

Mercedes Benz

Challenge

Speed, top performance and reliability are the key values behind Mercedes Benz's promise to deliver world class automobiles. Internally, MBSA strives to provide fast and efficient service within its individual departments. One of the challenges is the amount of documents the company processes across departments and the need to log and process them as quickly as possible.

By pinpointing their primary requirements, MBSA decided on three key challenges, which affected its network of 150 dealers across South Africa, the plant in East London and head offices in Zwartkop, Gauteng.

The Mercedes-Benz dealer network of over 150 dealers, process a high number of contracts per month, including purchasing contracts and agreements for value added services such as finance, and insurance and maintenance plans. Each contract requires several supporting documents, such as copies of passport pages, proof of residence, bank statements, and more. These are usually sent by post to the central office where they are manually sorted, separated and filed for a minimum of seven years. A manual registry was kept, but proved to be cumbersome especially when contracts needed to be retrieved.

MBSA East-London manufactures more than 50,000 vehicles each year. Many documents are created during the production process and archived once completed and MBSA experienced challenges both with storage and retrieval. The time required to locate, process and store relevant information increased the turnaround time on critical business processes.

For every vehicle produced, a job card is pre-printed for the individual production line stations containing the Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) and a body part number. The card is primarily used to register completion of a job at a particular workstation, but also to record any comments on the car during production. The manager at each station submits his batch of job cards daily for filing and storage. Each production station works independently, so the job cards for one specific car were often filed separately, especially as jobs could be



Mercedes-Benz South Africa (MBSA) is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Daimler AG. The company has a manufacturing plant in East London which has been building vehicles in South Africa for over 60 years. Headquartered in Zwartkop, Gauteng, MBSA manufactures Mercedes-Benz C-Class cars for the local market as well as export to the United States of America. It also produces Mercedes-Benz commercial vehicles and buses, Mitsubishi FUSO trucks, and assembles Freightliner trucks, a leading American brand. MBSA's headquarters, marketing and support divisions are located in Zwartkop, Gauteng, from where the Mercedes-Benz, smart, Freightliner, Western Star and Mitsubishi FUSO products are marketed and financed.

Products in Use:

- ◆ Kofax Kapow™
- ◆ Kofax Transformation™
- ◆ Kofax Capture™

completed on different days. With more than 500 job cards per day, this system of tracking and monitoring was inefficient and costly. The aim of the project was to facilitate MBSA's requirement for an application that would assist its users in digitising job cards and release the information to a back-end repository with metadata.

At Zwartkop, MBSA handles all incoming accounts payable documents. These comprise of invoices, credit notes, copy tax invoices and purchase orders; approximately 6,000 documents were received monthly and had to be processed manually and entered into SAP. Whenever a document had to be retrieved, it was a time-consuming manual process.

In all of the above scenarios MBSA wanted to establish a process of searching and retrieving documents quickly and efficiently as different departments and offices, onsite and offsite, required quick and easy access to certify that information was up to date and accurate. With customers often requesting information, it was critical to make this information accessible and user-friendly.

Solution

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Mark-Anthony Nel, Manager Business Support System, MBSA

MBSA wanted to implement a system capable of capturing key information from the incoming contracts and job cards and make it both searchable and retrievable. In parallel, they wanted to automate the accounts payable process. All this critical information would be indexed and saved to a back-end system. For the contracts department it was Verity/Autonomy and a custom developed solution; for the job cards it was Cepra; and the accounts payable department used SAP.

“We recognized the need for change in the current system architecture,” said Mark-Anthony Nel, Manager Business Support System “Documents contain the core information of a business, making it essential to be able to search and

retrieve the information stored within them.” The solution also needed to integrate seamlessly with the individual back-end system they had in place.

MBSA approached Belay, a specialist systems integrator and Kofax Certified Solutions Provider located in Gauteng, to determine how best to address the requirements of each of their departments. Belay designed a solution tailored to provide maximum flexibility and complete automation.

Belay addressed the contracts department with a capture solution implemented at the head office in which all incoming contracts are bar-coded at the point of origination. The dealers generate a barcode when the contracts are created and signed at the local dealer offices. Each contract is separated by attaching a barcode to the front page. When the contracts arrive at the head office in Zwartkop, they are scanned and the key metadata from the contract and the supporting documents is automatically captured and delivered into their locally developed back-end system. The key metadata enables the documents to be indexed such that the individual contract can be retrieved easily; and all scanned documents can be quickly accessed. Value added services can seamlessly be processed and any incoming calls requesting copies of the contract can easily be fulfilled.

The manufacturing plant implemented a similar solution. By leveraging the barcodes printed on each job card for cars being worked on, Kofax Capture™ was used to create an automated tracking solution. The filing department scans each card, and the Kofax solution captures the barcode containing the VIN and the corresponding job information. The image of the job card is then captured and the scan operator needs only index the filing box ID number. All data is stored in CEPRA for retrieval. It's essential that every step of the production line is documented and now when the VIN is keyed in an operator can confirm instantly where the automobile is within the production line, track any comments made on the job and cover all aspects of the car production line process.

Accounts payable also needed an automation solution. Because of the volume of documentation, it meant they needed to look at a solution capable of intelligently automating the classification, sorting and separation of paper and electronic documents, then extract and validate the information they contain. Kofax Transformation™ are powerful and versatile document classification modules designed to add page separation, challenging data

extraction and validation capabilities for unstructured documents such as invoices, credit notes, purchase orders, etc. without having to manually enter index fields – making it an ideal solution for efficiently capturing accounts payable correspondence.

By setting up rules for validating tax and supplier registration numbers they were able to save hours of time and increase productivity. The system is able to detect if an invoice has already been processed and manage exception, thus avoiding possible duplicate payments and route such payments to an administrator for manual intervention.

Results

“For Mercedes Benz, the implementation of Kofax solution across department yielded immediate results. Thanks to the ease of use of the solutions, employees’ trainings were kept to a minimum and the transition to the new solution was faster than expected,” said Mark-Anthony Nel.

In the Account Payable department, the deployment of KTM dramatically improved their processes and reduced the end to end processing time. As all invoices are captured at the beginning, they can easily follow the invoice progression and have a clear view on the exact stage of the invoice: incoming, under treatment, paid etc.

The Kofax solution also had a valuable impact in the Job Cards department. “With Kofax Capture, the time spent on each job cards received is reduced: all of them are rapidly scanned, forwarded to a server and remain accessible to all people concerned. With the storage of these job cards, MBSA reduced the space needed to store the documents, and experienced an improved flow and document management through the process,” said Mark-Anthony Nel.

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