

FBL Financial Group, Inc. Cuts Policy Production Time by 80% with Automated Processes



FBL Financial Group, Inc.
West Des Moines, IA
www.fblfinancial.com

Industry:

Insurance

Annual Revenue:

US\$915 million

Employees:

1,800

Oracle Products & Services:

Oracle Documaker

“It used to take one person a half-day to assemble policies. Now it takes less than an hour. This is about an 80% reduction in time to get policy print out the door.” – Kelley Frisch, Director of Annuity Administration, FBL Financial Group, Inc.

FBL Financial Group, Inc. (FBL), headquartered in West Des Moines, Iowa, is an insurance holding company, which offers insurance and investment products through various distribution channels. The captive distribution channel includes more than 2,000 multiline agents who offer life insurance, annuity and investment products through FBL’s wholly owned subsidiary, Farm Bureau Life Insurance Company, in 15 Midwestern and Western states. Property/casualty products are offered through Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Company and Western Agricultural Insurance Company in eight of those same Midwestern and Western states.

FBL was faced with 20-year-old document creation and publication technology that was incompatible with Windows XP. The company’s document creation and publishing processes were cumbersome, with no less than 14 ways for employees to create a document. With guidance from Senior Programmer Tim Crabb, the company’s business and IT departments worked together in spite of challenges, such as:

- A patchwork of unintegrated applications driving print production
- Very limited capabilities for producing attractive print with a consistent look and feel
- Time-intensive document creation and continued maintenance

Even simple tasks, such as defining fonts, lining up page numbers and viewing changes, were difficult and time consuming. “There seemed to be as many types of software solutions as there are

Key Benefits:

- Consolidated all policy forms onto a single, centralized platform
- Eliminated manual assembly of policy documents and associated errors
- Provided a method for last-minute user interaction
- Established and enforced enterprisewide document development and publication standards
- Ensured consistent branding
- Helped the company meet recovery-time objectives for business continuity
- Accelerated implementation of state variations of policy forms from two weeks to three days
- Automated 90% of production of annuity administration policies
- Reduced production time of annuity administration policies by 80%

lines of business,” said Crabb. “Many of them were outdated, and/or homegrown, making it difficult to publish complete document packages without user intervention because the data was stored across multiple platforms.”

The business owners and print team struggled to alleviate slowdowns created by cumbersome processes, such as:

- Creating and managing documents across multiple systems
- Repeatedly creating forms due to lack of common contract language
- Creating and maintaining documents in different formats
- Manually intervening after printing and before mailing
- Disjointed viewing and printing of draft work
- Changing signatures and logos manually, one form at a time

FBL also needed to speed time-to-market and ensure regulatory requirements were being met. The ability to push policies and policyholder documentation out the door faster also was identified as a critical need. FBL knew it needed to consolidate document creation and publish to one enterprisewide, standardized system, rather than rely on a multitude of disparate scattered systems and processes to drive policy production.

Accelerating Policy Document Development

On the surface, document creation and publishing challenges looked like an IT issue, but the situation affected many areas of the company. The project would consolidate the creation and publication of documents into one software system, which also would integrate with FBL’s enterprise content management (ECM) strategy.

Marlene Alberigo, a 17-year FBL veteran, set out to find the best possible solution. Alberigo worked with Crabb to define the scope of the project and assess software vendors and systems, including the industry-leading Oracle Documaker. The main criterion evaluated was the ability to accomplish start-to-finish integration with FBL’s central document repository vendor, and an external print-to-mail vendor. It was important that the selected vendor be able to handle every step of the process, including innovation, implementation, support, training, and bridging from external vendor support to internal staff maintenance.

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Shawna Greenway
Senior Product Analyst
FBL Financial Group,
Inc.

Based on the results of a feasibility study conducted by FBL and Oracle, the life insurance company established a goal of full policy print. By starting in the annuities division, FBL was able to implement new technologies alongside existing systems and revamp processes with minimal impact on business priorities and business users.

The first step was to convert all of the annuity division’s existing legacy forms and business forms to Oracle Documaker. FBL went through a comprehensive reusability analysis by reviewing active forms for reusable content and separating those pieces for inclusion in any document at will. Crabb and his team also set up a library to enable efficient access and reuse of standard language.

Next, images of hand-written client forms, such as applications, were integrated into the Oracle Documaker print stream. A powerful work-in-process (WIP) capability was implemented for documents needing user interaction. Documents that failed to meet certain business rules, or needed human decisions to complete the document package were automatically queued for review. All other documents were passed on to the third-party document repository and print-to-mail vendor. This design consolidated all policy forms into one platform, eliminated manual assembly and associated errors while providing a method for last-minute user interaction.

Cutting Policy Assembly Time by 80%

FBL also established and enforced document development and publication standards. The standards provided for quicker turn around on change requests, and quicker debugging, and cross-function utilization of staff. Oracle Documaker helped FBL

- Ensure consistent branding and corporate look and feel
- Position the company as Web-based and portable
- Meet recovery time objectives for business continuity

One feature that was well received was WYSIWYG (“what you see is what you get”). Before Oracle Documaker, most of FBL’s documents were created in word processing software with print and tag and uploaded to a mainframe, making it impossible to make real-time changes. To visualize the results of their efforts, business users had to wait for hard copy mainframe print to be delivered. If changes were needed, then the whole process would be repeated, resulting in significant lost time.

Since Oracle Documaker's Windows-based platform was a change from Crabb's existing mainframe development environment, he and his team took full advantage of the hands-on training provided by Oracle. "Our team is primarily COBOL programmers, non-Windows based," explained Crabb. "It wasn't until Oracle Documaker that we really started to go more toward a Windows-based development environment. And in my personal opinion, it has been really positive for us."

The life product development and pricing staff give Oracle Documaker two thumbs up. "The time-consuming, multistep process to first create and then proofread a form using the previous technology was painful and laborious," said Shawna Greenway, senior product analyst. "Oracle Documaker is easy to use; and with the introduction of WYSIWYG, creation is even easier. Oracle Documaker allows the actual form owners to see the finished documents in real time, and it allows them to make changes more quickly and efficiently. Due to the improved Oracle Documaker processes, the life product development and pricing staff was able to operate more productively despite a 25% staff reduction."

Oracle Documaker also provides a complete document package in PDF to electronically file with state regulators, improving accuracy and speeding time to market. Manual policy assembly and typing was labor intensive and error prone. Updating and automating the technologies and processes involved in the document creation and publishing phase of policy production has enabled more of a straight-through process for FBL. Kelley Frisch, Director of Annuity Administration at FBL, estimates that 90% of her department's policies are produced without user intervention.

Looking Ahead to Enterprise-wide Policy Print

FBL is well on its way to enterprisewide, full policy print with more than 9.5 million images going through Oracle Documaker annually. Alberigo and Crabb estimate that soon more than 39 million additional images will be going through Oracle Documaker. FBL and Oracle are currently collaborating to design an enterprise print-on-demand platform. There is a growing need at FBL to provide intelligent forms for automating applications and service forms, and Oracle has this capability.

Additionally, FBL was able to reassign resources and employees to other tasks since implementing Oracle Documaker. With the new processes, workflows and technologies, the company is much more efficient and better positioned to meet its mission-critical business objectives. Further, by using an overarching enterprise content management strategy and challenging vendors to integrate technologies to accomplish the company's outsourced printing, electronic storage and retrieval, document repository, and remittance needs, FBL is positioned for future growth.

FBL Financial Group is a holding company whose primary operating subsidiaries are Farm Bureau Life Insurance Company and EquiTrust Life Insurance Company. FBL underwrites, markets and distributes life insurance, annuities and mutual funds to individuals and small businesses. In addition, FBL manages all aspects of two Farm Bureau affiliated property-casualty insurance companies for a management fee.