



# CENTRAL ARKANSAS WATER

## A HISTORIC UTILITY COMPANY EXPERIENCES UNPARALLELED SERVICE WHILE INNOVATING THEIR INTERNAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

### COMPANY

Central Arkansas Water

### BUSINESS

Utility, Water Treatment Services

### FINANCIAL SOFTWARE

Microsoft Dynamics® GP

### Background

Dating back to the 1800s, Central Arkansas Water (CAW) has been providing and transporting water to homes and businesses throughout the Little Rock-North Little Rock metropolitan area. It began operation as two separate entities, Little Rock Municipal Water Works and the North Little Rock Water Department. In 2001, CAW emerged as a unified entity after a pivotal study revealed that one central water provider would be able to more efficiently and effectively meet customer needs. Putting aside equity interests and geographical differences, CAW thus formed with the objective of serving the greater good of the entire community.

Today, as Arkansas's largest public water supplier, CAW provides quality and affordable drinking water to a population of approximately 398,000 in 16 cities and communities. The utility serves 121,500 residential, commercial, industrial and master-metered customers.

### Challenge

Continually searching for more efficient and effective business practices, CAW knew there had to be a better accounts payable process than manually filing paperwork, making copies, re-scanning approved documents and pulling files for reference and review. Although finance and accounting personnel were already using a document scanning system, the system did not provide an intuitive interface or streamlined approach — leaving them with a backlog of materials to upload. “We had a scanning solution that we were using for the finance division, but it was so cumbersome. We couldn't keep up with the scanning and indexing because it added several additional steps to our process. We fell seriously behind,” said Deena Coston, Controller at CAW.

### Solution

In 2008, CAW decided to invest in a new solution. The water utility company acquired Microsoft Dynamics GP and started researching alternative document management systems. After careful review, CAW selected *doc-link*™ because the utility team liked the simplicity of the product and had received positive reviews about it from other trusted industry sources. “Altec's *doc-link* was endorsed by Microsoft and our consulting partner so we trusted their recommendation,” recalled Coston.

CAW also appreciated Altec's more streamlined approach and integrative understanding of the accounting division's natural workflow. “The first thing we noticed was that Altec had a completely different philosophy regarding when to capture the image. With *doc-link*, we scan the AP vendor invoice as soon as we open the mail then move it into a workflow process to executives for approval,” Coston continued. “This way, the document never gets lost, misplaced, misfiled or routed incorrectly. In our old imaging system, we had to attach the scanned image to a new email message for delivery to our approval managers and executives. They had to open the email, print the attachment to paper, hand-sign the paper, re-scan the document, attach it to a reply email message and send it back to AP. It was a big headache and a time-consuming business practice, for everyone involved.”

CAW was impressed by Altec's level of customer care and support. “The support from Altec is much better than any vendor I've experienced. They respond quickly, listen to the issues, and provide solutions. I've dealt with a lot of different consultants over the years, and I've never had as good of success solving problems and getting answers as I have with Altec,” explained Coston.

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*doc-link.*



Deena Coston  
Controller  
Central Arkansas Water





### Benefit

With scores of users accessing the system, one of *doc-link*'s key benefits to CAW has been its ease of use. As Coston explained, "Everyone can remember how to use it and access it easily."

Plus, files are no longer getting lost in the shuffle. Always knowing where documents are and not having to spend valuable time and resources on tracking have been a huge savings for CAW.

Responding to vendor calls is also no longer a challenge for the accounting staff. "We used to just cringe when vendors called. Because we were so far behind in our filing we knew it was going to take a lot of time and effort to find the information they wanted. Now it's a breeze," Coston said.

In addition, *doc-link* naturally aids in managing and tracking CAW's workflow. Through the "supervisor" function, managers can anticipate heavy work weeks, stay on top of deadlines and see where files are getting held up in the system. Coston said, "We are finally 'on top' of things in the accounting division."

Furthermore, Coston was especially pleased with *doc-link*'s capacity to track and manage upcoming large bills. "We now have the ability to track large-dollar items and we have a tool that allows for quick processing so we can take advantage of early-pay discounts. We manage our money better because of *doc-link*." ▲

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