

File Merge and Conversion at Manitoba Finance

Business Issue:

When Manitoba Finance switched their clients to a single business number to improve service, they needed to merge their legacy filing systems into one, and convert all existing files to match the new system.

When Manitoba Finance moved their clients to a single business number, they were faced with a major records management challenge: how could they convert their existing filing systems into one unified system without disrupting the excellent service their clients had come to expect? They wanted to provide their internal team with every available resource, so they sent out an RFP designed to find records management professionals with direct experience of large scale conversions. They also wanted someone who could help design a new system that could easily sustain and replicate itself as they continued to grow. TAB was one of many organizations to respond, and after developing the right methodology for this project over the course of a year, they won the contract.

Big Change, Big Challenges

The legacy filing structure in place at Manitoba Finance, created under three separate tax statutes, was designed to accommodate multiple business numbers held by a single client. This resulted in three different systems, all using terminal digit filing. Every file in each system, about 50,000 in all, would have a new label to reflect the new 15 digit Business Number.

Such a large transition posed a number of challenges. Most importantly, maintaining privacy and security of the information during the process would be critical. And Manitoba Finance made it clear that it was imperative their operations continue as normal during the conversion. This, combined with fiscal budget deadlines, meant that the project would have to be completed in an exceedingly tight timeline. Converting within a terminal digit system presented additional challenges because once the new files were created, they would automatically be out of sequence. To further complicate matters, space in the filing rooms at Manitoba Finance was very limited.

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Achieving the total accuracy necessary to make this conversion project a success would require meticulous planning. The TAB team, headed by Regional Manager Janet Campbell and Conversion Services Manager Andrew Chin met with Manitoba Finance Director Taxation Administration Branch, Brian Forbes and Manager of Operations Trevor Gamble and their team for a comprehensive download of all relevant information, including an on-site survey of the existing file rooms. Both sides realized that this was an excellent opportunity to overhaul Manitoba Finance's RM program. With this in mind, Campbell and Chin took what they had learned and came back with a plan that would not only ensure a flawless conversion project, but one that included adjustments and improvements that would continue to add valuable RM support well after the project was completed.

Blueprint

It was decided that Manitoba Finance would move to a color coded label to enhance filing accuracy and easy of use. TAB therefore recommended that the conversion project be anchored with TABQUIK

software. This way a custom designed label template could be produced in advance, and then securely printed at the TAB facility in Toronto using the Manitoba Finance database. The software would also allow Manitoba Finance to maintain and replicate the system after the project was completed, ensuring the accurate creation of labels for new files as needed.

Security

To ensure the integrity of both the information in the files, as well as the chain of custody, a set of policies and procedures were formulated and implemented specifically for the conversion. From the beginning, everyone involved in the project would be required to sign confidentiality and conflict of interest agreements. Further, all internet communications were subject to a strict set of protocols, all data would be sent with encryption, and data sources would be returned to the point of origin or destroyed. Labels would be boxed and sent to Manitoba Finance, even if they weren't used. To safeguard the site, security personnel would be brought in when it wasn't possible to have client personnel available.

And...Action!

The project began with the TAB professional services team deploying in two shifts of fifteen people per day in order to minimize disruption. The Manitoba Finance database was uploaded into TABQUIK on a secure terminal to provide a reference point. TAB personnel would then remove the file to be relabeled, affix each new label, and replace the file in a new position on a shelf which had been previously marked in accordance with the new system. This way they managed to convert approximately 50,000 files, condensing about 3,600 hours of labor into approximately two weeks.

Audit Accuracy

As the files were converted, sequenced to the color coding system and replaced in their new positions, they were then run through several layers of checks and audits which included both the client and the

TAB team. Central to this was a separate TAB team that physically checked each file to ensure that the end TAB number matched the contents of the file.

Planning Pays Off

The long and detailed planning process, combined with excellent co-operation between the two teams, produced an execution phase that ran like clockwork, making this conversion project a complete success. The TAB team converted 50 000 files with complete accuracy in just over two weeks. Manitoba Finance didn't miss an operational beat, and in the end they not only had a completed conversion project, but a more robust and comprehensive RM system in place that could carry them into the future and grow with them. As Brian Forbes said,

"TAB did a very professional job from providing the consultative support prior to writing up of the spec to the last folder being filed. Andrew Chin is an exceptional project manager, and we were very happy with the whole thing. Janet Campbell helped us see that this was a perfect opportunity to clean up and improve our system, and that was the real beauty of the project."

Manitoba Finance's motto is "Simplifying the business of doing business", and by moving their clients to a single business number, they have done that. TAB is proud to have helped them uphold their singular reputation for customer service.



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UNITED STATES	• 888.822.9777	www.tab.com
CANADA	• 800.387.6212	www.tab.ca
AUSTRALIA	• 800.50.3453	www.datafile.com.au
EUROPE	• +31 20 6975333	www.tab.nl