

Mutual Life Insurance Company



Iron Mountain Organizes Records and Streamlines Document Management Processes for a Leading Insurance Company

- CUSTOMER:** The customer is one of the largest mutual life insurance companies in the U.S.
- CHALLENGE:** The company wanted to enhance access and management of over 7 million active policy files stored centrally, with an outdated retrieval system.
- SOLUTION:** Iron Mountain managed the relocation and organization of these files and delivered a Data Management System for imaging documents and providing quick and easy retrieval.
- BENEFIT:** The customer realized both significant cost savings and dramatic improvements in records access.

The Customer

Throughout its history, this major U.S. insurance company has built a reputation for integrity and financial strength. With a family of companies offering life insurance, annuities, and long-term care insurance, the company has achieved significant success, including a place on the Fortune 100 and more than \$125 billion in assets under management.

Headquartered in a major metropolitan area, the insurer is one of the largest mutual life insurance companies in the United States and one of the largest life insurers in the world. Unlike a stock company, a mutual insurance company does not offer shares of stock on public exchanges. Rather, it is operated and maintained for the benefit of its members, or policy owners.

The Challenge

If you've ever felt overwhelmed by paperwork, consider the challenges of having over 7 million active policy files to manage.

The life insurance business generates mounds of documentation. On any given day, 2,100 new business files are created by the company, 4,100 individual documents are interfiled into existing policy folders, and 1,300 file folders are requested for retrieval.

The company had started managing its files in its central offices, but as the company grew so did the paperwork. Ultimately, 69,000 square feet of prime real estate was dedicated to storing files, all in their original paper format.

In addition, the processes for records access had become painfully slow due to both the volume of records and the outdated manual system and methodology. A typical retrieval request took approximately three days to complete. These demands had also produced a labor inefficiency, which required hiring costly temporary and contract employees to help out.

The customer dramatically reduced costs by outsourcing records storage and service to Iron Mountain and physically relocating 7 million policy folders from a high-rent facility to an Iron Mountain site.

Realizing that the time had come to rethink its records management infrastructure, the company had four primary objectives: reduce costs, improve records access, improve service quality, and embrace new technology.

The Solution

The company solicited and reviewed proposals from several vendors and chose Iron Mountain based on its proposed solution and program methodology. Iron Mountain's solution was composed of two main elements: relocating records to a low-cost facility and developing a comprehensive imaging system.

Relocating the files to save on storage costs was a fairly obvious solution, but the implementation was a mammoth undertaking. Over 7 million policy folders were moved from the metropolitan facility to a new Iron Mountain records management facility in an outlying suburb. Day-to-day operations at this facility would be managed by Iron Mountain employees. During the relocation process, all records were inventoried, verified, and affixed with bar code labels. To assist with this process, Iron Mountain subcontracted with a partner that specializes in the relocation and organization of customer file rooms.

The relocation process was audited and monitored daily by Iron Mountain to ensure that the files were moved efficiently and accurately. All file transactions – both physical and electronic – were verified using various quality assurance practices. During the relocation period, all policy folders were accessible to employees, regardless of relocation status.

The imaging system designed for the customer was created to provide quick and efficient access to policy folders for both service branches and the corporate office. This tool needed to be able to handle the communication and system demands necessary to create, store, and distribute more than 30,000 images daily. Iron Mountain worked with a leading consulting firm to develop the imaging and Data Management System (DMS).

The resulting Data Management System is an easy-to-use, point-and-click tool that enables the insurance company to manage all aspects of its records inventory. The system also serves as a direct line of communication to the Iron Mountain facility. DMS can be used to send electronic retrieval requests to Iron Mountain, to recall previously imaged files for display and/or printing, and to record descriptive information on new files. Iron Mountain audits and validates each transaction through its SafekeeperPLUS® system.

As a result of these changes, the insurance company has realized financial savings and improved quality of service and records access by implementing both new technology and an updated records management process.

The customer dramatically reduced its costs by outsourcing records storage and service to Iron Mountain and physically relocating policy folders out of its high-rent facility. Service improved with the DMS system – users can now access a comprehensive view of all records, irrespective of format and location. Furthermore, the system improved retrieval time for paper records from three days to 24 hours, with instant access to imaged documents and policy folders.

The bar coding on the files improved operating efficiency and enhanced inventory tracking. Additionally, records security was greatly increased. The physical files rarely leave the secure Iron Mountain facility, and when they do the SafekeeperPLUS system guarantees they are accurately scanned.

The customer's successful insurance business generates literally tons of paperwork. But, with help from Iron Mountain, the process for managing these records has been streamlined and costs are under control.

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745 Atlantic Avenue
Boston, Massachusetts 02111
(800) 899-IRON

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