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## **Loris Technologies' FileNexus Solution Powers Up Productivity at Erie Thames Services**

Today's technology simplifies many of yesterday's business operations. However, there is one problem that technology has not been able to solve – the ever increasing amount of paper that is produced by modern-day commerce. Some industries produce more paper than others, and businesses within these sectors must spend vast resources of money and time managing their paper documents. One industry that is especially reliant on paper is the electric utilities business because of its need to record all of the details and regulatory information for auditing and customer inquiry purposes.

Erie Thames Services (ETS) is one utility company that recently overhauled its internal processes to become more efficient, by implementing a solution to reduce its overall paper consumption and management. ETS is a utility service provider based in Ingersoll, Ontario. It provides enhanced services to customers of its parent company, Erie Thames Power. ETS also operates as a local ASP (Application Service Provider) and boasts seven electric utilities companies in Ontario and the US among its ASP customers.

### **Getting Plugged In**

Approximately three years ago, ETS began investigating a solution to help reduce the number of resources that were being spent on paper management. At the time, the process for most ETS staff was to print off data, manually edit information, and file it in binders that were kept in the company vault for the industry-standard seven years.

"We were spending too much time and money on storing and managing our paper-based customer data," said Todd Ross, vice president of strategic planning and business development, Erie Thames Services. "We were looking for a cost-effective solution that would help our organization reduce the amount of paper we needed to save, as well as increase overall efficiency in maintaining records to meet our compliance and customer obligations."

After completing an initial investigation ETS talked to its software partner Harris Computer Systems, who suggested the company look at Loris Technologies, a Toronto-based software developer of document management solutions. Loris Technologies' FileNexus solution is an open document management application for any type of file – electronic, paper, forms, microfilm – from any source, including host systems, PCs, scanned images, e-mails and faxes. Once records are stored using FileNexus, staff can retrieve the data simply and securely using their desktop PC.

As a software partner, Harris Computer Systems provides ETS with all its CIS and financial software. Harris Computer Systems and Loris Technologies were already working on integrating FileNexus into the Harris Computer Systems CIS (Customer Information Systems) products, to provide both Harris Computer Systems and Loris Technologies clients with added functionality to their CIS applications.

"We looked closely at a few other options, but the convenience factor of having FileNexus integrate with the customer information system we were already using stood

out as a real differentiator,” said Ross. “The FileNexus solution provided us with the storage and archive capabilities we were looking for to streamline our operations, at a reasonable cost.”

### **Juicing Up with FileNexus**

ETS worked quickly to deploy FileNexus across the organization. As of August 2005, 95 per cent of all documents created by the company flows through the FileNexus program. This includes all of ETS’ billing, cash receipts, accounts payable, payroll, work orders and anything else that would have been printed out and filed in the past.

During the summer of 2005, ETS hired a student to help with back-scanning the documents in the company vault and storage areas.

“It was incredible to see the amount of paper that we had stored away – we must have sent off at least two tonnes to be shredded,” said Ross. “We still have some more to go, but now we actually have storage room in our vaults which can be used for other purposes.”

Deploying the FileNexus solution has also enabled ETS to reduce the time spent on the month-end process from eight hours to two hours, because staff do not have to print out documents or search for documents that have been filed manually. An additional benefit is the ability to share documents online from multiple offices, as opposed to faxing hard copies between various offices.

Another key benefit is the ability to visually improve the presentation of invoices that are sent to business customers. Previously, the financial software only produced a typical vanilla-looking invoice. However with the integration of FileNexus, ETS can now produce a full-colour, highly detailed invoice. FileNexus also enables ETS to save the invoice image on the system just as it appears in hard copy format.

As well, the new solution helps ETS respond quickly to requests from auditors. Previously, it took external auditors five days to complete the annual audit at ETS. With the addition of FileNexus, the auditing time has been reduced to one day. Now if an auditor needs to see information from a prior year, they can easily retrieve the information and view it at their desktop computer. Just like using a Web search engine, auditors can search by any desired index and/or actual content to find the requested information.

“In addition to the productivity gains from the FileNexus solution, we obtained complete payback within six months of the initial deployment,” said Ross. “Capturing this type of ROI in such a short period is unheard of in the software industry, and we are so pleased we can share these results with other customers.”

### **Creating the Powerhouse Team**

The FileNexus implementation has been so successful that ETS has now layered it into its offerings for ASP customers so they can take full advantage of the solution’s features and benefits. Working with software partners Harris Computer Systems and Loris

Technologies, the FileNexus solution is now available to all ASP customers who want to expand the overall functionality of their system.

“Being able to provide our ASP customers with the FileNexus product is a huge differentiator for us, and having it integrated with the Harris Computer Systems CIS offerings is helping us win business throughout North America,” said Ross.

As a result of the seamless integration of the Harris Computer Systems products and the FileNexus products, ETS customers are not even aware they are using two different solutions.

“FileNexus is a huge value-add for us – customers who see it in action usually want it,” said Jeff Bender, CEO, Harris Computer Systems. “It’s a very compelling offering for businesses in the electric utilities sector because it provides them with a great level of flexibility and a wide range of options that can be tailored to suit their individual needs.”

### **Powering up the Future**

FileNexus is enabling ETS to create a process for e-billing with a single source view that contains the complete record of the customers’ statements. This feature will allow individual customers to log on and easily look at their current invoice, as well as past record of payments and bills. This is a huge advantage for customers who want to view their statements online and have access to real-time billing. Going forward, all ETS’ ASP customers will be able to rely on ETS for all their e-billing needs.

“We are very excited about the new possibilities garnered from our continued partnership with Loris Technologies and Harris Computer Systems,” said Ross. “We are looking ahead at forging new opportunities to help customers improve operational efficiency and reduce costs with the FileNexus solution.”

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