

# Tame the paper tiger

Today's oil and gas projects often involve multiple partners and thousands of pages of documentation. Tim Fleet of **Sword CTSpace** and Clyde Smith of **Mustang** tell Rod James how enterprise-wide document management systems can optimise workflow, cut costs and act as the glue that holds a rapidly expanding company together.

**A**s an organisation grows, so does the amount of documentation needed to make it function effectively. This is especially true in the engineering sector, where thousands of technical drawings, plans and project specifications need to be accessed by a number of parties, who are often spread around the world.

In the past, this meant mobilising large teams of staff to prepare and scan documents, and an army of couriers to deliver them. Not only was this approach materially expensive, but the amount of manual work involved meant that the level of human error and the number of mistakes made through repetition were high. Information would accumulate in silos, trapped in courier bags and email inboxes, making it difficult to share and even harder to audit.

At Mustang, a leader in engineering design and project management for the oil and gas industry, the old system was failing to keep up with its changing needs. With an expanding project load and offices opening across the US, Latin America, the Middle East, Asia and Europe, the company recognised that it needed a more cost-effective and efficient solution.

"Around nine years ago, Mustang started looking for an enterprise-wide collaboration tool, which at the time was quite an avant-garde concept in engineering," explains Clyde Smith, global PIM application manager for Mustang. "We just wanted to find a way to effectively transmit information in real time and to ensure that everybody received the same, up-to-date documents."

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**Clyde Smith, Mustang**

## Pioneer solution

Such systems were rare at the time, even when used to manage a single project, so extending such a solution across a whole enterprise was a hugely ambitious idea. Mustang, after much research, opted for Sword CTSpace's Collaboration Workspace solution.

The system provides web-based access to all important documents, allowing the appropriate end-users to modify and retrieve any necessary information. In Smith's view,

submitting documents through Collaboration Workspace streamlined the review and approval processes, with an in-built audit trail helping to further bolster data security and compliance.

"When we talk about delivering worldwide projects on time and on budget, having a tool such as this is of the utmost importance," Smith says. "Automating the end-user's interaction with the system allows us to reproduce quality information that goes to the right person. And being able to provide the necessary data to meet government and regulatory requirements has definitely become easier as well."

The software has also helped to significantly cut costs, as the need for specialist printers and paper-intensive clerical processes was replaced by immediate electronic transactions.

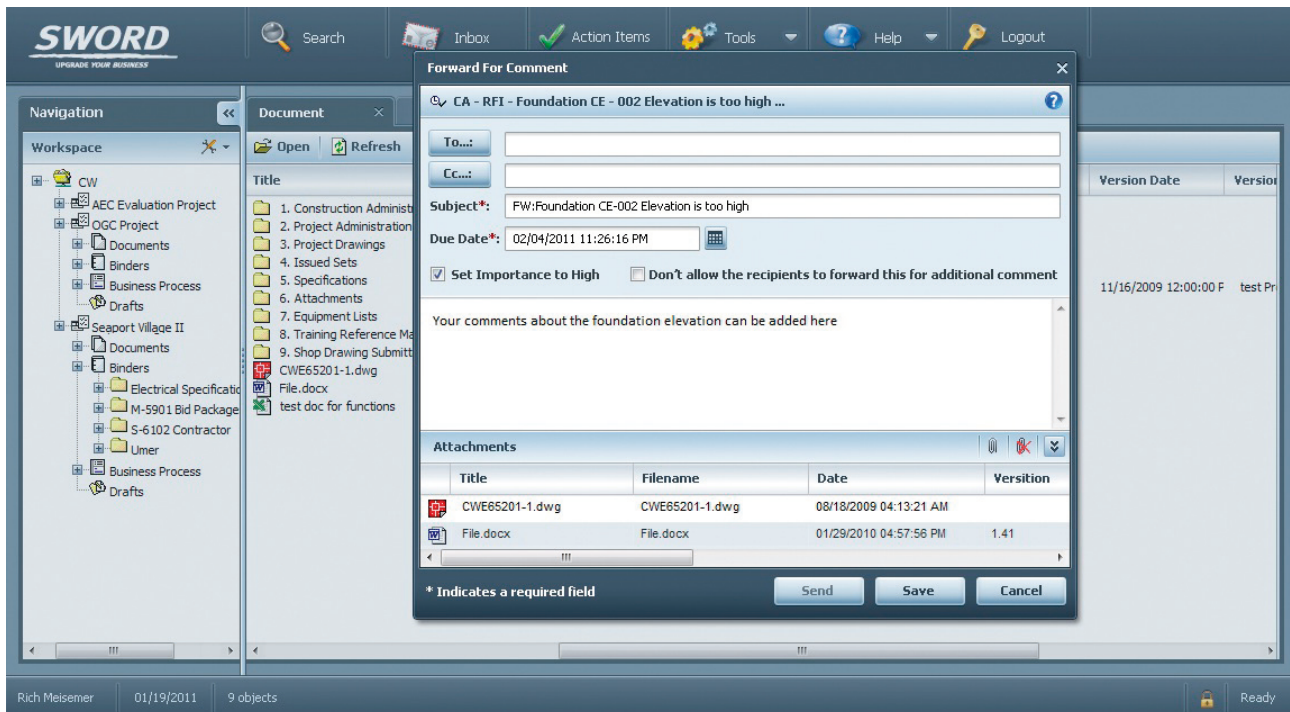
"Reducing the cost of operations was a major driver for us," Smith says. "We were able to reroute huge expenses that would have gone on materials and staff into other areas of the company. We got a tangible return on our investment."

## Core component

Collaboration Workspace has been integrated into Mustang's other in-house systems and become, according to Smith, part of the fabric of its day-to-day operations. In the eyes of Tim Fleet, Sword CTSpace's vice-president of product management, the way the solution slots in with Mustang's existing project management and accounting applications also vindicates the company's decision to think big.

"A major benefit of Mustang's decision to introduce the system across the company is that you can capture information in a consistent manner, which gives you a comprehensive account of how you carried out a project," he says. "This might sound obvious, but in the past contracted companies would perform a job and discard the data at the end of it. Mustang is being quite clever in taking advantage of all this information."

As well as using Collaboration Workspace to boost internal efficiencies, Mustang uses it as a tool to improve customer interaction. The company is involved in some of the most complicated oil and gas projects in the world. Many of the jobs it embarks on involve multiple contractors, subcontractors and auxiliary service providers, between which huge amounts of information are transferred. Collaboration Workspace can be easily configured and integrated into existing project management and collaboration systems, making it an added-value addition.



The Collaboration Workspace document management solution has made it easier for Mustang to provide data for regulatory purposes.

“By giving this system to its clients and suppliers, Mustang is improving its customer proposition,” says Fleet. “For this reason simplicity of use is very important. There isn’t the time to offer training, so the software has to be an easy-to-use, web-based solution.”

### Better together

Identifying and implementing the main requirements of the system involved a long and close process of collaboration. Companies with geographically dispersed operations require well-positioned, cloud-based systems that have sufficient redundancy back-up in case of emergency. Sword CTSpace is a leader in this field. Its technical support team is comprised of individuals with backgrounds in the oil and gas industry, who understand and implement these case-specific demands.

“We hear a lot of talk about cloud computing, but Sword CTSpace has been doing it for years,” says Smith. “We have been able to take advantage of the cost savings by not having to make the major capital expenditure.”

According to Fleet, this process of collaboration is ongoing and has had a positive influence on the operations of both companies. Being able to keep abreast of the way each other’s business is developing allows for more informed strategic planning.

“We try to understand how Mustang works,” he explains. “Just understanding what it is doing and where it is going as a company influences how we can help, and this works both ways. For example, Mustang has expanded into Saudi Arabia, which we knew about up front. That’s how you build a successful long-term relationship.”

The move to Saudi Arabia will see Mustang and Sword CTSpace’s partnership enter a new phase. The engineering company will be taking its US infrastructure and transposing

it directly, meaning that it will be up and running almost immediately. Fleet sees this as an intelligent move and a sign of how a flexible system can benefit the bottom line.

“By being able to transpose internal and cloud-based systems, the company is saving an awful lot of money,” he explains. “Being able to get new operations off the ground without having to procure new systems and infrastructure is a significant step.”

On Sword CTSpace’s part, the next 12-24 months will see a shift in its technological approach. It is planning to merge its cloud-based and internal storage solutions into a new document management system.

“I think there will always be a class of document that you want inside your firewall, so I don’t believe that a complete cloud changeover will take place in a more traditional industry like ours,” Fleet explains. “We are looking to bridge the gap between the two worlds by running a system that is part cloud-based and part resident. The trend is that these distinctions will blur. Down the line, this could be of great help to Mustang.”

Smith is also positive about the future. As Mustang continues its expansion, he sees the relationship with Sword CTSpace remaining of strategic importance.

“Certainly we expect to continue using the tool and will continue to look for ways to adjust to ever-changing client requirements,” Smith says. “I think our relationship will continue to be as strong as it is today, yet flexible to meet the challenges of tomorrow.” ■

#### Further information

Sword CTSpace  
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