

Case Study

B&M
Variety retailer

Retailer B&M sustains business growth and productivity with digital document management solution



Executive summary

Name: B&M
Location: Head Office in Liverpool; more than 600 UK retail stores
Size: Over 28,000 staff, serving four million customers weekly
Activity: Variety retailer

Challenges

- Paper-based Human Resources on-boarding process
- Time delays and costs incurred in posting hard copy documents
- Not suited to rapid business growth and peak season upscaling
- Evolving compliance needs also to be met

Solution

- Consulting service stems from existing Multi-Functional Printing (MFP) relationship
- Document management software, DocuWare
- Ongoing evolution towards digital operation of HR and other business functions

Benefits

- HR on-boarding process cut from weeks to hours
- Continued business growth supported and sustained
- Stronger staff engagement
- Business finding efficiency in digital workflows
- Additional areas of operation earmarked to also become paper-less



Challenges

B&M is a fast-growing variety retailer, formed in 1978 and now with more than 600 stores in the UK. Employing over 28,000 staff, the organisation serves more than four million customers every week, selling “top branded products at sensational prices”.

However, while the business has grown quickly, B&M has also suffered from a Human Resources headache: the speed of on-boarding new staff meant the process could not keep pace with the retailer’s dynamic rate of expansion.

The company was using a paper-based process, requiring hard-copy forms to be filled in and signed by new employees in-store. These would then be posted to B&M’s Head Office so that data could be manually entered into its payroll and HR systems. Once completed, the store would be notified by email that the new member of staff was now registered to begin their employment.

Speeding up this document flow was a critical requirement. In particular, the company was feeling the pain of the lengthy process during peak seasons, when staff numbers needed to flex dramatically. The existing manual way of on-boarding employees just could not cope with this.

In addition, B&M was also looking for a system that would support compliance requirements through a secure audit trail, as well as delivering an agile approval chain and improved visibility.

B&M’s IT Director David Grady explains, “We had a requirement to streamline a paper-based process for on-boarding new staff members. It was taking around two weeks to bring in new colleagues, and because of the growth of the business, we needed a way of on-boarding them within 48 hours.”

In 2013, the retailer approached Ricoh, which had first installed printing and multi-functional devices within B&M’s Head Office and stores several years earlier, for a solution to its Human Resources headache.

Solution

Ricoh DocuWare is a cloud-enabled document management software system that automates business processes and workflows by electronically managing and sharing documents regardless of their format or source. It makes documents readily available, where and when needed, with secure and controlled workflows and archiving, and powerful search options for quick retrieval.

It was to DocuWare that Ricoh turned when it assessed the challenges that B&M was facing in its HR administration. The new on-boarding system brought in saw printed new employee registration forms completed and then signed by the employee, scanned into the software and then shared electronically with the HR team, which was notified automatically that a new employee record needed to be created.

This initial phase of the implementation was delivered within a matter of months, giving B&M the ability to sign new staff up and get them working in a matter of hours, rather than potentially having to wait weeks, with paper copies being couriered around the UK.

However, this was just the start of an incremental process of change for B&M, with DocuWare paving the way for further refinements to be made to the HR on-boarding process. This has included transitioning to digital forms and signature pads that link directly into the document management system, so that staff registrations can be completed and signed without needing hard copies to be printed, and the HR department being almost immediately notified of a new employee record.

continued overleaf

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Throughout this evolution at B&M, Ricoh has provided a consultative steer: a keenness to identify the right answers to the questions posed by the retailer, and a capacity to adapt the technological approach as and when required.

"Ricoh's approach has been flexible," says Grady. "It has listened to our needs and advised on potential solutions that fit our requirements. It has then been agile enough to work through our requirements and change as we proceed, to make sure the system is robust and delivers the most benefit to the business."

Benefits

The impact of its transition to this software tool has been profound for B&M: simply put, it has enabled the business to operate and expand at the pace it wants to. It continues to increase its store numbers in the UK, and at peak periods might need to take on several hundred people per week. DocuWare plays a key role in ensuring B&M's people remain productive and agile.

"Using workflow tools and automation can save the hours that colleagues used to spend performing manual activities," says Grady. "We are now able to engage new employees into the business – that is, induct them, give them their contract and put them into the payroll system – within hours, rather than weeks. This is something that legislation now requires, and we would not have been able to manage that without being able to streamline and automate the process. In turn, our new colleagues are able to feel engaged with and valued by the business much more quickly through this streamlined on-boarding process."

With HR documents being exchanged digitally, the HR team can now move fast to raise queries or approve submissions, while the entire process is securely logged and archived, giving users instant visibility of approval status.



"Now the business has seen the benefit of this, we have been looking wider around the business and have identified several additional areas where the process can be digitised and become more efficient," says Grady. "As a business, we will start to reduce our reliance on paper and become more electronic workflow-oriented."

Among those areas that B&M is looking to streamline and digitise are documents relating to apprenticeships, training programmes, purchase orders and invoices, and logistics documentation such as delivery and customs records. In all of these areas, the software can provide secure, digital document workflows that enhance the efficient operation of the business, as well as removing a great deal of duplicated data entry and consequent risk of error.

DocuWare's true value to B&M is therefore only just beginning to be realised.

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David Grady, IT Director, B&M



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