



CASE STUDY:

Ricotec delights customers with rapid service powered by DocuWare



Ricotec cuts the time required to approve customer credit from three days to under 10 minutes, while strengthening document security and improving cashflow.

COMPANY PROFILE & OBJECTIVES

Established in Malawi in 1963, Ricotec, a Ricoh business partner, provides private business, banks and government organisations with a wide range of Ricoh products—including printers, print consumables and software. The company is also responsible for securely printing Malawian cheques, and services a country-wide fleet of ATMs.

From processing customer credit notes, quoting for repairs, creating invoices and confirming product deliveries, to managing internal HR processes, almost every activity carried out by Ricotec generates large volumes of documentation.

For many years, Ricotec stored these documents in a maze of filing cabinets. Over time, the company found that working in this way created significant delays for the business—impacting customer satisfaction, sales and HR management.



Faizal Okhai, Managing Director at Ricotec, explains: “We relied on paper documents to handle payments and confirm deliveries, with stamped, signed and verified paperwork from the originating parties. We struggled to collect debts in a timely manner, and our sales outstanding reached an average of 120 days. Payment delays naturally impacted cashflow and increased our need to use overdraft facilities. Crucially, this situation was the result of slow manual processes, not because our customers were unable to pay for services.”

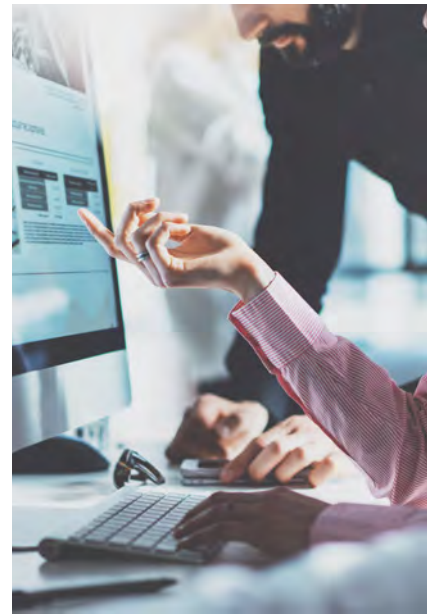
Manual document workflows also impacted customer service. When customers with established contracts and credit arrangements purchased print consumables, locating agreements and verifying credit status could take up to three days.

With documents filed in multiple storage units across its finance and sales departments, Ricotec not only struggled to locate key documents quickly, but also ran the risk of losing important files. “For some of the documents we hold, such as HR information, we are obliged to retain records for up to seven years,” continues Faizal Okhai. “Storing these files physically increased the likelihood of documents being lost and required a lot of time-intensive searching when key files were needed for HR activities, litigation purposes, or for proposal bids to organisations operating in highly regulated environments.”

Customers expect same-day service, especially when they are picking up smaller items like print cartridges. Our reliance on paper documents meant that, in many cases, we couldn’t meet this expectation. What’s more, with no central repository of previous quotes, our customers would receive different estimates for repairs depending on which salesperson they spoke to—increasing the risk of misquoting and creating confusion for our customers.

Faizal Okhai, Managing Director at Ricotec

"The Ricoh team helped us to set up DocuWare to meet our unique needs, and to develop an implementation plan that would reduce disruption to business and deliver the fastest roll out. Thanks to their expert support, we overcame our initial challenges and successfully deployed the solution in under three months."



SOLUTIONS

To enhance operational efficiency and improve customer service, Ricotec decided to digitise as much of its paper-based processes as possible, and engaged with DocuWare, a Ricoh company, to help with its digital transformation journey.

"Initially, we were sceptical about deploying DocuWare and decided to test the solution by using it to streamline our invoicing and credit approval activities," comments Faizal Okhai. "During this proof of concept, we recognized the potential that DocuWare had to radically optimize our key business processes. We we're looking for a comprehensive document management solution combined with a robust process management system, and DocuWare ticked both of these boxes."

Impressed with its initial experience using DocuWare, Ricotec worked with Ricoh to configure the solution to generate quotes, process payments, and store key HR data.

"The project turned out to be more challenging that we initially anticipated, because implementing the solution effectively also required us to evaluate and redesign many of the processes in our organisation, and we started with over-

ambitious goals," remarks Faizal Okhai. "For instance, at the beginning we tried redesigning processes from scratch, which generated a lot of additional work. However, we soon realised that adapting the pre-configured modules in DocuWare created by Ricoh would help to speed up deployment and take a lot of the stress out of the process."

He adds: "The Ricoh team helped us to set up DocuWare to meet our unique needs, and to develop an implementation plan that would reduce disruption to business and deliver the fastest roll out. Thanks to their expert support, we overcame our initial challenges and successfully deployed the solution in under three months."

Due to the high cost of internet services in Malawi, Ricotec opted for an on-premises deployment instead of a cloud-based solution, enabling the company to maintain strict controls over all its business-critical data. Today, over 140 employees use DocuWare on a daily basis to generate quotes, check credit notes, process invoices, and store HR data.

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Thanks to our positive experience with DocuWare, we're actively advocating for the solution and encouraging other companies in Malawi to use it. Already, we've seen increased interest in DocuWare among our customers, and we hope that by demonstrating the benefits we've achieved we can help more businesses to improve efficiency and reduce risk.

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BENEFITS

By replacing much of its paper-based manual workflows with streamlined digital processes, Ricotec has dramatically improved customer service while strengthening cashflow and boosting operational efficiency.

“Using DocuWare to send invoices, submit proof of delivery notes, and process customer payments, we've successfully reduced our average sales outstanding to 41 days—that's a reduction of over 65 percent,” comments Faizal Okhai. “Similarly, whereas previously it took 45 minutes to create an invoice, we can now complete the process in less than five minutes, nine times faster. Thanks to faster debt collection processes, we no longer need to rely on our overdraft, giving us much greater flexibility to adapt to unexpected delays in payments beyond our control.”

Today, customer credit-approval processes are handled in DocuWare, which eliminates the need for employees on the shop floor to search through mountains of paperwork to confirm customer credit arrangements.

“DocuWare has made it possible for us to confirm and approve credit agreements in under 10 minutes,” says Faizal Okhai. “This is truly transformative for our customers, who can now visit our stores and pick up new items on credit in a single visit. Offering this level of convenience has greatly improved the customer experience, helping to boost our overall competitiveness.”

With all of its critical business documents, HR data, invoices, contracts, service level agreements and more, stored in one place, sales teams can quickly find previous quotes and use them as the basis for new estimates.

And by establishing a standardised quote generation process with clear authorisation steps, Ricotec has eliminated the risk of misquoting for repairs or installations. “Now that documents are stored digitally in DocuWare, they are far more secure,” explains Faizal Okhai. “We’ve been able to impress government and other highly regulated organisations with our ability to provide accurate, up-to-date documentation for proposals in a matter of hours. Ultimately, this helps to win new business and finalise contracts quickly.”

In the months ahead, Ricotec plans to expand its use of the HR module in DocuWare from a simple document repository to an end-to-end solution for all HR workflows.

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ABOUT RICOH

Ricoh is empowering digital workplaces using innovative technologies and services, thus enabling individuals to work smarter. With cultivated knowledge and organisational capabilities nurtured over its 85 years' history, Ricoh is a leading provider of document management solutions, IT services, communications services, commercial and industrial printing, digital cameras, and industrial systems.

Headquartered in Tokyo, Ricoh Group has major operations throughout the world and its products and services now reach customers in approximately 200 countries and regions. In the financial year ended March 2021, Ricoh Group had worldwide sales of 1,682 billion yen (approx. 15.1 billion USD).

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