

Customer Profile: Northern Natural Gas

Making Energy Companies More Efficient

Northern Natural Gas (Northern) is based in Omaha, Nebraska, and operates an interstate natural gas pipeline extending from the Permian Basin in Texas, to the upper Midwest. The company provides transportation and storage services to approximately 75 utilities and numerous end-use customers in the upper Midwest as well as cross-haul and grid transportation between other interstate and intrastate pipelines in the Permian, Anadarko, Hugoton and Midwest areas.

Northern has 1,100 employees. As the company grew, its approval process was becoming cumbersome and time-consuming for its employees, as they used email and manual forwarding of messages to make requests and receive approvals. This method provided a sketchy-at-best audit trail resulting in requests often being lost in the routing process.

The Challenge

- Northern wanted secure, automatic notification of approvals that would save employees time.
- The company needed an audit-compliant security approval process that provided a reliable audit trail.
- Northern needed full functionality that would integrate easily with its existing systems at an affordable price.
- Northern needed one product that would handle all level of requests, from customer service interaction to internal employee matters.

Installation Summary

- Integrify's solution was installed and integrated with Northern's existing systems.
- The packaged solution was enhanced with several custom functions so that it would directly match Northern's existing systems.



www.northernnaturalgas.com

The Solution

Northern chose Integrify's solution because it offered the functionality the company required for a price that was more competitive than other packaged solutions on the market.

Integrify is a flexible business process management tool that allows companies to automate requests and streamline approval processes. The software provides form creation, routing definition and tracking tools to those responsible for processing requests, minimizing data entry and simplifying requests for approval and fulfillment. Integrify is Web-based, allowing for easy user accessibility and management of approval processes. The solution eliminates problems typically related to labor-intensive processes such as manual paper handling and email requests, and can reduce costs per transaction 60 to 90 percent as opposed to paper-based processes.

By allowing a company's employees the most efficient means to access, submit and obtain fulfillment for requests, an organization can offer the best possible level of service to its customers. With Integrify, efficiency gains are immediate and most companies can expect a return on investment (ROI) in three months or less.

The Integrify team spent a week on-site installing and implementing the Integrify software. The only challenge Northern faced during the installation process was making updates to its internal information so the Active Directory database could ensure requests were properly routed. When implementation was complete, Northern had applied Integrify's technology to a number of key areas for its business.

Automatic approval routing was implemented for application security, batch scheduling, Business Objects (enterprise reporting), gas control support, Nvision applications, Nvision security, Oracle and PowerPlant, and PGAS.

In addition, Northern set up requests to access any product (hardware or software) that requires checking inventory and purchasing. A Risk Acceptance category was implemented for submitting requests to non-standard accounts or IDs such as AOL instant messaging, group IDs, local server administration, local workstation administration, mass storage data copy, mass storage devices, Microsoft Patch Exceptions, modem lines, non-expiring passwords, server backup exceptions, service accounts, support accounts, test accounts, and training accounts. In this way, Northern can apply a standard request/approval process to any customer needs, no matter where/how the request originates.

An IT category was established for access to common drives, directory folders, group access and developer access, and the company is in the process of setting up a human resources category for new hire information, name changes, terminations and resignations.

With just the Integrify product, Northern was able to fully automate all its request and approval needs, from customer-facing applications to IT functions to internal employee functions.

The Results

Northern was pleased with the ease of installation and the immediate difference it made in making the request and approval process more efficient and cost-effective.

According to Larry Steward, manager of IT business support at Northern Natural Gas Company, "The Integrify system provides an auditable tracking system which provides the end user a status update on each step of the process. This equates to the end user knowing exactly where their request is delayed."



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