

AON HEWITT

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Aon Hewitt Benefits from Advanced Capabilities of MiddleOffice

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This case study examines how Aon Hewitt was able to reduce application development time while increasing system independence and flexibility, lowering costs, and improving their deployment processes using Sefas Open Print solutions.

Customer Background

Aon Hewitt has been a pioneer in the HR industry for more than 65 years, providing clients with best-in-class human resources consulting and outsourcing services. Aon Hewitt consults with more than 3,000 large and mid-size companies around the globe to develop and implement HR business strategies covering retirement, financial and health management; compensation and total rewards; and performance, talent and change management. As a market leader in benefits administration, Aon Hewitt delivers health care and retirement programs to millions of participants and retirees, on behalf of more than 300 organizations worldwide. In addition, more than 30 clients rely on Aon Hewitt to provide a broader range of human resources business process outsourcing services to nearly a million client employees.

Indeed, with the ability to serve both local businesses and large multi-nationals, Aon Hewitt processes millions of customized HR documents with a wide variety of characteristics and attributes. The result is that each client benefits from a personal communication statement tailored to their unique and evolving requirements.

The Problem

Benefits administration revolves around a number of important documents; 401(k) statements, pension calculation statements and enrollment documents are among the many personalized communications that support the process. The challenge for Aon Hewitt was in the creation and delivery of these documents—in significantly high volumes—for the diverse and expanding family of Aon Hewitt customers. Managing and implementing document composition changes and developing new lines of business had become time-consuming and complex; therefore, the Benefits Outsourcing segment at Aon Hewitt set out to find a solution that would resolve a number of inefficiencies that plagued their current system.

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“We needed to find a solution to make the document creation process at Aon Hewitt better, faster and cheaper,” says Rick Gornik, manager of document creation and delivery for the Benefits Outsourcing business at Aon Hewitt. “We produce a wide variety of personal communication statements. With our previous architecture, making changes and developing new applications was tedious and complex, so we began a search for a system that would allow us to more quickly expand our client base while lowering and maintaining minimal development cost.”

Aon Hewitt realized it needed to address the following problems:

- **Design objects were difficult to manage:** The existing document composition tool did not easily allow Aon Hewitt to exchange common elements between documents and clients. Composition updates were not “inheritable” across the system, making simple changes time-consuming and complex.
- **Application development time was too long:** Due to the complexity of the existing system and limitations in the design tool, the time required to bring a new customer on board was growing increasingly long. Lengthy development time—as much as six to nine months or more—was causing a delay with client implementations, as well as increased development expense.
- **Limited control:** The legacy document composition system did not provide a way to “lock down” critical elements affecting production. At the same time, client teams needed an easy-to-use tool to make user-focused modifications and content changes.
- **Inflexible solution:** The proprietary nature of the existing tools

did not allow open systems development and modification. Aon Hewitt developers and analysts were restricted from working “under the hood” to optimize processing and features.

The Vision

The vision for improvement at Aon Hewitt focused on both the design of their documents as well as the tools used to support the design. According to Gornik, complexity, control and cost were Aon Hewitt’s paramount objectives. “We envisioned an object-oriented development environment where our client teams could make simple changes more easily and cost effectively, while we maintained centralized control over critical composition elements.”

- **Decrease design complexity:** Aon Hewitt wanted to lower the overall complexity of document composition and make it easier to develop and modify the growing variety of personal communication statements they must manage. “Our focus was on implementation maximization,” says Gornik.
- **Increase control:** Gornik and his team wanted tighter control over critical production elements, such as barcodes and address blocks. “A seemingly small change can have a very large down-range impact, so we needed to be careful where we put the tools and capabilities,” says Gornik. “We needed the ability to lock down certain pieces and apply centralized control.”

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- **Reduce cost:** Aon Hewitt viewed the ability to expand their client base while mitigating the cost of document composition and support as a primary goal. “We wanted the option to roll out the document composition tool to more desktops both from a cost perspective, as well as a usability perspective,” says Gornik. “We were looking for a tool and a vendor that could provide for a more economical solution.”

Choosing the Best Partner

Aon Hewitt issued an RFI and considered a comprehensive list of software vendors, each experienced in the document composition process. During an exhaustive evaluation, Gornik and his team compared their incumbent system against a host of other commercially available applications. “We had a very long list,” says Gornik. “Many were unable to deliver a solution in the time that we needed, if at all.”

Ultimately, Sefas and another vendor passed the initial cut. But the real test came in the form a real-world demonstration of how each solution would address the many constraints and issues Aon Hewitt aimed to overcome. "Telling me and showing me are two entirely different things," says Gornik. "So, we chose one of our more complex 401(k) statements, assigned a system analyst devoted to each vendor, and challenged them to develop a working prototype within one month. At the end of the day we thought Sefas had the better product."

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The Solution

Aon Hewitt selected the Sefas Open Print MiddleOffice platform, a thin client-based tool that enables design collaboration through a central object repository, to improve the efficiency, cost and control of their document composition process. Document stakeholders share objects and reuse components, and users access the tool from any workstation connected to the Aon Hewitt Intranet—without installing any software. As a result, MiddleOffice helped Aon Hewitt streamline the process, reducing complexity while increasing control and ultimately reducing the time and expense associated with document composition and development.

- **Object-Oriented Design:** In contrast to the prior architecture, MiddleOffice provides Aon Hewitt with a flexible, object-oriented development environment. Common elements are easily shared across applications and modifications to existing applications are less complex because of the platform's ability to instantaneously "inherit" composition changes across the system. "We wanted object-inheritance and data-independence," says Gornik. "These were must-haves and ultimately where Sefas outshined the competition."
- **Easy to use:** Another reason Aon Hewitt chose Sefas is because of the company's ability to put an easy to use document composition tool in the hands of Aon Hewitt client teams. "MiddleOffice enables us to be much more responsive to user needs, without the need to spend as much time training," says Gornik. "Now the right tools are in the right hands. And the server-based central repository of elements, along with the inheritance capabilities, is a night-and-day improvement."
- **Easy to control:** While the expanded ease of MiddleOffice is improving the responsiveness of client teams, MiddleOffice also

provides Aon Hewitt with a high level of centralized control. "We are tightening up the environment where it was needed," says Gornik. "Obviously, the ability to move the location of a 2D barcode or manipulate the location of an address block are capabilities that need to be locked down. This mixture of control and flexibility was not easily done using our old architecture."

- **"Out of the box" development:** MiddleOffice enables Aon Hewitt with nearly "out of the box" development of customer statements. "I wish I could say that the majority of our clients are turnkey, but the reality is that each is pretty unique," says Gornik. "They all require some level of tailoring and customization. But unlike before, when nothing was turnkey, MiddleOffice gives us the ability to leverage existing elements, adjust them as needed, and then have the system inherit the changes automatically."
- **Open systems design:** Aon Hewitt is an organization of highly technical and capable developers, and MiddleOffice provides a tool set that embraces an open architecture. According to Gornik, the open systems design gives his team the ability to extend and modify the system as needed. "We were looking for a platform that was open: if we needed to understand what was happening under the covers it wasn't buried in a bunch of proprietary stuff." MiddleOffice is based on mainstream technologies such as C++, SGML, XML and Java.

The Benefits

MiddleOffice proved to be a valuable tool for Aon Hewitt because it makes the design of even the most complex documents less complicated. System independence and flexibility have been increased, development time has been decreased and control over critical composition elements has been strengthened. The result: lower development costs and rising process performance overall.

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- **Increased independence and flexibility:** We achieved the independence and flexibility that was critical for taking away the pains that we suffered with our former architecture," says Gornik. With MiddleOffice, common objects like paragraphs, tables and charts are part of the central repository, while the design tool encourages users to create and re-use important document components. "First and foremost, we were looking for an object-oriented tool and the ability to inherit a change. From this perspective, Sefas was clearly the solution of choice."

- **Reduced development time:** Development time for new applications has been dramatically reduced using MiddleOffice, with new implementations coming on board in a fraction of the time and expense. "In the past it would have taken a couple weeks just to get started, and up to nine months to work through the development process," says Gornik. "Now it is not unusual to see your first document coming out the door in as little as a day. And bringing an entire line up can be achieved in a matter of weeks, not months."

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- **Tighter control of production elements:** Using MiddleOffice, Aon Hewitt gained centralized control over composition elements critical to production while providing an easy to use and responsive tool to client teams across the enterprise. "We have realized the tool for the masses and separation of duty," says Gornik. "We have been able to leverage the technology, yet we are no longer concerned about something bad impacting production."

- **Lower cost of adding new document jobs:** Aon Hewitt can now expand their market reach with the knowledge that the cost of document development has greatly improved. "The beautiful thing about MiddleOffice is that as we have grown we have been able to leverage the tool with other groups who were struggling with document creation," says Gornik. "Our goal is to significantly reduce the cost of document creation, and we are well on our way to reaching that benchmark."

- **Easy and cost-effective deployment:** Since Open Print is thin client-based, the cost to set up and maintain the application across the enterprise was greatly reduced from the previous model. "In the past, deployments or upgrades required an individual install to each desktop. Now users simply login to

a server, which is cheaper and easier than keeping software resident on each computer. We were able to lower our cost even further because of the global site license provided by Sefas."

- **Improved mainframe performance:** Open Print enabled a "grid" approach that resulted in dramatic improvement in processing throughput. Rather than using one large extract record file on the mainframe, Aon Hewitt's document system breaks the file into smaller extracts to be run concurrently. "The grid allows us to take the assemble and compose aspects of document creation, break them up and do it on a low-cost, high-performance set of servers," explains Gornik. "We then re-collate the pieces together and bring them back to the mainframe for final rendering."

For now, Aon Hewitt is benefiting from a document composition tool that gives them more agility and control at a lower cost of ownership. "It's really our own business decisions that will determine our achievements from here; it's no longer the tool that is stopping us from reaching our goals," says Gornik.

A Strategic Partnership

According to Gornik, the future looks bright for the relationship between Aon Hewitt and Sefas. "I anticipate that as we grow we will look at Sefas as our starting point. We don't even want to call them a vendor; we want to say that they are a partner—advocates of the entire process and dependable in terms of their expertise. Sefas is in tune with our needs, and their attention is always focused on our results."

About Sefas

Sefas Innovation is a world leader in document production technology. The company is headquartered in Paris, France, with operations in the U.S. and the U.K. Sefas solutions offer unparalleled levels of flexibility and performance. Many of the largest financial institutions and Fortune 500 leaders rely on Sefas Enterprise ADF technology to produce complex, high-volume and mission critical transactional documents.

For more information about our products and services, please visit www.sefas.com.

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