From scanning and snail mail to collaborative champions.

"It's really expanding into all the nooks and crannies…we always are asking what else we can do that hasn't been done before."

RAY KIEFFER
ELECTRONIC DOCUMENT SUPPORT SPECIALIST

QUICK FACTS
- ► Softdocs customer since 2011
- ► Completed implementations in Student Services, Human Resources, Business Office and Nursing
- ► Awarded Title III grant to assist in technology refresh

KEY PLAYERS
- ► Ray Kieffer, Electronic Document Support Specialist

CHALLENGES
- ► Lack of modern technology framework
- ► Dispersed campuses causing lack of collaboration
- ► Lots of paper shuffling and human error

SOLUTIONS
The Softdocs ECM Platform:
- ► Workflow
- ► Enterprise Content Management
- ► Electronic Forms
- ► Print Customization and Delivery

NORTHEAST IOWA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

CALMAR, IOWA

Northeast Iowa Community College (NICC) serves eight counties in northeast Iowa and surrounding areas, offering over 85 academic programs of study. With online and blended learning, vocational studies, and adult education and literacy, NICC focuses on providing affordable and high quality education options to various demographics of students across the state of Iowa.

Northeast Iowa Community College was very overdue for a technology update. After being awarded a Title III grant, NICC had the funds it needed to begin the search for a content management solution. Once they had explored what else was available in the space, it became clear that Softdocs provided what NICC needed at the most appealing price point.

Northeast Iowa Community College had gotten to a point where their makeshift solutions for managing paper became unsustainable. With two campuses more than 90 miles apart, and no central office, NICC's challenge to maintain communication and collaboration was particularly unique.

"Our main goal was to gain collaboration, we didn't have a true electronic filing cabinet…we stored PDFs here and there but no way to collaborate or track."

NICC purchased Softdocs in October 2011, about six months before Kieffer was brought on board. The college began using Softdocs' Doc e Suite: D**oc e Scan, Doc e Fill, Doc e Serve** and **Auto Launch.**

Doc e Scan, Softdocs' legacy content management solution, was rolled out in student services, human resources and the business office. **Doc e Serve**, Softdocs' print customization solution, was implemented for use in student services and the business office.

Before Softdocs, NICC was depending solely on network folder sharing as their main method of collaboration. Employees would scan a document and give certain people the rights to view it, but this only worked for certain processes and certainly couldn't take the place of a true content management solution in the long run.

"Had we not found a solution, there would have continued to be lots of shuffling of papers and human error."

Collaboration is Key

Not only was communication within one building via paper-based processes inefficient, NICC had the challenge of managing communication between two distant campuses. The college wanted to find ways to streamline those inefficient processes so employees were spending less time delivering documents and more time on the pressing projects back on campus.

"The one thing that we've run into issues with is that we don't have a centralized office," said Kieffer. "Our two campuses are 90 miles apart."

Prior to purchasing Softdocs, employees at NICC would either have to mail or drive documentation back and forth between campuses, a time consuming process that lacked any security.

"On the student services side, that meant reams of paper for each student where collaboration meant scanning, copying, emailing or snail mail," said Kieffer.

Serving Your Students Well

In the world of education, the ultimate goal is to provide value. Students are busy, so finding ways to simplify paper-heavy processes on their end makes life easier for not only the student, but the employee too.

Before implementing **Doc e Scan**, students would have to physically fill out all forms, and then return them to the student services office for processing. Wet signatures, crumpled forms and missing fields were just a few of the common problems that came along with the manual process.

With Softdocs in place, student services was able to get rid of the paper itself, plus store all content in a centralized location that could be shared across the room or across campuses.

Doc e Scan allowed for easy printing of transcripts and student schedules that had a clean and professional look.

When **Doc e Fill** was deployed, the admissions and financial aid processes eased headaches for students and employees alike. Now the entire financial aid process is handled online and the turnaround time is a fraction of what it was prior.

The business office used **Doc e Scan** and **Doc e Serve** to automate the accounts payable process enabling the printing of checks through Serve, followed by the archival of those checks in Scan. All relevant invoices and POs are linked to their respective checks. Audits are smoother than ever and employees are able to better serve students when their time is not spent tracking and managing paper.

The Move to Etrieve Content

After five years leveraging **Doc e Scan**, NICC made the decision to upgrade to Etrieve Content, Softdocs' next generation electronic content management solution, in October of 2016.

"We wanted to move to **Etrieve** as soon as possible," said Kieffer. "The main drivers were really the web-based infrastructure, as well as the improved look and increased functionality."

Unlike the first Softdocs implementation, Kieffer was present for this one. In fact, with the grant that NICC was awarded, Kieffer's job was to handle Softdocs' solutions and Softdocs solutions only.

To Kieffer, this made all the difference in the implementation of **Etrieve Content** in comparison to the initial **Doc e** suite implementation.

When asked what advice Kieffer would give other schools looking to make the move to paperless, he said, "You need to have one person who knows the system or a group that works together that knows what to do."

Not only is implementation smoother with a product owner, the ongoing maintenance is as well. Having a champion of Softdocs at your school really ensures that you are getting the most out of your investment. "Now other schools call me for recommendations," said Kieffer.

Besides having a product owner, utilizing the professional services team proved to be a huge help to NICC as well.

"It's rare that I've ever called the support staff and ended the conversation without a solution."

Looking Forward

NICC is on track to roll out Etrieve Forms and Flow in the coming months and is looking forward to taking advantage of its advanced workflow capabilities and mobile responsiveness.

When asked about future goals of Softdocs at NICC, Kieffer responded, "It's really expanding into all the nooks and crannies…we always are asking what else we can do that hasn't been done before."

From using network folder sharing and file cabinets to acting as a role model for schools in terms of ECM, NICC has truly come full circle with Softdocs.

When communication and collaboration is streamlined, employees are happier, and in turn, students are happier. The positive domino effect that going paperless can have on a school is tremendous and it is always exciting to see institutions like NICC go above and beyond to provide the best customer service to its students.