

SMARTSEARCH BOOSTS ALPHA ENTERPRISE GROUP TO HIGHER LEVELS OF EFFICIENCY AND PROFITABILITY

CASE STUDY



BUSINESS:
Office Supplies, Systems
Furniture, Flooring,
Total Light Management
Solutions and
Electric Supply

COMPANY:
Alpha Enterprise Group

OBJECTIVES:
Reduce dependence on
paper to achieve greater
efficiency; automate
workflow processes for
greater document access
and control

A modest investment in SmartSearch proves to be a “phenomenal” value for an expanding, diversified provider of office supplies, furniture and flooring

It might seem ironic that a rapidly growing business enterprise that began life as an office supply company would choose to reduce its use of paper in order to be more efficient and profitable. To Alpha Enterprise Group’s President and CEO Chet Riddick, however, it made perfect sense.

“Having spent 22 years in information systems, I immediately saw the value in using SmartSearch to make our business more efficient and profitable,” said Riddick. “Smart business people understand that paper is an inefficient medium and that efficiency equates to profitability. With SmartSearch, Alpha Enterprise Group has been able to fundamentally transform the way we manage documents and conduct business. SmartSearch has provided phenomenal value. Already, our increased productivity with SmartSearch is generating more than two hundred thousand dollars in cost savings annually, boosting our bottom line. And I believe that we have used only a fraction of the value that SmartSearch will ultimately bring to our organization.”

Capitalizing on his 50 years of experience in the office supply business, James Brown founded Alpha Office Supplies in 1985. That business was the taproot for what grew to become Alpha Enterprise Group, an expanding \$40 million enterprise with more than 60 full-time employees. Today, Alpha Enterprise Group is comprised of a number of divisions including the original Alpha Office Supplies; Alpha Resource Incorporation; Alpha Office Furniture, Flooring and Supplies; and Alpha Transportation Logistics Services. “Alpha’s core competencies have expanded well beyond office supplies,” Riddick said.

Alpha Enterprise Group’s office supply business is a tandem model that includes a partnership with Staples in addition to its own independent regional business. Through its Staples partnership the company serves major accounts such as Lockheed Martin, Independence Blue Cross and Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Massachusetts, offering next-day deliver to any location in the U.S. Within the tri-state area of Delaware, New Jersey and Pennsylvania the company provides “last-mile” delivery to its regional accounts through its transportation services unit, a strong revenue driver.

To address problems that had been “running rampant” as a result of its reliance on paper, Riddick and key team members conducted a top-to-bottom analysis of Alpha Enterprise Group’s core business processes. “We examined every piece of paper we touched, asking ourselves ‘How can we reduce paper and data entry errors while increasing efficiency?’ Then we implemented SmartSearch as an enterprise-wide content management system,” Riddick said. SmartSearch is now fully integrated into virtually every core business process including sales, accounting, shipping and human resources.



ABOUT SQUARE 9 SOFTWARES

Square 9 Softworks is a leading developer of innovative, business-centric software solutions including the award-winning SmartSearch Content Management Suite. Dedicated to making content management available to organizations of all sizes, Square 9 Softworks designs solutions built on open architecture and cutting-edge technologies that drive efficiency and productivity across all business applications.

Through decades of experience with content management technologies in business enterprises of all kinds, Square 9 Softworks has acquired a thorough understanding of document-driven business processes. Intensely customer-focused and highly responsive, the company delivers effective, value-driven solutions and has achieved a reputation for excellence in meeting the rapidly evolving needs of its customers.

Square 9 Softworks distributes its solutions exclusively through a network of highly skilled channel partners from its corporate office in New Haven, Connecticut. For further information, visit www.square-9.com

Furniture sales are often complex, sizable transactions, so Alpha Enterprise Group's furniture unit generates a tremendous amount of documents in PowerPoint, Word and Excel formats, plus PDFs and e-mail, all of which are supported by SmartSearch. Riddick's team mapped out the lifecycle of these transactions and developed efficient workflows using SmartSearch. Now these documents are indexed into SmartSearch using mandatory fields and administrator-assigned codes. This gives management access to every document for every project, categorized by defined lifecycle stages. "Previously, we had poor control of the sales process. Now, I can sit at my desk and instantly see the status of every transaction, regardless of where our salespeople may be," Riddick explained.

Deliveries made by Alpha Enterprise Group's transportation unit generate Proof of Delivery records (PODs). Signed by customers taking delivery, these PODs are critical to the company's collection efforts. The PODs are quickly scanned and automatically indexed into SmartSearch. "When a customer says 'I didn't get that delivery,' our accounts receivable staff uses SmartSearch to retrieve and e-mail the signed POD to the customer – while they are still on the line," Riddick said. "Before SmartSearch, someone had to comb through mountains of paper in our warehouse to find the POD, make a copy and send it to the customer – an extremely labor-intensive process."

Riddick measures Alpha Enterprise Group's return on its investment with SmartSearch in labor costs saved. The company has redirected six employees from tasks that have been simplified or are no longer necessary since implementing SmartSearch. Based on average annual compensation including salary and benefits for these employees, Riddick estimates the company is saving \$228,000 in labor costs each year alone. "SmartSearch paid for itself before the first employee was reassigned," Riddick said. "Just do the math and the decision to adopt SmartSearch should be a 'no-brainer.'"

Alpha Enterprise Group found that SmartSearch was easy to learn, use and support. Transitioning to electronic content management actually freed up space on its servers. In addition, the security of its documents has been ensured through a combination of SmartSearch and offsite backup. "If something were to happen to our facilities," Riddick said, "our operation would be back up in minutes and we would be fully operational again within a day or two – now that's value!"

Would Riddick recommend SmartSearch to organizations seeking to operate more efficiently and profitably? "Yes, absolutely," Riddick exclaimed. "I can recommend SmartSearch unequivocally. Today, businesses must run at full speed, especially when managing documents. Paper is a very expensive medium because it consumes costly labor resources. SmartSearch is an extremely powerful efficiency multiplier that will have a positive impact on any company's bottom line."