


DEPARTMENT FOR ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS (DEFRA)

PROTECTING THE PUBLIC INTEREST

DEFRA saves money and the environment by outsourcing document management to Iron Mountain

CHALLENGE:

DEFRA was faced with London building closures and the sheer complexity of managing hundreds of thousands of files

SOLUTION:

Outsourcing document storage, access, and shredding to Iron Mountain with extra security for documents in transit

VALUE:

Better customer service from faster turnaround, and environmental benefits from online access; one project saved £225,000 a year

“Iron Mountain has a real grasp of the opportunities open to us. They are always suggesting new ideas to help us to maximise efficiencies and their expertise means they can deal with the large workflows DEFRA produces.”

Mike Kaye
Head of Archive Services
DEFRA

CLIENT

The UK Department for Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) tackles climate change, ensures food safety, and oversees the farming and fishery sectors. Its information management requirements are complex and, as with all public sector organisations, it is constantly seeking to maximise value for money.

In 2002, with the impending closure of one of its largest facilities in Hayes, Middlesex, DEFRA initiated a review of its document storage needs. Outdated manual processes meant that finding a single file among the 500,000 kept there could take at least 30 minutes, impacting productivity and customer response times. Worse, aged files held in Hayes had to be sent to Alnwick for review – a round trip of nearly 600 miles – to decide whether they should be retained, destroyed, or sent to the National Archives.

DEFRA chose to outsource the task to Iron Mountain. The transfer of the archive was completed in tight timescales – within deadline, to budget, and with the minimum of business disruption.

CHALLENGE

Next, following a 2005 efficiency review, DEFRA asked Iron Mountain to take on documents formerly held at its London Bridge facility, adding a further 200,000 files to the outsourced archive. Then in 2007, under the UK Government’s London Estate Reduction Programme, DEFRA asked Iron Mountain to manage documents held at its last in-house file store at Vauxhall, along with files held in other London-based offices scheduled for closure. At the same time, DEFRA outsourced its shredding operations to Iron Mountain, to take advantage of consistency of service from a single supplier, and reduce operational risk.

Mike Kaye, Head of DEFRA Archive Services, notes: “The excellent relationship Iron Mountain has built with DEFRA underpins the efficiency and success of our document management systems. In working to understand DEFRA’s objectives and the individuals within the department, Iron Mountain has a real grasp of the opportunities open to us. They are always suggesting new ideas to help

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SOLUTION

As these projects progressed, DEFRA became an early adopter of a new Iron Mountain portal that allows companies to manage their information assets online. “The online portal brings real improvements to DEFRA including powerful search enhancements, ease of ordering, and staff training benefits,” says Mike Kaye. “In listening to and acting on DEFRA’s feedback, Iron Mountain has proven the integrity of our working relationship.” At the same time Iron Mountain increased security and accountability by introducing continuous GPRS tracking and an auditable chain-of-custody to deliver a higher standard of information protection to DEFRA documents in transit.

In forging an effective business partnership, Iron Mountain has become a trusted information management adviser to DEFRA. “Iron Mountain never forces us to do anything,” explains Mike Kaye. “They are always happy to discuss ideas with us to raise standards, provide better customer service, and respond quickly to our business pressures and demands. Effectively, they have become a valued member of the DEFRA team and it is not surprising that the success of the partnership has resulted in DEFRA recently extending its contractual arrangements with Iron Mountain.”

VALUE

Overall, DEFRA has gained from real estate and staff efficiencies and can now search and access hundreds of thousands of fully indexed files in 30 seconds rather than 30 minutes. With the implementation of the UK Freedom of Information legislation in 2004 that, together with the greater security offered by the Iron Mountain solution, became a business imperative for DEFRA.

Despite the scale of the London Bridge project there was not a single customer complaint; and the £225,000 a year savings generated by the move to Iron Mountain will see the project self-financing in just over four years.

The Vauxhall site and other subsidiary sites held significant volumes of documents and transferring them to Iron Mountain was a 12-week undertaking. The speed and efficiency with which Iron Mountain undertook the project helped ensure that DEFRA was able to vacate the facility before being forced to sign a new lease – saving £700,000. The transfer was completed six weeks ahead of schedule and, despite the project’s complexity, no single file was out of circulation for more than 72 hours.

In terms of environmental benefits, the Iron Mountain service allows DEFRA to view details of all files online and make a preliminary assessment of their business and historical value. That, together with greater use of review sampling, has led to significant reductions in the 600-mile carbon footprint created by trips between Hayes and Alnwick.



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