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Document to Knowledge™
A CANON COMPANY

INTERVIEW WITH MICHAEL GOLLWITZER

HEAD OF IP SUPPORT SIEMENS AG

MR GOLLWITZER, COULD YOU BRIEFLY DESCRIBE INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY SUPPORT AT SIEMENS?

The support department for patent activities was founded around 40 years ago in Germany. At that time, the aim was to group all administrative functions in a central place. In particular, these functions are incoming mail, initial applications, repeat applications, contract matters, fees and invoice processing, researching patent information, and the associated IT activities. Today we are both technically and organisationally the central point of contact within the corporation and a service provider for all internal IP departments. The IP departments of the corporate group are spread around the world in China, the USA, the United Kingdom, Austria, Switzerland, and headquarters with multiple locations in Germany. All these locations are supported by the centrally managed IP Support department, which in turn has various localised focuses.

WHEN YOU CHOSE IRIS AS YOUR SOFTWARE VENDOR OVER 20 YEARS AGO, WHAT WERE THE KEY REASONS?

With the internal rollout of a digital workflow system (IPAS), all the documents generated in that system and outgoing mail were available in digital form. By contrast, incoming mail worldwide was on paper. To create digital files from this and take advantage of automated processing, we launched the DigiEX project in 2005. IRIS had not only shown the possibilities of digitalisation and automation, but also openly addressed the limits of the technology, which won our trust. By combining Siemens' special functional requirements for patent activities with the existing features of the software, IRIS was able to meet our technical requirements. All of this impressed Siemens. In the subsequent project and implementation phases, IRIS demonstrated considerable expertise. Their open and committed cooperation in translating the solution into daily operation, demonstrated at that time, has remained unchanged.

WHAT IRIS SOLUTIONS DO YOU USE FOR WHICH PROCESSES?

We are presently rolling out IRISPowerscan™ and using the XScan client for local scanning of paper documents. The scanned documents are forwarded as TIF images to central IRISXtract™ processing in Munich, which is the first channel. In parallel with this, we have a Siemens internal database where PDF documents from all over the world are stored, and from there forwarded to Munich for central processing, which is the second channel.

In addition, we are using XMailFetcher to monitor mailboxes and fetch incoming emails with documents from them and forward them to Munich for central processing. This amounts to the third channel.

A fourth channel is the importer for data or documents from large international patent offices, including Germany, Europe, USA, China and WIPO.

Central IRISXtract™ processing takes place in Munich. In the first step of the process chain we use the Digital Mailroom solution for AI-based

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automatic classification of all possible patent documents of the IPAS application. There are many different document classes and categories, such as inventor notification, official mail, patent applications, correspondence, etc., that must be determined automatically by the Digital Mailroom solution.

Invoice documents are classified and read by the IRISXtract™ Accounts Payable application. If necessary after automatic checking, the previously read data can be verified centrally or locally as a final step.

WHAT CHALLENGES DID YOU FACE WHEN INTEGRATING IRISXTRACT™ FOR PATENT FILES?

The first big challenge at the start of the project was creating the interfaces to the internal management system, including virtual users for automated post-processing. We had to deal with the totally different layouts and the different document-dependent requirements for reading and for processing in IPAS.

Now we have an electronic system. Previously we received a stack of mail about 2 metres high every day from the external attorneys, plus all the official mail. First we digitalised the mail. Then the data was read automatically by IRISXtract™. We needed a two-person procedure for the patent files. With IRISXtract™ the processes were automated in a document-dependent manner, which meant the documents were already correctly assigned to the files and at the end an employee checked the extraction result if required by the document. This considerably simplified the process. In addition, we used IRISXtract™ to almost completely automate incoming invoice capture. Today we mainly receive electronic data in the form of .zip or .xml files, which we classify automatically with the Digital Mailroom solution. Together with IRIS, we have refined the solution so it can be used for patent matters.

HOW WERE YOU ABLE TO OPTIMISE YOUR BUSINESS PROCESSES WITH IRISX-TRACT™?

The deployment of IRISXtract™ enabled us to optimise the incoming mail process (opening mail, stamping, noting due dates, scanning documents and manually filing them), freeing up employees to work on tasks with greater added value. The very low error rate allowed the quality of the process to be boosted. The IRISXtract™ system allows us to check the results and to correct them if necessary. Thanks to this flexibility and transparency, we are able to make our processes more efficient.

WHAT CURRENT REQUIRE-MENTS DO YOU HAVE FOR THE SOFTWARE?

Thanks to the digital transformation, during the pandemic we had the advantage that from one day to the next, all employees could easily work from home. This meant our processes could continue working unimpaired. Currently we are working on a migration to the latest version of IRISXtract™. In future we plan to change from an on-premise IRIS solution to a cloud-based solution. What we require of the software is its flexibility. It must be able to adapt quickly to new circumstances or requirements, such as new import channels or other interfaces.

WHAT WOULD BE YOUR ADVICE TO OTHER COMPANIES FACING THE SAME CHALLENGE?

I would advise other companies to not underestimate the complexity of digital transformation projects, even if it looks simple at first. I also advise other companies to get their employees onside on the issue. That's the only way to ensure future success.

WHAT DISTINGUISHES YOUR COOPERATION WITH IRIS?

We have had a very good, trust-based relationship over the many years, and we see ourselves as a complete partner of IRIS.

CONTACTS

I.R.I.S. AG

Heussstrasse 23
52078 Aachen
Germany
Tel: +49 (0) 241 920350
info-de@iriscorporate.com
www.irisdatacapture.com

I.R.I.S. SA

Rue du Bosquet, 10
1348 Louvain-la-Neuve
Belgium
Tel: +32 (0) 10 45 13 64
info-de@iriscorporate.com
www.irisdatacapture.com

I.R.I.S. INC.

955 NW 17th Avenue, Unit D
Delray Beach, FL, 33445
USA
Tel: +1 (561) 404 2690
info-de@iriscorporate.com
www.irisdatacapture.com

ABOUT US

Image Recognition Integrated Systems (I.R.I.S.) is a leading provider of 'Content to Process' technologies'. I.R.I.S. offers solutions for automatic invoice and order processing, HR and supplier records as well as case management in legal, healthcare, and finance sectors.

I.R.I.S. provides technologies and solutions that capture data and information contained in documents, which are relevant to business processes. The goal is to make the data easily available while reducing operating costs.

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