

Public Buildings Service (U.S. General Services Administration): Attaining optimal mainframe faxing



Administration

The Public Buildings Service of the U.S. General Services Administration is the real estate arm of the federal government and oversees an inventory of more than 345 million square feet of workspace for a million federal employees in 2,000 American communities. Because it is in contact with hundreds of office staff across the country on a regular basis, faxing is highly integral to its operations. When the Public Buildings Service determined that it needed to replace its fax system, it selected Esker as its provider of mainframe faxing. After careful consideration, the Public Buildings Service decided that Esker Fax for Notes was the ideal solution for its mainframe faxing needs.

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Lou Rother IT Specialist
Public Buildings Service
U.S. General Service Administration

Challenge: Updating for greater flexibility and overall performance

With hundreds of federal buildings nationwide and some 500 inbound phone numbers, the Public Buildings Service found that its aging fax system was increasingly incapable of providing the desired level of performance. Specific problems included the inability to send faxes to mail-in databases or to specific groups, to use fax cards with newly purchased systems, and to have the hardware serviced.

The Public Buildings Service sought a versatile and reliable system that did not have these limitations and that also offered improved reporting capabilities and greater ease of use overall. Other specific criteria included not having to change the system’s mail design, being able to add users without loading a special client, and being able to quickly identify usage volume and trends for a particular period.

Solution: Esker Fax for Notes

After evaluating other fax server software products, the Public Buildings Service selected Esker Fax for Notes because its enterprise-wide capabilities met or exceeded the systems criteria that it identified. According to Lou Rother, an IT specialist with the Public Buildings Service, Esker Fax for Notes in the end simply offered “a better product and a better value for the government.”

With Esker Fax for Notes, Rother says the Public Buildings Service no longer has a problem with sending faxes to mail-in databases or specific groups. *“For example, one of our customers is the Federal Protective Service,”* he explains. *“They may have a need to send faxes to building managers that the security level has gone up. Instead of manually sending faxes to all of the different offices, they can now send out a bulk fax to all of the different numbers. We weren’t able to do this before.”*

What Rother also likes is that the Public Buildings Service didn’t have to change its system’s mail design when it implemented Esker Fax for Notes. *“That’s one thing that General Services imposes on all of its offices. We’re not allowed to change that design, and if we were forced to do it we wouldn’t be able to use Esker Fax for Notes. But we are able to use it with our own specialised GSA mail template and it works just fine.”*

Another positive result from the switch to Esker Fax for Notes has been Rother’s ability to much more easily “keep an eye” on the system. Now with a simple glance he can see what kind of volume is coming in and going out, which before he couldn’t do at all. Rother is also pleased with how the switch to Esker Notes for Fax has brought about increased efficiency in handling unused phone numbers. These numbers can now be automatically reassigned to employees who need them.

Benefits: A total fax solution

Rother says the most useful features of Esker Fax for Notes are the Esker Fax Admin database and the Esker Fax for Notes Log database. *"These really make it easy to administer our system and to go in and see how faxes are being processed,"* Rother says. He adds that another benefit of the change is that now he can add a user to the system without having to load a special client. *"When you are using Notes, it just makes it so easy when you have the Log database. That is a must,"* he says.

Esker came out for three days. He was a prompt, courteous, professional person who was here on time and was willing to stay late. He was also able to offer ideas on how we could work around certain situations.

Rother points out that one of the things his team was concerned about during the installation was how to get the existing phone numbers moved over so they wouldn't have to spend hours and hours typing names and phone numbers into the new system. *"The Esker technician worked with one of our Notes administrators, and we were able to come up with an agent that populated all of the names and phone numbers into the Esker Fax Admin database, which saved us a lot of time,"* he says.

As it turned out, the implementation of Esker Fax for Notes was finished a half day ahead of schedule. *"I've been very happy,"* Rother says. *"And not having heard any complaints from our people means we're doing a good job."* In fact, Rother says that if he had not told many of his co-workers about the change to Esker Fax for Notes they never would have realised that the change had been made.

Future improvements

Following its successful implementation of Esker Fax for Notes, the Public Buildings Service continues to learn how to optimise its use of the system to accomplish its related communication and information management objectives. Possible plans for the future include increasing the number of licenses, should the need to add more phone lines occur.

Esker Fax for Notes also offers the Public Buildings Service the option of direct migration to Esker DeliveryWare for pure Notes fax plus document delivery via Web, XML, PDF, wireless, print, hosted fax and postal mail delivery services, and archive.

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■ U.S. General Service Administration

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