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Vice-President
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The Paperless Office

Environmental issues are affecting every nation around the globe. By employing innovative practices using technology to drive our business solutions, management companies can use our example and reduce their use of finite resources and contribute to a more sustainable future.

Over the years, we recognized green concerns and so we introduced and implemented a variety of environmentally friendly and resource-saving measures for many different clients. Initiatives such as lighting and plumbing retrofits, recycling and composting programs, gardens and green rooftops all have a positive and lasting impact on reducing pollution and energy costs.

When the time came to “go green” as a company, management expressed a vision of the paperless workplace of the future. As condominium property managers, we deal with a lot of pulp. It’s a paper-intensive industry and always has been, but doesn’t always have to be. As the scope of our proj-

ect began to take shape two things were clear – there was going to be a significant financial investment required in business solutions software, and much work would be needed to realize our vision. We had to change how we work – virtually every company policy and procedure needed to be examined through “green lenses,” and the day-to-day functions and processes that make up our service delivery to clients needed re-tooling to maximize the implementation of the new technology.

After a year of researching the options and weighing the pros and cons, the company partnered with Konica Minolta Business Solutions (Canada) Ltd. to assess current workflows and operational practices, and to determine how software can be implemented to help the company achieve our objectives. One of the goals set out in planning was to implement a company-wide search engine that would be capable of accessing any piece of data at the touch of a button.

The solution that best fit our goals was an Enterprise Content Management (ECM) software package. This ECM package allowed us to automate paper-intensive processes, enabling the transition to a paperless workplace. The software solution also includes a web forms module that easily automates the capture of data online, eliminating manual data entry and improving the quality of the information capture processes company-wide. Clients now have access to online resources at their fingertips, which reduces processing time and further improves the client experience – condo owners can request maintenance online, order and pay for products, update their information and communicate directly with their management team. Working with suppliers has become a more efficient and seamless operation with the electronic delivery and processing of invoices and work orders.



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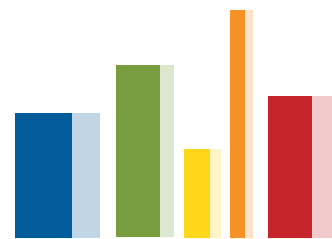
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Tier 1 Benefits

In addition to client communication and supplier benefits, with these new initiatives in place we've essentially upgraded our client service level by giving our property managers the tools to access, analyze, input and update critical information on our centralized database, any place and any time they need. Upgrading our workplace has enabled our management team to work remotely, increasing productivity and accelerating workflow tasks, while simultaneously reducing environmental impact related to paper and storage costs, electricity usage, commuting and gridlock concerns, and physical office space requirements. Also, many of the property managers' reporting and onsite duties can now be recorded in real-time. For example, site inspection reports can now be completed and uploaded during the actual visit. Photos and critical information during an emergency response can be captured and uploaded immediately – maintaining a complete record of events as they happen.

Tier 2 Benefits

All of these key benefits were definitely a welcome addition to our workplace, but the resulting lesser-known benefits were really astounding. Gone are the days of property managers dragging suitcase-sized file carriers and briefcases to sites and meetings. These bulky items are replaced by a simple laptop. Wasted time and productivity due to data entry errors and misfiled documents are also a headache of the past, as every document that is batch-scanned into the new system is now fully searchable and also tagged by keywords. The usability of historical information that has traditionally been stored in filing cabinets has increased substantially by making it easily accessible and searchable. Another helpful feature is time stamps that are recorded on all documents as they are input and move through automated workflows, allowing the company to audit, assess and improve its systems and maintain performance and quality standards. Perhaps the most impressive feature of the new software was the scalability and customization aspects.

When a new challenge presents itself, the fully customizable nature of our business solutions enable us to dream, build and implement to meet the challenge with remarkable speed, since the framework is already in place and built

to our specific needs as condominium managers. In an ever-changing industry, the ability to adapt and innovate is of utmost value and importance.

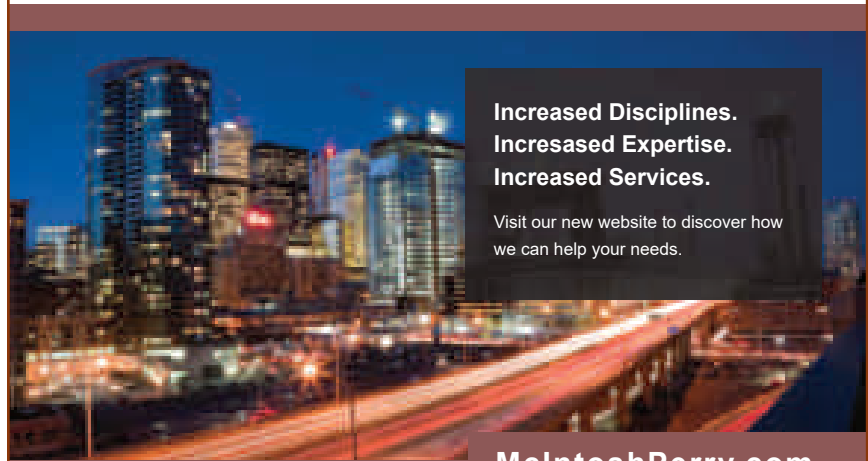
By going paperless we can deliver more efficient services to our clients – and by analyzing the added productivity we have gained so far as a company, we can beat our target of recapturing the cost of implementing this green technology and refocus our efforts toward the next phase of innovation to better meet our clients' needs, and our responsibility to the

environment. Our company is now more efficient as a service provider to our clients and our costs of doing business are reduced, while leaving less of a footprint on the environment. ■

Richard Maddern is vice-president of TAG Management, an ACMO 2000 certified company. Headquartered in Burlington for over three decades, TAG specializes in the management of condominium corporations within Ontario's Golden Horseshoe region. tagmanagement.ca

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