



CASE STUDY

Allegheny Energy Uses RightFax

BACKGROUND

Allegheny Energy's electric utility subsidiaries deliver electricity to approximately three million customers in a 29,000-square-mile area that covers parts of Ohio, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia. The company presently employs nearly 5,000 people in three corporate centers located in Hagerstown, Maryland; Greensburg, Pennsylvania; and Fairmont, West Virginia; as well as 54 service centers and power stations across its five state service territory. Electricity generated by Allegheny Energy is delivered to customers by approximately 5,000 miles of high-voltage transmission lines and more than 58,000 miles of distribution lines. In addition, Allegheny Energy is linked to neighboring utilities, all of which regularly share resources.

THE CHALLENGE

A large portion of fax traffic at Allegheny Energy is in-house. Different departments view one another as "customers" and regularly exchange information, invoices and other forms of communication during the course of daily business. Four years ago, Thomas Haynes, a specialist within Allegheny's Information Services department, realized that faxing methods in use at the company facilities varied widely. "We had fax machines everywhere," said Haynes, "and employees were installing many different kinds of fax software." He added that technical problems varied because so many faxing systems were employed. Because Allegheny uses digital phones, each modem needed its own phone line. The numerous phone lines necessary to support modems were expensive to maintain and Allegheny was growing. Haynes foresaw that costs would continue to escalate until a consistent faxing solution was found.

The company that had sold Allegheny its stand-alone fax machines approached Haynes with a fax server solution. "The program wasn't what we needed, but it opened our eyes to fax server technology," said Haynes, who initiated a search for a fax server solution. After experimenting with several products, Allegheny Energy purchased RightFax because of its rich feature set and scalability, and because RightFax licenses lines instead of users.

THE SOLUTION

A long-time RightFax user, Allegheny Energy currently runs RightFax Enterprise Suite, and regularly employs five of the RightFax add-on modules. With RightFax, Allegheny has implemented a consistent faxing solution that has reduced the variety of technical problems and overall faxing costs. Much of Allegheny's fax volume is inter-company between three offices across five states. Internal customers leverage their Local Area Network (LAN) and Wide Area Network (WAN) connections for routing and forwarding faxes between sites, thereby avoiding long-distance fees for internal faxing. "We are definitely taking advantage of the network connection," said Haynes. Not all of Allegheny's faxing is inter-company, though. Allegheny uses least-cost routing for sending faxes external to the company, again saving money on long-distance faxes.

All of Allegheny's sites have felt the benefits, like Enterprise Fax Manager (EFM) and paging support, brought forward by upgrading to RightFax. "We have three servers we like to keep in sync as much as possible," said Haynes. Prior to installing RightFax, it was necessary for Allegheny to open several administration tools to administer identifications,

groups, library documents and printers. "With EFM, we can manage everything from one place. The drag-and-drop feature has been a real-time saver for keeping library documents and forms synchronized on all systems, and the colored status buttons have made it much easier to see if the servers are up and running." If those servers are not performing well, the new paging support offered in RightFax notifies Haynes. "The paging service is a great tool to help us manage the fax servers," Haynes said. "It alerts us proactively to any services that may be down and allows us to work on them before getting calls from clients."

Allegheny Energy has also integrated its RightFax system with Mosaix ViewStar, an open network-based business process automation solution, to automate its accounts payable system. Invoices faxed to Allegheny's accounts payable department are received by RightFax and stored as image documents. ViewStar then moves the image documents into a queue for user processing. The reverse is true for invoices faxed from the accounts payable department. ViewStar manages fax queues for the workflow and uses RightFax to send the invoice. "We didn't purchase RightFax for this purpose, but when a need arose in our accounts payable department, we found a solution," said Haynes. "Because the RightFax Application Programmer's Interface (API) permits customization, we were able to easily integrate it with ViewStar."

"We've been using RightFax products since 1994 and have been very pleased," said Haynes. "RightFax has been a wonderful addition to our infrastructure. Our first RightFax upgrade was so easy, I did two more remotely across our corporate network."

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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