# Customer Case Study

## Auto Parts Chain Achieves HR Management Advances with docSTAR

If you hail from Mississippi or Alabama, you might know them as the old Carport Auto Parts stores. In New England, for years you may have called them Foreign Autopart or Lappen Auto Supply. In the Midwest, you might still refer to them as Western Auto. Whatever you call them, the shops are all part of the Advance Auto Parts family of stores, the second largest such chain in the country, with 2,800 locations in 40 states, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

The Roanoke, VA. based organization, which employs 41,000 people, has grown from just 1800 stores at the beginning of the decade. Some of that growth occurred through acquisition, but much of it was done the old fashioned way – one store at a time. And the continued expansion is being helped along by docSTAR.

### It's the People

Throughout the growth – actually, throughout Advance Auto's entire history – employees have been highly regarded. The company clearly values the hard work, dedication, and commitment of Team Members, as the company calls them, complete with capital letters. The prominence of employee satisfaction in the firm's goals proves that. The goals are simple:

1. Serve our customers better than anyone else.
2. Make Advance Auto Parts a special place to work and to be a part of. Treat Team Members with love and respect...like a family.
3. Be profitable enough to ensure that we are successful in numbers 1 and 2 above.

So it's no wonder that human resources is a critically important function at Advance Auto. And because employees – Team Members – are so highly regarded, it only makes sense that managing them and their information takes top billing, as well.

Perhaps nobody is more aware of this fact than Kaushal Senanayake, director of the company's human resources service center. His operation is responsible for keeping track of all the data in all of Advance Auto's personnel files nationwide – and making it easily accessible. Managing HR files for a company of more than 40,000 people is a tough enough job. But when you look at the growth pattern Advance Auto has experienced, the job entails even more horsepower.

That's part of the reason Senanayake tapped docSTAR. He knew the value his company places on people, he recognized the explosive growth that marked the company's existence, and, most importantly, he foresaw the need to bring HR data all together – and keep it all together – in a practical way. In October 2003, Advance Auto signed on with docSTAR to help bring order and ease to human resources document management.

### Enter docSTAR

Installation and implementation was handled primarily by the local docSTAR partner. But a special situation at Advance Auto brought in extra support from docSTAR's home office, as well. "We had a unique application," Senanayake says. "We had a split-server environment. That was apparently the first time docSTAR had been asked to work in that situation." That wasn't a problem, according to Senanayake. "docSTAR was very accommodating," he says. "They did what it took to make it happen."

Installation and initial training went well, and in no time, Advance Auto was scanning in employee records at lightning speed. "We were very aggressive in getting all of our files into the system," Senanayake says. "Within several months, we had millions of pieces of paper scanned in. It was a very rapid deployment. We didn't waste any time."

Advance Auto used temporary workers – a lot of them – to get the scanning done. As part of the pre-implementation planning process, Senanayake and his team established a cut-off date for scanning. For all employees on the active roll as of October 1, 2003 and forward, every document would be included in the imaging system. "We were not going to go back and image previous employees," he says. "But for all active team members, we scanned all of the documents, regardless of when they might have been generated." All of the old files of terminated employees were placed in storage.

The urgency to get docSTAR up and running was two-fold. First, Senanayake says, the firm wanted to get all the active files into the system so they could vacate the file room. "We had a 4,000 square-foot area that operated as a fairly well organized manual file room," he says. "It had 60,000-plus files, and a staff of six people managing the files." It was evident that a company of Advance Auto's size, and growing, needed a better solution than row upon row of paper files.

The second driving factor was equally simple: return on investment. "I have a technology background, and I came in the door three years ago and thought, 'Obviously, there's a better way to do this,'" Senanayake says. After making the switch, he saw a significant and speedy return on the technology investment, he notes. "We wouldn't have done it if there was not a return on investment," he adds. And the quicker the return, the better.

**Processes Improved**
The move to document imaging wasn't just a once-and-done move, though. For the past two years, new records and documents have been digitized as they've been created. This has cut down on the need for any additional file space, and allowing the company to do more with less.

Part of this new way of doing business has involved traditional physical scanning. For instance, Advance Auto human resources and management professionals handle the processing of paper documents, and then scan them into the imaging system. "We still have a decent amount of work that is on paper," Senanayake says. Imaging makes the paper much easier to track and retrieve.

But another facet of the move involves documents that don't actually need to be committed to paper – ever. "We are seeing a shift towards doing more and more things electronically," Senanayake says. "We are getting more documents via electronic media, such as email or faxes." The HR department in Advance Auto uses an electronic fax solution, so faxed documents are visible right on a computer monitor, and don't have to be printed.

The goal is to avoid having to print items before processing – something that requires workflow adjustments and a new way of thinking. "We can get documents electronically, we can process them electronically through PeopleSoft [a human resources information management system,] then we can drag it right into docSTAR," Senanayake says. It's a new workflow, and one that is being implemented as technology allows. "That's where we are going," he says. And quickly, he believes.

Even before the full conversion takes place, Advance Auto is benefiting from a link with PeopleSoft. "We have to key the team member ID into docSTAR, but it is linked with PeopleSoft," he says. "We use the same indexing information, so it can be done relatively easily." It's simply a matter of toggling between the management software and docSTAR.

**Easier Access**
The ROI was more than just financial. docSTAR has brought productivity gains, too. Just ask the human resources professionals who handle personnel issues for the company's 40,000-plus employees and nearly 3,000 different locations.

In addition to home office staff, human resources team members are dispersed across 18 Advance Auto regional sites nationwide. "Add to that team members who are doing things like benefit administration, and we could have upwards of 30 people having to look at documents, just in our regions," Senanayake says.

Before docSTAR, these field HR people had no immediate access to team member files. Sure, they could get something photocopied and faxed or mailed, once someone at the home office was able to get up and go dig it out of one of those 60,000 files. More often, the person at the home office would simply give them the information, and hope things didn't get confused in the process. "It was a nightmare," Senanayake says.

Today, that's changed. People in the field still call in to the home office. And they still request information from centralized team members. "But now we attach it to an email and shoot it out to them," he notes. The procedure is driven as much by field preference and workflow issues as anything else. "The people making requests could be at a hotel, or their home, and could have a bandwidth issue," Senanayake says. More often, though, they'd rather get the info via email, instead of having to log on to a system, because once you have your email attachment, it's there. Period."

The always-on-the-go field HR people love the docSTAR system, he says, because of the access it gives them to these team member documents. "They can pull it up on their laptop and show it to somebody," he adds. "They can discuss it with division managers or store managers, and say, 'Look, this is what I see in the system.'"

**Safety & Storage**
Other benefits of going digital have to do with space and security. Along with productivity improvements came the ability to reclaim a significant amount of floor space. The 4,000-square-foot file area was converted to another use. "It's now the company's mailroom," Senanayake says. "They were located in a different building, with a much smaller facility. Now they have the mailroom where the files were."

Backup storage is another benefit. The Advance Auto team didn't have to worry about HR data when Hurricane Jeanne ripped through Roanoke in September 2004, taking the Roanoke River almost eight feet above flood stage. "I used to worry every time there was a storm," he says. "I imagined something would happen to that file room – the roof would leak and the files would get wet or ruined." By having all HR files digitized on docSTAR, backups are easy. Redundant copies of all of the data are secure, stored away for safekeeping. "Now all we would have to do is restore the backup and go on," he says.

Another security plus is docSTAR's AuthentiDate feature, which protects documents against tampering. "We very rarely have had to use it," Senanayake says. "But it's great to know it's there if you want to go back and authenticate original documents or look at an audit trail." He describes it as a "great comfort" and something Advance Auto was looking for when it was deciding on which imaging provider to go with. "AuthentiDate was one of the deciding factors in us getting docSTAR versus another product," he says.

**Moving Forward**
It's obvious that technology will continue to support Advance Auto team members as they drive the company's growth and success. "Technology plays a significant role as an enabler of our business objectives," Senanayake says. And docSTAR has already made a positive impact. "It represents a radical improvement in the way we work," he says.

Document imaging has been around for a while now, he explains. "And I can't think of not having it," he adds. "We were pleased with the docSTAR implementation, and the fact that we were able to achieve huge productivity gains and efficiencies by using it." He believes docSTAR has dramatically changed his business processes and the way his firm handles HR transactions. "We have empowered team members with information, immediate access to information," he says.

The firm has not adopted document imaging on a wide scale anywhere else. While there are no definite plans or pending projects, Senanayake says he has been consulted about its potential in other areas. If he has any influence with his peers, imaging may grow just as the company has. "That's the direction we will want to go in the future," he says, with an air of confidence.