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Information rights management helps L&T protect its knowhow

Intellectual property and patents are critical assets for every organization. Yet there are a number of processes, functions and designs which may not be patented, but are still critical to the organization. Larsen & Toubro's electrical & electronics division (EBG), one of the core business divisions of the USD 8.5 billion company, faced a similar situation—the need to protect its home-grown knowhow. At this point of time, EBG found [document rights management \(DRM\)](#) to be an apt solution to protect such expertise.

Document rights management resources

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L&T's EBG division specializes in the manufacture of electrical systems, energy meters, automation solutions, medical equipment and petroleum-dispensing pumps. Although the EBG division had sufficient security to protect its intellectual property, it lacked strong measures to protect certain small but crucial processes, knowhow and design secrets. "This knowhow created by our engineers, can include things like the care to be taken during plastic design, or the ways to achieve a particular quality (such as strength or performance) in plastic moldings. Although we didn't file patents for this knowhow, it was critical enough to be protected from going out of the organization," explains P V Shrungarkar, the head of IT for L&T EBG. Earlier, this knowhow was generated and captured in text or Microsoft Word documents which provided limited protection through passwords. The company wanted to make this knowledge widely available to internal users across business units—but only on a need-to-know basis.

In 2009, when L&T EBG started evaluating solutions, it realized that the [information rights management](#) concept was not yet well developed. Later, when the company failed to get Gartner's magic quadrant and white papers on information rights management, it decided to conduct an in-house strength and weakness analysis of several DRM solutions (including Microsoft's and Symantec's products).

L&T EBG then came across Seclore's FileSecure solution, which enables enterprises to retain control over the usage of a document even after it's shared. This document rights management solution helps an organization to control the copy, print, edit and forward rights on any kind of document. It also helps an organization to create granular rights for controlling the document with features like Who, What, When and Where. The document rights management solution supports over 115 document formats including Microsoft Office, Open Office, image- and text-based formats.

Once protected, the documents can be distributed by any means such as CDs, email, pen drives, messengers, FTP and shared folders. The file security features provide file protection wherever the file goes. The information rights management protection is provided by the document owners or by the administrator, and the document rights are managed centrally.

L&T's in-house experts began the information rights management solutions's evaluation process by undertaking a first-hand analysis of the Seclore [document rights management \(DRM\)](#) solution. EBG already had SAP's document management system (DMS), which offered similar rights-based control over documents. Hence certain people within the organization felt that there was no need to invest in a new document rights management solution. However, after further analysis and a drilling exercise, the R&D experts at EBG

realized that the SAP DMS was not able to provide all the required information rights management features. So the team ran a small pilot project of Seclore's DRM solution. Satisfied, the company went live with this information rights management solution in the month of October 2009, within a short period of 10 days. Since L&T EBG had already undertaken [data classification](#) under SAP's DMS solution, the only addition that EBG had to make as part of the new information rights management requirements was to create and add certain rights such as who would be allowed to copy, print, edit and forward.

The power users have been very carefully selected in order to avoid any misuse of owner rights. The DRM solution's client has been installed in around 200 machines.

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P V Shrungarkar
Head of ITLarsen
& Toubro's
electrical &
electronics division
(EBG)

Initially, around seven key personnel from L&T EBG's R&D department were trained as power users and document owners. These people were given rights to edit documents, while the rest of the users were given rights on a need-to-know basis. Although the company has not yet created any policy on information rights management, it is planning to formulate policies as quickly as possible. "Knowing that the people who started using this DRM solution are not always going to be there, we need a proper documentation of processes on the solution's usage," says Shrungarkar.

Shrungarkar feels that the information rights management implementation has helped to protect the confidentiality of the company's precious knowhow and expertise. "The expiry date feature is very exciting, especially when I share documents with outside entities like vendors—the documents automatically lock themselves after a certain date."

L&T EBG has also started using this solution on a large scale to secure tender documents in the projects department. Earlier, request for proposals (RFP) documents were physically sealed. Now, with the DRM solution, EBG can send RFPs months in advance, but the documents will open only on a specific date and time. The DRM solution also helps EBG to revoke document rights at any point of time, even if it is already distributed.

Shrungarkar finds this information rights management arrangement is more cost-effective than other similar solutions. L&T had to buy just a few creators' licenses from Seclore; if it had to go in for another information rights management solution, it would have needed to buy a user client access license (CAL), server CAL, etc. As the Seclore DRM solution is based on open source technology, L&T had to develop a multilayer architecture where it uses a Microsoft server and runs an Apache server installation on top of it. The IRM implementation is limited to the L&T EBG's R&D department at the moment. However, L&T EBG plans to extend its use to other divisions such as marketing, production and consumer focus application.

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