

Document Management Case Study



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Replacing paper documents with electronic ones results in reduced labor, material expense, and better communication, customer service, and risk management.

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Harrah's Entertainment: Not a Gamble with S4i Express

Visit one of its casinos if you feel lucky, but luck has no role in the IT operation of Harrah's Entertainment Inc., one of the largest players in the U.S. gaming and entertainment industry. And there was no gambling on the firm's choice of an iSeries document management system, either. That decision was based on sound business decisions.

Harrah's Entertainment is focused on building loyalty and value with its targeted customers through a unique combination of great service, superior products, unsurpassed distribution, operational excellence and technological leadership. From its administrative services center in Memphis, Harrah's accounting department services three iSeries generating bimonthly reports for about 1,000 users at the company's headquarters in Las Vegas, and at its 21 properties in 17 markets across the United States. Reports vary in length from a few pages to thousands.

Harrah's needed a solution to a twofold problem, explains Eric Mitchell, manager of accounting systems. First, was a way to segment and bundle reports so that users received only the reports, or sections of reports they needed. Second, was a way to take advantage of e-mail delivery to avoid the cost and time delay associated with printing, separating and hand-delivering reports. "We needed to send a single bundle to a user with everything they needed. If they only needed three reports—or even parts of three reports—we wouldn't send them ten," Mitchell says.

Harrah's previously used an in-house developed system that bundled reports but was severely lacking in distribution capabilities. "We produced the reports here in Memphis," Mitchell says. "Delivery was accomplished by moving them around, from output queue to output queue on the iSeries. We're on a network, so most people were able to access the reports on the iSeries and then print them locally. But this was highly labor-intensive—an expensive way to manage distribution."

"Our annual savings as a direct result of using S4i Express started year one around at \$75K."

Eric Mitchell, Manager of Accounting Systems

Without e-mail, reports were printed, burst, separated, sorted and hand delivered to the users. Mitchell says the entire process might easily take 12 hours to complete. And if, through human error, some report or section was lost, it meant repeating the whole process. "We had to reproduce and reprint them—kill more trees," Mitchell says. "It didn't happen often, but it happened." That's one gamble Harrah's isn't taking any more.

In early 1999, Mitchell began searching for an iSeries software product to solve both the bundling and e-mail distribution problems. After considering numerous software products, he chose the S4i Express Document Management System from S4i Systems as the best match to Harrah's needs.

S4i Express is a fully integrated iSeries network-centric document management system. It electronically captures, separates, indexes, bundles, distributes and archives multiple reports or report segments in a wide variety of formats, including RTF, PDF and HTML, to a wide variety of devices. Extensive online viewing capabilities and delivery options include e-mail, website publishing, downloads to workstations, PC file servers, outfiles, and IFS Folders. Simple user profiles and distribution rules allow changes to be made quickly, and once.

Harrah's installed S4i Express in early 1999. Now, most reports sent to remote locations are sent via e-mail. "It's a process we don't even see," says Mitchell. "Once we produce the report, that's it for us. From the iSeries, S4i Express does all the work, sending e-mail to its users via the Internet. It saves us a ton of time." At their end, users can still print reports if they choose, but most now view reports online, and save them to a hard drive as needed. The centralized printing, bursting, separating, and hand delivery process has become extinct.

"It is definitely saving us money on printing," Mitchell says, "in having the equipment available to print all the reports, as well as all the paper, toner, and manpower. We used to get overtime help for our monthly close. When you take salaries and benefits into consideration, I would estimate we're presently saving \$50,000 annually just in printing costs as a direct result of using S4i Express. Plus, we're taking people out of the picture and doing everything automatically. It's faster, and more efficient because we're eliminating the chance of human error."

Mitchell points out that people who were previously assigned to physically distribute reports are now used more productively. "We used to have a person just monitoring the outqueue to make sure the stuff got printed. There are a lot of other projects going on that an employee could be doing instead of spending time doing that."

In Mitchell's opinion, there is an added benefit in timeliness that works to Harrah's competitive advantage. "Users get their numbers much quicker than before," he says. "In the past, turnaround time was pretty slow. A report might be produced today but wouldn't get to the user for a day or two. Now they have them within hours. That's a clear advantage."

Mitchell plans to take further advantage of S4i Express capabilities. Currently, reports are archived to microfiche. Harrah's produces a tape of the reports and sends it to an outside vendor who, two weeks later, returns the microfiche to Harrah's. Then, anyone with a need to view an archived report locates the fiche, mounts it in a viewer and searches for the specific report. That's about to change.

S4i Express has powerful, rules-based archive capabilities (often called "COLD") that allow documents to be output directly to optical storage devices, tape or other media, making them directly accessible online. Users may view multiple documents simultaneously and even do ad-hoc distribution with no special programming or complex languages to learn.

An optical disk library for report archiving will be implemented at Harrah's during the fourth quarter of 2000. "By eliminating just what we normally spend on microfiche we'll save another \$20-25K per year, bringing our total annual savings as a direct result of using S4i Express to around \$75K," Mitchell says. "And it will save us a lot more time, too—you can bet on that!"



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