

Mining group Exxaro standardises on distributed document collaboration with Kodak Capture Pro Software and Microsoft SharePoint 2010 in its Namakwa Sands division

London , December 20 - Kodak (NYSE:EK) today announced that South Africa-based mining group, Exxaro, has purchased Scan Station 500 network scanners and Capture Pro Software Auto Import Edition software to underpin the implementation of a strategic electronic document management system (EDMS) in its Namakwa Sands division. Kodak reseller, CSX, based in Sandton, South Africa, was selected as key implementation partner.

Utilising Microsoft SharePoint 2010, the initiative will create a single consolidated document management system to facilitate knowledge sharing, provide easy access to information across multiple sites, promote best practice and guarantee legal compliance in terms of document retention, access and security.

Exxaro is a diverse natural resources group with a portfolio spanning coal, mineral sands, base metals and iron ore, with operations in South Africa, Australia, Namibia and China. The world's third largest mineral sands operation, Exxaro's Namakwa Sands business mines rutile and ilmenite - used to manufacture titanium and pig iron – as well as zircon, typically used in the chemical and ceramics industries.

Dirk Short, Namakwa Sands' IT engineer, projects, explains, "We have three main sites in the west coast of South Africa which are about 320 km apart. Our WAN links are good, but even so, there was limited collaboration on a document level, duplication was commonplace and standards were not in place across the business in terms of document naming conventions and control. The project is about bringing everybody together, and creating a system to handle all paperwork from reports, to engineering manuals, and a myriad of office and financial documents."

This is particularly important in South Africa – and in a mining business – where document retention and compliance rules are complicated and paperwork must be held long term: for example, 7 years for invoices and purchase orders, and 15 years for personnel and medical records from an employee's date of exit. Technical drawings and mine plans must be kept for the lifetime of a mine.

The project team consulted with two law firms – Base Inc. and Mostert Opperman – who advised on the retention periods for specific documents so these could be programmed automatically into Microsoft SharePoint.

In addition, employees were interviewed across all sites so that it was clear how they use information, the documents created and the paper flow within the business. This has enabled a taxonomy of documents to be established so a company-wide index structure could be created – with standardised metadata and naming conventions – to help with subsequent search and retrieval.

In order for Microsoft SharePoint to be populated efficiently, the team wanted to deploy scanners which were easy to use and required very little user involvement. Kodak Scan Station 500 network scanners were chosen as they are rugged, compact, offer centralised administration capability – crucial given the three sites – and have an easy-to-use touch screen which can be set to guide user choices.

Short says, "We've set rules per document type and department so importing paperwork using Capture Pro Software Auto Import Edition is easy, staff input is minimised, and accessing information in SharePoint is fully automated. Staff load in documents, just touch icons on the screen and the document is instantly saved to the relevant folder with metadata immediately generated in the appropriate SharePoint columns. Capture Pro is a powerful tool to manage and streamline paper documents and related data into SharePoint making them easy to search and process."

Namakwa Sands is applying Capture Pro Software OCR to documents so they become searchable PDFs, with some financial documents automatically imported into its Mincom Ellipse ERP system.

The Scan Station 500s have been implemented in various departments including HR, engineering, supply chain, training and ISO/quality, as well as mining, laboratories, production, finance, marketing and risk management.

Three Kodak i1220 workgroup and three i160 departmental scanners – able to handle A3 paper - have also been bought for high speed historic back scanning, with Namakwa Sands also using a third party bureau service to carry out some digitising.

Given the business started open pit and surface mining operations in 1994, the project team is scanning personnel records for some 3,000 staff, thousands of historical purchase orders (and associated correspondence like quotations) and 1,200 engineering manuals each containing 100-200 pages for heavy equipment used.

As a multi site, 24/7 operation, historically there was always a risk that pages would go missing if engineers took manuals out into the field to fix a piece of equipment. With the new EDMS, they search for the appropriate section on screen, find answers quickly and print off the relevant page.

SharePoint runs on resilient HP servers based in Namakwa Sands' datacentre in Saldanah, and given all staff access the system via the web, a Riverbed solution has been deployed to optimise WAN traffic to improve network and therefore application performance.

The benefits of the new EDMS have been quickly realised. Access to information is far quicker, staff productivity has been improved, compliance rules have been met and knowledge sharing within the company streamlined. Short adds, "Security of information has been improved too. For example, personnel files don't have to be transported between sites as before. Authorised managers just type in an employee ID number and access is instant."

Commenting on the relationship with reseller, CSX, Short concludes, "Our experience with them has been brilliant. CSX has helped with any issues we've had and after sales service has been superb."

David Stephens, Kodak's sales manager for South Africa, says, "Our Scan Station 500 scanners are ideal for companies who want to deploy an enterprise scanning solution, coupled with the intelligence of Capture Pro Software Auto Import Edition, to form an ideal solution across multiple sites for knowledge workers who require all the convenience of centralised management and control of document and data capture. Together with Microsoft SharePoint 2010, we help businesses leverage meaningful data from paper documents for enhanced collaboration, productivity and compliance."

1. Namakwa Sands has A smelter and its HQ in Saldanha Bay, a mineral separation plant in Koekenaap, and its mine in Brand-se-Baai
About Kodak

Kodak's Document Imaging business enables customers to capture and use valuable information from electronic and paper documents. Our document imaging solutions include award-winning scanners and capture software, and industry-leading service and support. From small offices to global operations, Kodak has the right solution to feed your business the information it needs.