

DAK-GESUNDHEIT DEVELOPS DIGITAL MAILROOM BASED ON PDF/A



With more than six million insured persons, DAK-Gesundheit is one of the leading German health insurance companies. Incoming mail is digitized in so-called DigiCenters located in Berlin, Essen and Hamburg. As of today, 80% of DAK-Gesundheit's incoming mail is digitally processed. These primarily include certificates of incapacity for work, treatment and cost plans, payment slips for sickness benefits and applications of any kind. The three locations process an average of 90,000 mail items every day. The data of approximately one third of the mail items is automatically read out via OCR/ICR and processed further.

The DigiCentres are faced with the challenge of having to completely classify and index the entire inbox and forward the mail to the digital mailbox of the person responsible for processing it. In order to get an impression of the daily workload, the inbox is weighed after the arrival of the incoming mail. Altogether it's about one ton a day. The incoming mail is then pre-sorted automatically according to the thickness of the letter, because the volume of the documents contained therein determines which scanners will process it. The Opex scanners are used for letters of up to three pages and the Inotec scanners are used for the remaining items. In 2012, DAK-Gesundheit decided to scan the documents in color and convert them to PDF/A. The reasons for this decision included improved readability on the screen and simplified data extraction, as well as the implementation of compliance guidelines.

For example, originals should be digitized in color for greater legal certainty, as this will result in a better match between the copy and the original. In addition, the PDF/A format is the ISO standard for long-term archiving, so it ensures readability for years or even decades. This implements another legal requirement.

"When we opted for color scanning with PDF/A, we naturally also asked ourselves how we would deal with the file sizes of the color images," said Kay Schülzke, Head of DMS and Input Management, DAK-Gesundheit. "We found the answer with Foxit because their PDF compression not only converts documents to PDF/A, but also compresses them. Therefore, we didn't have to increase storage or line capacity."

The Foxit component processes the images immediately after digitizing. Due to the award-winning compression technology integrated into the software, the file sizes from the color images are only slightly larger than those of the previous black and white scans. After compression, the scan operator applies the qualified electronic signature. The metadata and the document data are then read and stored in a separate XML file. Finally, the PDF/A documents are stored in the document management system, which employees can access. The physical mail is then stored for six weeks and finally destroyed. The optimal interaction between the compression of the image files and the quality of the readout of the data is a crucial factor for process reliability.



"Introducing the PDF/A format was the right decision and conversion will have an even greater significance for us in the future," Schülzke added.

DAK-Gesundheit therefore plans to convert documents received by e-mail or via the online platform into PDF/A files.