Underwriters Laboratories

i-Sight®

Underwriters Laboratories Builds Cases for Criminal Enforcement with i-Sight Case Management

"Our mission is to preserve and enhance the integrity of the UL family of Marks and to protect the safety of consumers around the world from the potential hazards associated with goods bearing counterfeit UL Marks. The ability to capture data and build enforceable cases in i-Sight is helping us fulfill our mission."

— Judith Lykins
Manager, Anti-Counterfeiting Operations

Customer name: Underwriters Laboratories

Challenge:
- Too much data regarding UL mark counterfeit cases to capture, track and retrieve efficiently.
- Traveling investigators could not log into a secure, centralized system from remote locations.
- UL lacked consistent, easily produced reporting to measure its activities and successes.

Solution:
- i-Sight mirrors UL's investigative process.
- The Web-based software enables investigators and law enforcement personnel to view case information from anywhere in the world.
- All history, data and supporting documents are stored with each case and can be accessed quickly.
- Templates for letters and reports keep outgoing information consistent and are easy to produce.

Results:
- The anti-counterfeiting team reduces the time to find needed case information and send required letters or reports.
- The team handles an increasing number of cases without adding staff.
- Alerts and reminders help investigators take next steps in a timely manner.
- UL runs reports on valuable information such as types of cases, volumes, and achievements, aiding decision-making.

In the United States alone, counterfeiting and piracy costs between $200 and $250 billion in lost sales annually (Global Intellectual Property Center). From entertainment items to fashion to electronics, you don't have to go far to find fakes.

Beyond the costs, counterfeiting presents a safety threat to consumers. An improperly made and untested product can cause serious harm.

For more than 115 years, Underwriters Laboratories® (UL) has been testing products and writing standards for safety. The products that are certified by the organization – and only those products – carry the distinctive UL Mark. UL evaluates more than 19,000 types of products, components, materials and systems annually with 21 billion UL Marks appearing on 72,000 manufacturers' products each year.

THE CHALLENGE

Underwriters Laboratories takes an aggressive stance against counterfeiting of its UL Mark. Its comprehensive program provides law enforcement agencies with information to distinguish between authentic and counterfeit UL Marks.

During tough economic times, instances of counterfeiting may increase. In fact, the value of goods seized by U.S. Customs and Border Protection increased by 38.6 percent in fiscal year 2008.

At UL, the ability to build a criminally enforceable case requires detailed tracking of information and coordination with law enforcement agencies. UL originally utilized a simple database; however, the application was not capable of capturing e-mails or attachments and did not allow investigators a comprehensive "visual" of each case.

"Our goal is to keep dangerous products out of the hands of consumers. In order to put together a successful investigation for criminal enforcement, we needed a more effective way to collect, analyze and output our data," said Judith Lykins, manager, Anti-Counterfeiting Operations.

THE SOLUTION

UL decided, after much research and review of other software systems, that i-Sight Case Management Software from Customer Expressions was the best match for the team's processes by centralizing all cases in a hosted, web-based, globally accessible system.

"i-Sight was really much more what we were looking for. It's built more around the investigative process," Lykins said. "The web-based aspect is also important to us. External hosting gives us the ability to access i-Sight whenever we need and from wherever we may be. We can also give law enforcement personnel the ability to view a particular case."

Customer Expressions staff worked closely with UL to configure the software to the team's specific needs. With knowledge from working with similar teams addressing fraud, the Customer Expressions contacts were particularly adept in understanding the team's needs.

The flexible software is configured with terminology and categories that match UL's specific processes, and templates for letters and reports with the UL branding. Customized reporting with i-Sight provides insight, enabling UL to improve processes and make better decisions.

All members of Anti-Counterfeiting Operations manage their cases, and all associated photos or documents, in i-Sight. Investigators find all information for each case in one place, eliminating searching and retrieval from multiple locations. Built-in reminders keep investigators aware of deadlines for action on specific cases, or alert a manager when there's been no action for a couple of weeks.

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THE RESULTS

Using i-Sight, each investigator in the Anti-Counterfeiting Operations group manages a large volume of cases while still keeping up with all steps, deadlines and related materials

"Having a centralized repository for all information has been extremely helpful," Lykins said. "We can easily find information and can generate letters and reports quickly and consistently. "

In turn, UL can provide complete documentation to authorities to help expedite enforcement actions. This all contributes to UL's corporate mission of promoting safe living and work environments – and doing so efficiently. The system has provided UL with the necessary intelligence to build in resources where needed to be most effective.

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