

Fulton Homes



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-Patrick Hindall, CIO of Fulton Homes

Patrick Hindall is in charge of promoting employee productivity. As the CIO of Fulton Homes, he is responsible for making sure employees can work efficiently, either from the central office or out on site. Employees work with large blueprint files and are often working out on the 12 subdivision development sites where there is little to no connectivity. Plan sets usually include around 50 PDF or TIFF files per floor plan with about 5.5 GB in individual floor plan data. The individual files are high-resolution images around 800 KB. They needed an easy and secure way to access these large files and share them with external contractors. Since they shared files and plans on a regular basis, they also needed to know they were always accessing the latest version.

Hindall had tried to solve the file access and sharing problem by deploying a number of different technologies throughout the years, such as third party solutions and FTP. FTP was cumbersome and not user friendly. When sharing with contractors, the contractor would email updated files to someone at Fulton Homes. The employee didn't always share the updated file with the entire organization and so many different versions floated around the company. The email server databases were full of file attachments being passed around in a giant game of telephone, and no one

HIGHLIGHTS

- Fulton Homes replaces Box and builds a file sharing platform to support 12 development sites in 7 Arizona Communities
- Subfolder permissions keep files secure when working with contractors
- Local access makes working on large blueprint files easy.

COMPANY INFO

Fulton Homes is Arizona's largest family-owned and operated homebuilder. Fulton Homes has contributed more than \$300 million to Arizona's schools, communities and children. Founded by Ira Fulton 30 years ago, Fulton Homes now has many employees spread out across Arizona at various development sites.

knew which version was the latest. When employees wanted to give contractors access to a shared folder in order to negate the versioning problem, they had to go through IT. IT ended up spending most of their time fielding requests to create a new file or folder and setting up appropriate permissions to that folder.

“The IT department had become a bottleneck for granting permissions and access to folders,” Hindall said. “We needed to empower employees by giving them the ability to share folders with contractors when out on site.”

Hindall had heard of cloud file sharing solutions and thought they would fit into his employees’ workflow and he signed up for Box’s Enterprise solution. However, after 6 months he realized that Box didn’t meet their business needs. Box only set up permissions on a folder level, when Fulton Homes needed subfolder permissioning. When setting up a folder for a development site, the project lead had access to the entire folder. They only wanted contractors to see the subfolders that pertained to their part of the development. With Box, it was all or nothing at a folder level, and that wasn’t an option for Fulton Homes.

Box also didn’t solve the anywhere file access issue. When out on development sites with little to no connectivity, employees had trouble accessing their files in the cloud. In the office, Box couldn’t quickly sync the 5.5 GB files to the cloud. Latency issues were slowing down everyone’s work. Fulton Homes needed a true enterprise solution.

Hindall found Egnyte and liked the combination of local plus cloud. He deployed local storage with a VMware virtual appliance on an existing file server. In order to start with a clean slate and the latest file versions, he formed a team of key stakeholders and content managers to devise a common folder structure and taxonomy. Hindall requires employees to clean up their files, ensure they are accurate, the latest version and in the correct format before they can upload them into the existing folder structure on Egnyte. This process is helping them organize and clean up the company’s files.

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Employees love the solution and the ability to “share in place” with outside contractors. They needed minimal training, as they were able to access their files via a familiar interface, the mapped drive. When in the office, employees work directly off of the server, which speeds up file access time when editing and saving large blue print files. The cloud enables employees to easily share files with contractors and set permissions to folders and files. They no longer have to reach out to the IT department when giving permissions to contractors. When out at development sites, employees access Egnyte via the cloud or a mapped drive. External consultants and contractors will use Egnyte exclusively through the web browser.

Eventually, folders will number in the multiple hundreds and files in the tens of thousands. Egnyte’s sub-folder permissions now make it easy for employees to share the right files with contractors. For example, all employees can view (all files at the root of their “Communities” folder. With standard waterfall permissions, all employees can view all folders & files in this directory. The sub-folders in this folder have different owners and those owners can assign permissions to their subfolders as they see fit. They can make a specific

employee an editor of specific a sub-folder or sub-file. However, they cannot remove the View Only permissions that are inherited from the root level and assigned to all employees. This enables Fulton Homes to build a common file repository with a well-known taxonomy that everyone can see, and give content owners the ability to assign edit permissions to their subfolders as they see fit. Moreover, because the content owners are in charge of setting their own permissions, permission changes can be done rapidly and in concert with a workflow. A content owner can grant a specific employee edit access to a sub-file. Then, once the edit is made and proofed, repeal the edit access. Content owners are free to offload tedious & time consuming file edits to subordinates or outside contractors, while maintaining strict version control.

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TAKE THE NEXT STEP

Over 1 Billion files are shared daily by businesses using Egnyte. Egnyte provides the speed and security of local storage with the accessibility of the cloud. Users can easily store, share, access and backup files, while IT has the centralized administration and control to enforce business policies. Egnyte, founded in 2007, is based in Mountain View, California and is a privately held company backed by venture capital firms Google Ventures, Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers, Floodgate Fund, and Polaris Venture Partners. For more information, please visit www.egnyte.com or call 1-877-7EGNYTE.