Why they chose activePDF

“Quite a bit of research was carried out on similar products in the market before we learned that activePDF could easily satisfy our requirements after spotting an advertisement in the ColdFusion Developer's Journal”, states Peter. “We evaluated both Crystal Reports™ 8.5 and raw HTML. However, Crystal Reports was inadequate because it did not support HTML tags above version 1.0. This meant that white spaces could not be recognized. Raw HTML was inadequate because of the necessity to have standard header and footer sections on letters of various lengths. The letters are typically from one to twenty pages long and all must be formatted in exactly the same way”.

Peter had nothing but positive comments about the pre-sales technical support he received throughout the evaluation period of activePDF's products – “Support is unsurpassed. We have never worked with a company that has given us a greater turn around time in answering our questions and finding solutions for our problems”.

Once the solution has been fully implemented, there are possible plans for the OSD to expand this solution within the entire Department of Defense.

Advanced Systems Development is a mature small minority owned business with 22 years of successful Information Technology (IT) project experience 15 years of supporting executive level application development; database administration, help desk and network administration at the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD). ASD currently employs 145 IT Professionals with security clearances. ASD not only supports OSD, but also provides nationwide desktop & network support to the US Department of Labour- Bureau of Labour Statistics as well as for the US Court of Appeals. ASD is a Macromedia Corporate Champion and Alliance Partner as well as the sponsor and organizer of the Pentagon ColdFusion User Group.