ITAR/EAR Compliance Software for Defense Contractors

International Traffic in Arms Regulations – Export Agency Regulations

"…We have five days to decide if an event is a reportable issue yet we spend too much of our time playing catch up with phone calls and emails trying to extract the information robbing us of the time for more important issues…" Contracts Officer

Situation

Compliance to US agency regulations is a critical part of the customer's business processes, including the reporting of certain issues to the pertinent oversight agency. However, reportable issues have a time constraint. The customer has to gather the facts and quickly decide whether the issue must be reported.

The problem facing the customer's Trade Compliance Office (TCO) was getting the information reported from the multiple business units to the TCO in the timeliest and most accurate manner possible so they had the time to make the decisions they needed related to each issue. TCO management spent too much time extracting the information they needed to make a decision.

Information was reported through emails and usually arrived with incomplete information so TCO managers spent most of their time with follow up activities trying to quickly get the information they needed. To further complicate matters, the reporting processes were people-dependent, requiring precious time and resources. It was a complex process where follow up questions were knowledge-based and triggered by the response to a previous question.

User Concerns

The customer knew that there were several risk factors:

● Distraction of the managers from important business issues if detailed scripting of IT personnel were to be required

● Disruption of up and downstream business processes if unintended consequences were to occur

● Dissipation of scarce budget resources if the improvements were to not be captured

To improve this complex business critical process business rules had to be built into the application. The business users knew what worked and what needed improvement, but, they needed IT support to implement the process improvements. Internal IT departments are very talented in managing the corporate data and associated platforms; however, they are often too busy to become familiar with each departmental process and the associated business rules. Therefore, departmental managers must spend valuable time scripting each step to avoid the risk factors listed above.

Solution

The customer brought in AccessIG, Inc., a Microsoft Certified Partner, as a member of the team to help mitigate the risks and to accelerate the capturing of the benefits. Because AccessIG had extensive A&D experience the customer did not have to script each step. AccessIG not only demonstrated a quick understanding of the business processes, but also

Defense contractors risk business interruption or loss of business by failing to properly report and fix non-compliancy issues under ITAR/EAR. This requires identifying the possible issue and making management decisions within a very short time frame – days.

The customer is a USA-based Aerospace & Defense Contractor with multiple operating divisions and business units spread over many locations. The customer supplies products and services to both military and commercial markets worldwide.

BEST PRACTICE EXPERIENCE

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those processes that would be affected up and down stream. And, based on their extensive experience, they brought valuable "best practices" experience that they customer could draw upon.

As a result, the customer gains faster benefits at a lower cost due to:

- the acceleration of the process improvements/prototyping phase
- the acceleration of the identification of the cost/benefit
- the acceleration of the identification of avoidable risk

AccessIG used a combination of SharePoint, SQL Server and ASP.Net to build extensions to the SharePoint solution. AccessIG established a SharePoint site (WSS 3.0) as both an initial solution and a rapid prototyping tool. As the customer began to organize the information in SharePoint, they were quickly able to imagine what was possible. As a result, the customer was able to rapidly formulate the business rules that could be pushed down to the local business units for the reporting of issue information.

AccessIG met with several users from the business units to get maximum input from the users prior to building the solution. The first step was to "prototype" the solution so the users could participate in the Imagineering process and get to the goal faster with lower risk of failure. This minimum effort saved a lot of rework time and expense and minimized the amount of time and resources contributed by the customer who still had to run their own business functions.

AccessIG, teaming with the customer and the customer's IT partner, developed a web-based solution that guided the user to enter the correct information as soon as they had it and fill out the remaining information and attachments as the data became available. The solution also contained the business logic to ask for additional information based on how the previous questions were answered. Once the user completes the input the process checked for incomplete information and the necessary attachments and notified the user to supply any missing information prior to submission to TCO.

The solution was first tested with two business units to exercise the solution in order to fine tune the application for maximum ease of use and benefit for the users. Suggestions were evaluated and either eliminated, implemented or considered for future implementation. Once the customer and AccessIG were confident that the solution was ready to roll out, training was done quickly and inexpensively through remote training over the company intranet to the various locations. This also ensured a secure environment when using real information.

Benefits

- Issues now arrive at Corporate TCO as complete as possible

- Gathering and completing the information has been pushed down from corporate to the business units

- Instead of email, Information is exchanged between the parties through hyperlinks that are secured behind the company firewall

- The customer has more flexibility in ensuring the right information is reported and has more time to exercise decision making associated with resolving each issue

- Using SharePoint in combination with document version control users no longer have to worry if the document they are working on is the latest copy

- Corporate now has more time to devote to proactive activities; i.e., looking better in the eyes of the customer

- The information is being stored in a format that is building a Corrective Actions Database that the customer can use to proactively improve their business processes