



Bulletin

Managing Office Operations with PaperVault™

Introduction

PaperVault™ is a data and paperwork management system that its inventor – Don Pheil, CEO of DPW, Inc. (S. San Francisco, CA) – developed to manage the company's finances, projects, invoicing, bids, change orders, and other operations. Originally designed for DPW, Inc., the software has been revised and expanded to fit most any size or type of company needs, which is why DPW, Inc. won MCAA's 2006 **E. Robert Kent Award for Management Innovation**.

Initially, PaperVault's functions were relatively simple; it logged jobs, bids, and change orders and retrieved internal documents easily and quickly. Over time and as the company grew, its needs changed and PaperVault evolved to meet them.

Counters

One of the features that distinguishes PaperVault from other data management software packages is patent pending counters that focus employees' attention on tasks that must be completed within a certain time frame. By monitoring the counters, the 78 employees responsible for specific tasks can more effectively manage their daily work schedule. The more immediate the need for a task to be completed, the higher the increment

assigned to a counter so the employee is aware that it must be completed by a certain time. And, once the employee completes the task, the counter is decremented accordingly.

Completion of a task may not be all there is, however. Sometimes, the end of one job triggers another task for another employee in the company. Then, the counter for the new task is initiated which alerts the responsible person that a task needs his or her immediate attention.

To be sure DPW, Inc. employees and management are on top of the work flow, PaperVault provides an instant visual display of who is responsible for what tasks company-wide and when they must be completed. Management can see at a glance where potential bottlenecks exist.

Tracking Project Bids

An excellent example of how PaperVault's counters work is how the system manages bids. When DPW, Inc. receives a bid invitation from a general contractor, the information is logged and assigned to an estimator. The walk-through and due dates trigger the task counters that are unique to each employee in the bid process within the company. Because PaperVault makes

bid information available to everyone on the bid team, critical information (i.e., due date) is not overlooked.

The system works especially well when DPW, Inc. receives bid invitations from several general contractors for the same project. Once a bid letter is created for the first contractor, it becomes the template for letters and other documentation for the other contractors. PaperVault also modifies the bid documents as appropriate for each contractor. If DPW, Inc. wins the bid, all the bid information is instantly converted to project information.

Document and Correspondence Management

Document and correspondence management is the heart of PaperVault. The system was created so that all DPW, Inc. employees could quickly view all the documents associated with a job. The system allows the company to send and receive documents and correspondence from clients and vendors in hard-copy, e-mail and facsimile forms.

What makes PaperVault so much more effective than other document management systems is the manner in which it associates and displays project documents. The program's three-paned display allows users to view internal documents in the uppermost pane and external documents in the middle pane. The bottom pane chronologically displays all relevant/related documents and correspondence once an item from the upper or middle pane is selected, thereby providing the user with an instant history of all communications received for that particular issue. And, issues can involve a paper trail of change orders, RFIs, account receivables, insurance and much more. PaperVault, therefore, enables anyone to quickly and easily understand the background on an issue.

Electronic Mailing

PaperVault knows what information goes in which e-mails. When an employee chooses to create a particular type of e-mail, (RFI, change order, quote, etc.) for a project, the system automatically generates a customized message, including default text and all relevant reference numbers, in the body of the message. The user can fine-tune the text as well. When the message is ready, PaperVault will send it by e-mail or fax to the client, as specified by the user.

Another useful feature of PaperVault is that all associated documents for a bid or project are instantly available for quick selection to be added as an attachment to an e-mail or fax message. Users may either open a dialog box to find a document in the system or use the "browse" function for documents outside PaperVault.

PaperVault also manages incoming documents associated with electronic messages. The system automatically files replies to the relevant bid or project file using a proprietary process. After the reply is filed, PaperVault removes it from the employee's in box, thereby reducing clutter. This e-mail becomes another "link" in the communication chain and will display as a related item.

Billing

PaperVault's features also ensure that invoices are received by clients on specific days each month, as they require. Each project form has a field for the billing due date. Once that information enters the system, a counter is initiated for the responsible employee.

Several days in advance of the billing date, the projects and change orders designated for billing are presented to the assigned employees who immediately know how many billing tasks they must complete for that day.

A screen provides them with the information they need to calculate the billing. Once the task is complete, the counter is decremented. At the same time, a new accounting counter is initiated with the accounting department to prepare and send the invoices. This process is simple and easy and prevents delayed payments.

Although PaperVault cannot guarantee a client will pay his bill on time, it does simplify the billing process and ensures that DPW, Inc. employees and their clients do not miss due dates and deadlines. And, if there's any question about a bill, PaperVault eases the response because the system documents the billing and payment history so completely and logically.

Accounts Receivable

The "crown jewel" feature of PaperVault is the accounts receivable module. While the system is not an accounting program, it effectively manages accounting information to ease the tasks facing DPW, Inc.'s accountants. With a few keystrokes, PaperVault can send an e-mail to the general contractor's accounting department staff reminding them that action is needed on an invoice. The DPW, Inc. employee can attach the relevant invoice and all associated documents, such as signed invoice packages, lien releases and insurance certificates. When a reply

comes in, PaperVault logs and files the message and generates counters for needed actions. The module, therefore, displays accounts receivable information for each project and each customer as well as each invoice. And, PaperVault draws all its information from the construction accounting program without entering into the financial accounting system.

Built-in Flexibility

PaperVault is as nimble as it is comprehensive. The system provides for custom tasks that can be initiated from any screen in the system. Any employee can take on the task, a note field dispenses information and follow-up dates, and counters are triggered to ensure the work is completed. Searches are easy and quick; employees can search the system with a project number, contractor name or address. And, a contractor can adopt portions of PaperVault, rather than the entire system.

Pheil said that PaperVault has helped DPW, Inc. grow. "PaperVault permits us to take on additional work and scale our staff properly as we grow. It is easy to integrate and monitor the work of a new employee."

If you are interested in adopting PaperVault for your office operations, please contact Don Pheil at DPW, Inc. at dp@dpwinc.com or 650-588-8482.