

Staples, Inc. Streamlined Their Design and Construction Operations Using Infrastructure Lifecycle Management Solutions by InQuest Technologies



Background

In late 1998, Staples, Inc., already the leading retailer of office supplies, business services and furniture embarked on an aggressive growth campaign. Leading this corporate build out was John Lynch, Vice President of Construction. Faced with managing the global construction of over 160 new stores and the remodeling or refurbishment of an additional 90 each year, Mr. Lynch, an industry veteran, was fully aware of the daunting task ahead. As an early user of the Internet, he realized its capabilities for streamlining and coordinating the activities of his team, contractors and other Staples departments. With the aggressive opening of an average of one new store every two days in the United States, the UK, Canada, and Germany, Staples required a platform that could support complete document management, had configurable workflow processes, construction specific functionality and 100% browser based access. In February 2000, after an exhaustive and in depth software selection process, Mr. Lynch selected InQuest Technologies to provide all of Staples' collaborative construction and infrastructure management solutions. Staples' first pilot project using the InQuest Technologies InQuest Construction solution was the construction of their 50,000 sq ft, state of the art, distribution center in London, OH. Led by John Whitney, Director of Non-Retail Construction for Staples, the InQuest Construction solution successfully consolidated information and enabled team members from around the country to access the right information at the right time through nothing more than a web browser. Request For Information (RFI's) became a breeze with the use of InQuest Construction. No longer did they need to be faxed or mailed with the associated time lag for a response. Now they are handled right over the web on InQuest Construction, with "real-time" responses. "The architect on the project claims they will never go back to the old (paper) RFI method" says Mr. Whitney. Architects on the project also benefited from the paperless contracts; file routing functionality and task approval workflow. With InQuest Construction acting as a permanent record of every piece of information posted, it substantially cut down on the amount of paperwork handled by all parties and significantly streamlined the construction process.

The Challenge

After the successful use of InQuest Construction on the distribution center project, John Lynch was ready to implement the InQuest Technologies solution into his extensive Retail Construction division. With the Staples' Retail Construction division forecast of 250 new construction, relocation, remodeling and expansion projects for the 2001 fiscal year, InQuest Construction would truly prove its value. Step one of his national rollout plan, was to require everyone in his Project Management team to use InQuest Construction for all retail projects. Using the powerful template and best practice feature of InQuest Construction, a standardized retail branch template with a detailed file structure was created and stored on the system. This stored template was then used for each stores' construction, allowing for all retail projects to leverage the best practices inherent in the template. Now, all retail project collaborators know exactly where to access their information, no matter what project they are working on. Mike Akkerman, Manager of Retail Construction Southeast Region says, "InQuest Construction has helped the everyday activities and processes of the Project Manager by reducing paperwork and providing access to multiple resources simultaneously".

Case Study At A Glance

The Company:

Staples, Inc. is a global retailer of office supplies, business services, furniture and technology. Revenues in 2000 were \$11 billion.

Construction Activities:

Staples Inc. Retail Construction division constructed, relocated, remodeled and expanded over 250 stores in fiscal 2001.

InQuest Technologies Solution Used:

InQuest Construction

Customer Since:

1999

The Challenge (continued)

Everybody has secured access to their information without all the Fed Ex mailings and faxes of the past. As a result, Staples information distribution costs have been reduced substantially. Step two was to have the Architects, General Contractors and other vendors utilize InQuest Construction. These collaborators have been crucial to the success of Staples' implementation of InQuest Construction. Collaborators have found that being able to access information from almost anywhere and at anytime, has been a tremendous asset to their job performance. Information that once took days or longer to receive is instantaneously available to the appropriate users from anywhere they can access the Internet. "The use of laptop computers on the job site and digital cameras while completing on-site inspections allows information and images of any specific detail to be viewed by the same resources for a first hand look at the issues and effective follow-up actions" says Mr. Akkerman. By allowing multiple collaborators to access information at the same time, all parties are consistently "up-to-speed" on their projects. In addition, the cost of rework resulting from the use of incorrect plan versions has been eliminated.

The Retail Projects division recently began conducting bids on InQuest Construction. Project Managers and Architects can create an approved vendor database and post pre-bid information for access by all invited bidders. Allowing bids to be submitted electronically through InQuest Construction gives the General Contractor the chance to obtain last minute numbers from subcontractors virtually right up to when the bids are due, thereby creating more competitive prices. Once posted, the bids can be reviewed by team members in multiple locations -- eliminating the need for all parties to be in the same room.

What's Next

Staples Retail Construction Division has identified additional areas of process improvement and solution adoption. "As with any new technology there is always some resistance, but with each new collaborator's use of the system comes the realization that InQuest Construction enables time efficient and cost effective project management practices. Users constantly generate new ideas for using the InQuest Construction platform to improve workflow and reduce costs" explains Mr. Akkerman.

When Mr. Lynch is asked what is next for Staples' use of InQuest Construction, he explains his plans to introduce other Staples departments to the InQuest Technologies solutions. With traditional construction and infrastructure management techniques, a tremendous amount of valuable information is lost between when the construction is completed and the new facility is commissioned. InQuest Technologies changes this by providing a single platform for managing the complete infrastructure lifecycle, from initial design, through construction and during on-going operations. "Our Facilities Department will be able to access the system for information that will help them manage the maintenance of open stores. Our Fixtures department will be able to use the system to maintain photos of the fixture installation" said Mr. Lynch. In addition, facility personnel will be able to manage work orders, permits, licenses and other critical facility information, all from the same InQuest Technologies solution platform. Already, the facility group is managing 150 landlord contracts on InQuest Technologies solutions and this use is expected to increase substantially.

Mr. Lynch says, in regards to the success of the Staples InQuest Construction implementation, "The system is very powerful, it has streamlined our construction processes and has brought a wealth of information regarding all of the construction projects around the country to my fingertips".

Staples Inc. Corporate Overview

Staples, Inc. is an \$11 billion retailer of office supplies, business services, furniture and technology to consumers and businesses from home-based businesses to Fortune 500 companies in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Germany, the Netherlands and Portugal. Headquartered outside Boston, Staples invented the office superstore concept and today is the largest operator of office superstores in the world. The company has over 50,000 employees serving customers through more than 1,300 office superstores, mail order catalogs, e-commerce and a contract business.

InQuest Technologies Corporate Overview

InQuest Technologies, the leading provider of Infrastructure Lifecycle Management (ILM) solutions, provides companies with technology and services to lower operating costs and accelerate growth by optimizing the management of their infrastructure, from design and engineering, through construction and during on-going operations. Leading international organizations such as Staples, Gilbane, Verizon, Hertz, Kaiser Permanente, CA MTA and NBC have chosen InQuest solutions for an immediate impact on their operations and bottom lines. InQuest Technologies has helped these companies leverage the power of the Internet to transform the way that they design, engineer and manage their infrastructure.

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