From yellowed paper stacks to digital rental agreements

Haus & Grund Kiel property management is digitizing its mountains of paper with a powerful scanning solution from Kodak

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Michael Raddatz
System administrator
Haus & Grund Kiel

It scans, scans, and scans, eight hours daily, month after month – until long into 2011, the KODAK i4200 scanner of Haus & Grund Kiel Property Management will be busy converting some 50,000 rental and property agreements from paper format to digital format. This is obviously a major task. To accomplish it, they were looking for a scanner that combined speed, quality and reliability with maximum ease of operation. „KODAK i4200 satisfied these requirements 100 percent," says Michael Raddatz, system administrator of a long-established Kiel company.

Haus & Grund Kiel has more than 135 years of experience in house, apartment and property ownership. It started with a property association for Kiel and the surrounding area beginning in 1873, which in 1932 created its own department for the management of its members' real estate property. This developed in 1954 into Haus & Grund Kiel Hausverwaltung as a separate incorporated company Today, about 50 employees manage 9000 apartments. In the context of a restructuring of the tasks, it became necessary some time ago for the employees of several departments at different sites to be able to simultaneously access a rental or property agreement – a task that could not be accomplished using the usual hanging file folders. Against this background, it was decided to set up an electronic document management system, and, in the end, the ELOprofessional solution was selected.

The question was how can one transfer thousands of old documents, efficiently and costeffectively, to a new system? Outsourcing would have been too expensive, so Michael Raddatz took a sample document, went to CeBIT, and used it for a live test with different scanner manufacturers. „Our documentation is in part very old, and in part in a horrible state. The oldest documents date back to 1964," the system administrator explains. „It is a mishmash of thick and thin, postcard size to oversized documents, some on extremely yellowed parchment paper, photos, or glued Tesa stickers. Each document is between 100 and 200 pages long."

Extremely poor originals – extremely well processed

The personnel at Kodak rose to the challenge. The i4000 demo model at the CeBIT stand proved faster than all its competitors, and better at adapting to different documents and providing higher quality final results. The ELO partner Icon GmbH also recommended the KODAK technology: „KODAK's i4000 series is intended for middle sized companies that want to digitize their incoming mail productively and inexpensively," says **Matthias Rump of Icon** who had promoted the DMS system ELOprofessional and the scanning solution at Haus & Grund. "In combination with the proven Capture Pro Software, the new scanner performed well over a broad range." Additional features, such as the Smart Function, allow the sending of digital documents, simply by pushing a button, to destinations such as e-mail, desktop applications, network organizer, and Microsoft Share Point servers.

Training expenses zero

Between March and June 2010, 3500 of a total of 8500 rental documents have already been digitised by Haus & Grund. This was made possible in particular by six apprentices and without them it would not have been possible to carry out such extensive document conversion in so short a time. The ease of use of the i4200 helped

them achieve this. The apprentices were quickly able to perform the operations, without any training. To reduce the load on the apprentices, the company also employed temporary students who prepared the documents. Today, the apprentices take turns scanning the documents every day.

„It is important to sort the documents properly," Michael Raddatz explains. „Before the scanning process, all the pages have to be flush on top, and any adhesive notes must be glued in such a way that they don't cover any text. „Once this is done, the apprentices only need to put the stack of sheets into the feeder, and the scanner automatically pulls them through within a few minutes." Other scanners sometimes mis-feed when a large number of Post-it notes are attached to pages. With the i4200, we can leave the adhesive notes on the page in most cases, and they are scanned as well. Double feeds, which always occur from time to time, are detected better than by its competitors," in the experience of Michael Raddatz. In his opinion, this function, and the ability to capture even small documents cleanly, are the greatest advantages of the i4200. Should the scanner nonetheless occasionally detect adhesive notes that have been pulled in on A4 paper as a double feed, that page will then be erased, the Post-it note is glued to the backside of the sheet, and the page is scanned again.

OCR and indexing with the Kodak Capture Pro software

After scanning, the integrated KODAK Capture Pro starts optical character recognition (OCR). This will later allow full-text searching across the archive. The latest version of Capture Pro is compatible with Microsoft Windows 7 and features improved OCR capability, as well as automatic importing and indexing of images from other sources. Capture Pro contains a template in which the temporary scanning employees enter the number of the renter or property of each document as an index for sorting by keyword. This number then becomes part of the file name of the pdf document generated by Capture Pro, and is transferred to the ELO system for further processing and archiving.

After the digitisation, the old documents are first stored temporarily in cardboard boxes. The scanning team used an Excel list to record what had already been scanned, and what documents are in what boxes, in case something needs to be rescanned. In the medium term, Haus & Grund will then have the paper documents shredded.

SITUATION:

Property management company implementing EDMS. Approximately 50.000 files to be digitised.

OBECTIVE:

Legacy files needing to be scanned rapidly and cost effectively and with minium training.

SOLUTION:

KODAK i4200 Scanner with Kodak Capture Pro Software

COMMENTS:

The better the scanning solution, the easier you can process the documents later.

Michael Raddatz,
Systemadministrator
Hausverwaltung Haus & Grund
Kiel

The better the scan, the easier the processing by DMS

„In general, having an optimal image quality of the scan is important to us," says Michael Raddatz, „because the better the scanning solution, the easier it is to process the documentation in the DMS later." Perfect Page — an image processing technology developed by Kodak itself, with which the i4200 scanner as well as all the other models of Kodak are of course equipped — ensures image quality without manual readjustment.

After the on-site installation of the system by Icon GmbH, Kodak continued to provide assistance to optimise the system during the continuation of the project. „One of our recommendations was to switch from grey-scale scanning to full colour," **Godo Jessen, Key Account Manager Document Imaging at Kodak**, explains. Because automatic colour recognition cannot be used for some typical photography patterns, such as mold on a white wall. With grey-scale, on the other hand, the pattern is difficult to see. Consistent use of colour reproduction allows Haus & Grund Kiel to reduce the scanning resolution slightly, resulting in an average 2/3 size reduction. The advantages in terms of memory space and speed of access more than make up for the minimally reduced scanning rate.

Today, DMS technology and Kodak's i4200 scanner allow Haus & Grund a more efficient work procedure and a more rapid data flow. The renters benefit from the fact that today the clerk who is processing their case can instantly access the required documentation, if it is already available in digital form. Once all the 8500 rental documents have been scanned, the Kodak scanner will be used to digitize property documents, of which there are a good 40,000, and then also to gradually handle all incoming mail. Newly received documents are naturally scanned immediately. If the associated file does not yet exist in electronic form, a new digital file is created, and filled with the current correspondence before the old documents are added at a later time. All in all, the Kiel pilot project is establishing standards that are compatible with effective document processing in Haus & Grund property management. Additional state and local associations of Haus & Grund will soon follow this successful example. All the participants in the Kiel project are confident that this will be the case.

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