

Contract Lifecycle Management in SharePoint

For a global generic and specialty pharmaceutical company

Challenge

Manual contract processes resulted in approval times of up to six months and difficulty tracking contracts.

Solution

A custom SharePoint contract lifecycle management solution provided a scalable and user-friendly system with automated workflows, notifications, reporting, search, and role-based security features.

Results

- Phase I deployment in North America completed in seven months
- Phase II deployment in China, India, and APC completed a few months later
- Immediate reduction in turnaround time for approval
- Reduction in manual work
- Improved visibility
- Streamlined contract processes

Company Overview

The client, a U.S.-based generic and specialty pharmaceutical company, is one of the largest generic manufacturers in the world. With one of the broadest generics portfolios in the industry, its 900+ products cover a wide range of therapeutic areas. Through its subsidiaries, the firm also produces active pharmaceutical ingredients and develops specialty prescription drugs for the treatment of respiratory diseases, allergies, and psychiatric disorders.

Business Challenge

The company's contracts were being processed manually, with documents physically handed from one individual to another for review and signature. This time-consuming approach resulted in approval times of up to six months, causing delayed payments and missed opportunities. It also made it very difficult to track contracts throughout the process, leaving executives with no visibility into the status of a particular document and increasing the likelihood of misplaced or lost contracts.

Solution

The firm wanted a contract lifecycle management (CLM) solution that was user-friendly, flexible, and scalable to support future needs. Since the company was in the middle of an enterprise-wide SharePoint implementation, they decided to replace their existing system with a custom SharePoint-based platform.

HighPoint Solutions was brought in to conduct an assessment of their existing contracting process, which provided a structure for the statement of work and the application requirements.

Once the assessment was complete, HighPoint facilitated workshop sessions to document current processes, define the future approach, and identify the initial requirements.

A prototype of the solution was then designed, incorporating contract management best practices and the intended business process changes. The system design was demonstrated to users in the form of 'day-in-the-life' scenarios with feedback collected to refine technical and business specifications.

Development of the solution took approximately two months, encompassing create, review, and approve processes for contracts as well as notifications and reporting. Workflows were established within SharePoint using Nintex Workflow, based on the organizational hierarchy, to guide contracts through the approval process automatically and notify individuals of contract status and expiration. Contract metadata was set up for over 90 values, which provided a significant increase in the ability to search and manage contracts by tracking basic data such as vendor, start date, end date, requestor, division, and country. Many of these values are set by the system, which reduces the manual effort required and increases the consistency of the data.

The solution also offered universal search and faceted search capabilities, as well as a unique security model. A traditional SharePoint-based CLM solution allows any user to view the full contract, so most firms limit access to the system to just a handful of users. This leaves a significant burden on those individuals, who must continue to answer questions about what information they already have and send contracts to users without access. The custom system created by HighPoint utilized a role-based security model that let every user have an appropriate level of access to the system. Roles were created for regions, departments, and groups, allowing some users to see just a few values on contracts relevant to their team while others retain broader permissions.

Once development of the solution was complete, the firm conducted user acceptance testing as well as system testing. Although no major problems were uncovered as a result of this testing, some modifications to the workflows were required due to changes in the approval process. During this phase, training materials were also created for specific user groups (Contract Requestor, Approver, and Attorney) and deployed online for approximately 1,500 individuals in the United States, Canada, and Puerto Rico.

Upon completion of testing and training, the solution was migrated to the production environment and approximately 32,000 historical contracts were transitioned to the new system.

Results

Phase I deployment in North America was completed seven months after the project began, with Phase II deployment in China, India, and APAC scheduled to conclude a few months later. Although the full benefits of the project were dependent on a cultural shift, the firm saw an immediate drop in turnaround time for contract approval.

By delivering a custom SharePoint-based contract lifecycle management solution, HighPoint helped the pharmaceutical firm achieve its goals of reducing manual work, streamlining contract processing, and improving visibility with a flexible, scalable, and user-friendly system.