



Consolidating multiple billing formats into a single bill meeting regulatory requirements

The Business Challenge

To better service clients, BellSouth needed to consolidate multiple data sources and billing formats into a single bill that met regulatory requirements and drove increased customer comprehension and satisfaction. But how could it cope with the complexities of existing data structures yet economically deliver an effective new bill to millions of customers?

Not only does BBI mail over a million bills every night and use over 8,000 miles of continuous stationery each month — in every cycle, bills must be delivered to the Post Office within 24 hours of data release. This means each element of BellSouth's Automated Document Factory must comprehend the need for speed, yet accurately present all the customer data, regardless of source, in the final bill format destined for customers.

Out with the old

In its previous billing model, BBI prepared a series of files per cycle from its internally-developed CRIS billing application. An externally-sourced workflow management system tracked the formatted data from receipt to mail. Application changes through CRIS were time consuming and costly.

A mainframe-based bill corrections process was available, but cumbersome to use. Problem documents were manually corrected but the presentation for updated documents was not dynamically created.

In addition, the position of each character for each line needed to be counted and tracked. BBI was concerned that increased application format flexibility might mean sacrificing production throughput. Moreover, BellSouth wanted not only an up-to-date application for its combined bill, but an infrastructure that could be leveraged over many new applications, including in-sourcing.

Customer Background

BellSouth Corporation is a fortune 100 communications services company headquartered in Atlanta, Georgia serving nearly 46 million customers in the United States and 15 other countries. The company's core digital network covers over 25 million access lines in the south-eastern United States. BellSouth Billing, Inc. (BBI) is a subsidiary of the BellSouth Corporation with facilities in Birmingham, Alabama, and Atlanta and Alpharetta in Georgia.



The Solution

To streamline its bill production process, BBI turned to Sefas. Sefas professionals integrated several products from the Open Print suite of software with BBI's existing workflow infrastructure to complete an end-to-end solution that manages every step of the production process.

The Open Print Solutions consists of developer tools, run-time engines and document databases that drive every facet of automated document factory management. Professional developers create document applications with business logic and style selections that create unique pinpoint customer communications.

Reduce costs and more

Sefas set out to provide BBI with an application meeting its goal of increased billing application functionality with reduced costs. Value adds to the process included increased document format flexibility, an improved bill corrections process and the implementation of a core document infrastructure scalable to multiple applications. In addition to providing a new document infrastructure, Sefas developed an integrated billing application for BBI's consumer direct bill.

It uses Open Print Backstage as the production run-time platform, Open Print Projector as the web-based bill review and correction system, and Open Print Studio for the creation and maintenance of the billing application.

BBI discovered that Open Print could map complex customer data structures and provide the run-time

performance needed to meet tight production windows. Sefas also helped BBI re-engineer its QA process by enabling on-line bill verification and correction accessible through its corporate intranet.

“ *The data used to manage us, but now we manage the data.* ”

Steve Barlow, Director, Operations, BBI

The Benefits

Sefas and Open Print enabled BBI to deliver its bill reformatting project on-time and under budget at a fraction of the cost of alternatives. This improved the time-to market for new applications from months to minutes.

Open Print also provided rapid application development environment and the Sefas team provided expert document application development and systems integration services and expertise.

BBI now has a means of managing customer facing output without having to rely on business application modifications.

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