



PHARMA COMPANY PRIORITISES PAPERLESS OFFICE VISION WHILE RETAINING ACCESS TO CRUCIAL DRUG DOCUMENTATION

"We've got someone from Iron Mountain who goes around all departments and checks the documentation, then classifies and digitises it. I used to do that myself, but now I'm able to spend time on more value-added activities."

Minerva Casas Ventura, Head of General Research and Development Archive and specialist in documentation of clinical trials, Almirall



CHALLENGE

Almirall aimed to eliminate paper to cut costs and improve efficiency and sustainability. But the volume of paper records was significant - and key to the company's compliance requirements.



SOLUTION

Iron Mountain® end-to-end service, including on-site support, indexing, transporting, and logging and storing physical archives securely offsite. Records are all available via the Iron Mountain Connect™ portal with the option of express delivery in less than 4 hours or within 24 hours.



RESULTS

Iron Mountain is helping Almirall achieve its strategic aim of being a paperless company. Digitising paper files is freeing up office space and improving document traceability. For documents necessarily kept on-site, better indexing helps improve regulatory compliance.



5,500 boxes

of physical documentation stored off-site



More than two rooms

freed up in the R&D department



Around 5 metres

of new documentation processed per month



Access to records

reduced from days to minutes

MAKING PHYSICAL DOCUMENTATION A THING OF THE PAST

“The R&D documentation relating to a medication that has been commercialised has to be stored for the lifetime of the product, or up to 15 years. We’ve got a big archive and soon needed more help and support managing.”

Minerva Casas Ventura, Head of General Research and Development Archive and specialist in documentation of clinical trials, Almirall

IMPROVING EFFICIENCY OF OPERATIONS

Keeping key drug information

A leading global pharmaceutical company focused on dermatology, Almirall is committed to ditching paper in its offices as a way to improve sustainability and operational efficiency. But for the R&D department going paperless was no mean feat.

The department must hold documentation relating to the clinical trials of every drug it markets. These records must be stored for 15 years or the product’s entire life, whichever comes first. A busy new product pipeline meant the R&D department was home to 80 percent of the company’s paper documentation, with around five metres of files added monthly.

Managing masses of paper

And that was on a quiet month. With Almirall outsourcing many of its research activities to third parties, it was not unusual to take delivery of 10 or more metres of documentation in one go. This was stored in basement rooms in the company’s Sant Feliu de Llobregat R&D centre, close to Barcelona.

Although the firm had sub-contracted custody of its old files to a provider called MDA, it still stored enough documentation on-site to fill around 1.4 km of shelving. This was the situation in 2019 when Iron Mountain acquired MDA and Almirall started its paperless office journey.



Iron Mountain supports clients with on-site personnel if needed



MOVING TOWARDS A DIGITAL WORKPLACE

“We had to get rid of all the paper we didn’t need. And since we had Iron Mountain to hand, we decided to get them involved. They work with us across several departments as well as R&D.”

Minerva Casas Ventura, Head of General Research and Development Archive and specialist in documentation of clinical trials, Almirall

ON-SITE SUPPORT FACILITATES TRANSFORMATION

Enabling document digitisation

Almirall chose an Iron Mountain end-to-end solution to creating a paperless office across multiple departments, including R&D, human resources, procurement, sales and marketing.

Two Iron Mountain employees were placed in the pharma company; one based in the R&D department; and one remote worker managing an Almirall documentation database.

The office-based employee’s job is to review, catalogue and digitise records, then oversee the transfer of physical documents to secure, long-term storage if needed. The paper files can be located and retrieved at any time via an Iron Mountain Connect™ portal.



Assuring compliance and simplifying admin

Within R&D, only a limited amount of documentation is digitised and stored off-site because of regulatory requirements. The cataloguing process alone makes it easier to locate and retrieve files, reducing administration time and effort.

“We know where to find documents now they’ve been catalogued,” says Minerva Casas Ventura, Head of General Research and Development Archive and specialist in documentation of clinical trials, Almirall. “Before it took three or four days or more, depending on the document. Now with the database, we know where it is really quickly.”



Digitisation frees up valuable space and reduces facility costs



SPACE TO BREATHE AND ROOM TO MANAGE

“We wanted to move to a more agile, electronic way of working. Among many other advantages, digitisation improves collaboration and cuts costs.”

Minerva Casas Ventura, Head of General Research and Development Archive and specialist in documentation of clinical trials, Almirall

Office consolidation and cost savings

The Almirall paperless office project is still underway, but Iron Mountain has already put 5,500 boxes of files into long-term, secure off-site storage. This has freed up more than two rooms, allowing the company to consolidate office space and save acclimatisation costs.

Making life easier all round for Almirall

At the same time, Almirall has gone through a staff rationalisation process that left only a few people available to manage documentation. Having Iron Mountain employees on hand is therefore critical in meeting the company’s paperless office goals. The Iron Mountain team can digitise and store records at a rate of about 10 boxes a day. “Their staff are easy to work with,” says Casas. “They listen to our needs and respond quickly. We’re really happy.”

Overall, Iron Mountain is helping Almirall manage large quantities of critical documentation in a much more efficient way, saving on administration time and cost. With only a small in-house team, “Iron Mountain has given us air,” Casas concludes.



Having an Iron Mountain person on-site reduces administration effort



Cataloguing physical files makes it easier and quicker to find documentation



Storing records off-site frees up office space and cuts facilities costs



Better information management enhances compliance with drug-related audits

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