Managing Corporate Agreements to Avoid Business Interruption
Eliminate the risk of losing business due to delayed or expired agreements

"Managing agreements across multiple divisions, multiple partners, and multiple years became overwhelming. Consequently, agreements began to expire without enough time to renew them, disrupting important business relationships..." Contracts Manager

Situation

The customer is a large organization with multiple divisions. A large part of their business relies on establishing and leverage important agreements with customers, partners, and distribution channels. Agreements could exist at many levels in the organization and could include multiple parties both internal and external. For example, a distribution agreement could include Corporate, two divisions, a broker and a third party partner.

All agreements had to be vetted and approved by multiple managers in legal, compliance, sales, and operations at various levels in the organization. All agreements were created and maintained manually using MS Office Word. Signed agreements were exported and emailed to the parties in Adobe PDF format.

The approval of agreements was done manually through emails. This often led to delays due to the unavailability of the approvers. Also, there was little or no visibility as to where each agreement was in the approval cycle, who was working on it and when approval could be expected. No metrics existed that managers could review to improve the process.

Agreements were hard to trace to prior versions. There was no mechanism for maintaining the history of an agreement or business relationship across multiple versions of the agreement.   .

Customer Concerns

The customer knew that there were several risk factors:

- Dissipation of scarce budget resources if the benefits were not captured

- Loss of user confidence if the information was incorrect or difficult to retrieve

- Dissemination of wrong information would adversely affect user business decisions

The customer looked but could not find a reasonably priced or effective solution. In addition, they knew that they required someone with extensive business knowledge to quickly understand the issues and terminology to get to a fast solution with low risk.

They knew that the logic and technology required was far beyond the ability of a power user to accomplish. And, because of the number of business users that would be involved in approval cycles in the future, they wanted to limit the introduction of tools that would require new training.

The customer was also concerned about the security of the information and the ability to prevent unauthorized users from changing the information.

The customer had to find an easy way to be alerted when agreements where up for renewal and an improved collaborative solution that we reduce the time and effort to process and approve new agreements. Users were expecting an easy to use solution, delivered in a web browser, using the Microsoft desktop tools with which they already were familiar.

The customer is a leading Aerospace and Defense supplier with multiple divisions and customers worldwide.

Solution

After searching for a solution, the customer brought in AccessIG, Inc., a Microsoft Certified Partner, as a member of the team to help mitigate the risks and to accelerate the capturing of the benefits. Because AccessIG had extensive business experience the customer did not have to script each step. AccessIG personnel could easily discuss business situations alert the customer to potential upstream and downstream unintended consequences. And, based on their extensive experience, they brought valuable "best practices" experience that their customer could draw upon.

As a result, the customer gained faster benefits at a lower cost due to:

- the acceleration of the process improvements and prototyping phase
- the acceleration of the identification of the cost/benefit
- the acceleration of the identification of avoidable risk

AccessIG recommended using Microsoft technologies for their information solution. AccessIG used their extensive business experience and vocabulary to work with the customer and in only a few sessions had a prototype, using SharePoint, that the customer could exercise which minimized the effort/resources they had to supply. In addition, the customer could imagine what was possible because they could see it and try it using their own data. This methodology helped AccessIG draw the "tribal knowledge" out of the business users so it could be formalized as business rules within the new business processes.

The customer quickly imagined what they needed and AccessIG was able to quickly formulate the information models for creating, approving and monitoring critical business agreements. From this model, AccessIG deployed a SharePoint solution that included the ability to create or update agreements from existing agreements, alerts to notify the managers "x" days prior to expiration, and workflows to automate the process of agreement approvals. The information was much more secure since SharePoint sends only the link to the authorized user rather than sending the entire Agreement in email.

about the mapping process; specifically that the mapping and labeling of data, if done incorrectly, would result in erroneous business process reporting when accessed by the users. Although each division used the same basic ERP application, each system was implemented differently; i.e., how the data was labeled and stored depended on how the software was originally configured. So, they required support from someone who had the business expertise to find and interpret the information stored in the ERP systems.

The business users knew what information they wanted, but, they needed IT support to implement the process improvements. Internal IT departments are very talented in managing the corporate data and associated platforms; however, they are often too busy to be-

Benefits

- Agreements are maintain in a centralized SharePoint system that provides easy access for authorized users

- Managers are alerted to expiring agreements with more than enough time to effect a better negotiated renewal so no business was lost because

- Workflow helped busy executives manage the process of approval with the familiar desktop MS Office tools they already had

- Everyone could see where in the approval cycle each agreement was and when it was expected to be completed

- Agreements were automatically linked to prior agreements and history

- Agreements data could be easily searched using SharePoint tools