

Harry Fox Agency & Digital Designs

Secure Document Archiving

Harry Fox Agency Transforms a Problematic Paperless Solution into a Model of Simplicity, Flexibility and Performance

HFA is the leading provider of rights management, licensing, and royalty services for the U.S. music industry and was established in 1927 by the National Music Publishers' Association (NMPA) as an agency to license, collect, and distribute royalties on behalf of musical copyright owners.

HFA issues mechanical licenses for products manufactured and distributed in the U.S. A mechanical license grants the rights to reproduce and distribute copyrighted musical compositions (songs) for use on CDs, records, tapes, ringtones, permanent digital downloads, interactive streams and other digital formats supporting various business models, including locker-based music services and bundled music offerings.

The Business Challenge

At the turn of the 21st century, HFA and the entire music industry has been challenged with supporting the development of new forms of internet-based media distribution, at the same time that the traditional revenue source from physical goods is in decline. In this environment, HFA needs to license many multiples of its annual physical licenses to enable online music services and provide improved services to its publisher and licensee clients, while also containing costs.

Transforming a nearly 80-year old operation into the digital age has proven to be HFA's major business challenge. Although HFA has long utilized technology to manage their business, in 2005 they embarked on a project to eliminate cumbersome processes associated with archiving and accessing licenses and reports by up-dating technology that had been in place for over 10 years. By adapting their IT infrastructure to take advantage of new technologies, HFA's goal was to improve service by making its systems processes faster and easier to access by all parties involved.

Legacy Applications for an Evolving Business: Time for a Change

With an iSeries AS/400 operating environment that had been in place for 15 years, HFA built many proprietary applications that set the standard in customer service for the music industry. Using IBM's Content Manager, HFA allowed publishers and licensees to access copies of their licenses, usage reports and royalty re-ports by fax within 24 hours or less of the request. But as Web technologies have evolved, HFA envisioned a new system where their users could access and receive information more quickly.

In May 2005, HFA turned to Digital Designs to provide a digital archive and fully integrated browser-based viewing capabilities that would integrate with all of their in-house applications. HFA had successfully used Digital Designs the previous year to overhaul the statement process by which HFA tracks and disburses royalties. For the next project, HFA and their Digital Designs project team, focused on the replacement of the license agreement archive.



HARRY FOX AGENCY Targeted Applications

- Royalty Checks
- Statements
- Licensing Documents

BENEFITS

- Instant access to secure documents for employees and clients
- Increased service levels
- Reduced retrieval time from hours to seconds
- Decreased printing, postage, manual handling and physical document storage by 70%

For years, music licensees had to sign and return hard copies of licenses sent to them by HFA. HFA wanted to drastically reduce the large manual effort associated with this process, while enabling their infrastructure to handle the ever-increasing volumes of transactions.

Implementation

The implementation required converting 4.3 million documents from a proprietary format in IBM's Content Manager to PDF for easy storage in Digital Designs' DocAgent Web. Documents were indexed and loaded by type. Interfaces were written that allowed documents to be securely stored and retrieved by users in any system, based upon their permissions. DDI's DocAgent Web was set up to run on any version of web browser and platform.

Paperless Processes Enable Unsurpassed Service

HFA's modernization of its licensing tools immediately benefited their users.

eSignature, a part of the eMechanical system, allows licensees to sign their unsigned licenses electronically. Now, documents are made available to people who need them, when they need them. eSignature makes the process easier for HFA and licensees, allowing both to save on postage and time.

eMechanical also supports document viewing. Users have direct and complete access to their entire license requests, publisher approvals, controlled composition agreement, and manually and electronically signed licenses history.

In early evaluations, HFA estimates that by scanning and archiving 30,000-40,000 documents monthly for online review, they have eliminated up to 70% of the printing and manual handling of those documents.

By integrating the DDI solutions to their own in-house systems, HFA now offers the industry's best online tools for its affiliated publishers, including the ability to review pending and completed license requests, request the addition and modification of songs in the database, access online versions of licensing reports and royalty statements, and more.

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