

Frequently Asked Questions about VFC™

1. **What is the Internet?**

The Internet was initially conceived in the 1970s as a means of connecting the U.S. Department of Defense network with other radio and satellite networks. It was designed with the intent that every computer on the network could talk (share information) with any other computer. It has since evolved into a cultural phenomenon and business tool.

2. **What is an intranet?**

An intranet is a privately run Internet, usually within an organization. The intranet is not limited geographically (for instance, it can span across entire countries) but it is protected against public access. Only authorized personnel may access an organization's intranet.

3. **What is an extranet?**

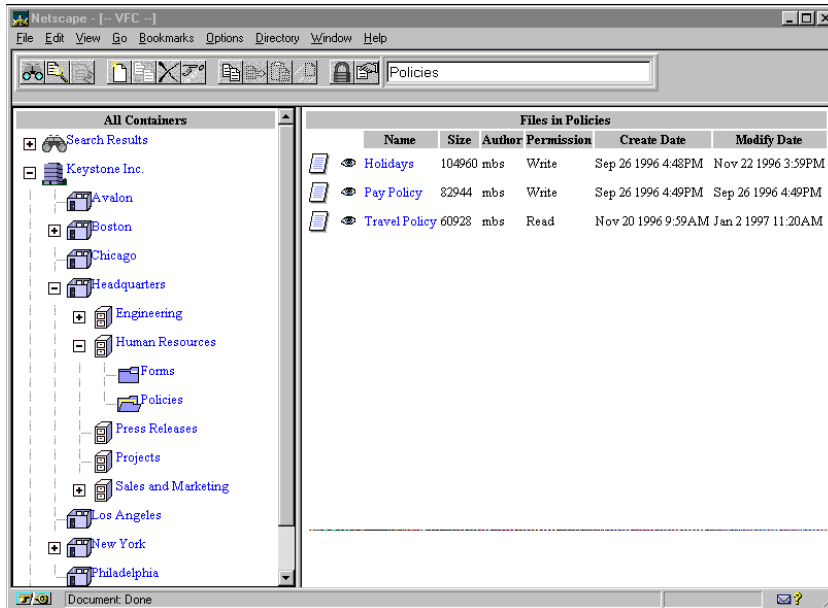
Your company's extranet is the bridge that extends your corporate intranet to include clients, partners, and suppliers, giving them restricted access to your internal network. Utilizing your corporate extranet creates a more dynamic and efficient exchange of information, so your outside contractors become a virtual part of your company.

4. **What is a document management system?**

A document management system uses information technology to manage business documents. Traditional document management systems track document revisions, monitor the review process for certain documents, and control the workflow of a company's. These same systems impose proprietary interfaces on their users, requiring heavy investment in training and software. These systems have been criticized for failing to adequately share information across multiple document management systems or even to simply communicate with other systems.

5. **What is Virtual File Cabinet™ (VFC)?**

A type of intranet groupware, VFC is an evolutionary product developed by Infodata Systems Inc., that enables users to share information interdepartmentally and between disparate document management systems.



The VFC "Office"

6. How is VFC different from its competitors?

The main difference is that VFC gives control to the users. Users decide which browsers and servers they want to use, what format their document will be in, and so forth. Users need a flexible system that enables them to share information across departments as well as with people outside their organization via an intranet. VFC has given them such a tool, as well as a protected, secure repository for departmental or corporate information. But VFC has cornered a new segment of the information technology market with its capability to bridge across multiple document management systems. Now you can access documents created in your favorite word processor, spreadsheet, or graphics package. Clients with other existing document management systems will be able to "speak" to you in your virtual office.

7. Who should use VFC?

Any organization that wants to share their document-based corporate assets can benefit from VFC. Companies with field offices or off-site personnel, such as law firms or government agencies, will appreciate VFC's flexibility and ease of access. Companies especially sensitive to security needs, such as high-tech corporations, financial service organizations, and competitive intelligence groups, can rely on VFC's protected containers. And organizations will find that VFC's extranet capabilities transform outside contractors into a virtual part of their own company. This feature is especially useful for organizations that want more efficient relationships with customers and suppliers, such as manufacturing companies.

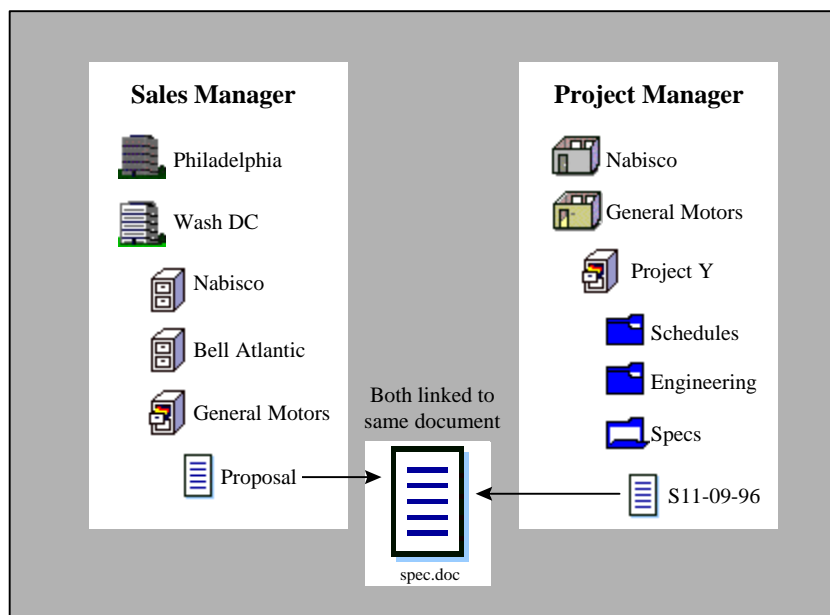
8. Why use VFC instead of e-mail to share information?

E-mail is a static way of exchanging information. It *pushes* information *out* to a vast audience, many of whom don't even need the it. Those who do, generally save the files they receive to

their hard disks — often over and over again each time a revised version is sent. VFC, on the other hand, uses Web technology to *pull in* personnel and clients who are searching for specific information. And the Web interface creates an active network of information that is always current and that can be accessed with a standard Web browser.

9. How does VFC share information?

VFC (Virtual File Cabinet) provides the bridge between corporate departments that until now could only exchange information by duplicating it. In the virtual office, the exchange of information is smooth and dynamic because VFC creates links to the source document in the VFC repository. No more worrying about which revision is the latest. Any changes made to the source document are automatically reflected in the linked documents residing in other virtual locations. Because the linked document behaves as if it were the original, a linked technical report in your virtual office becomes “yours,” even though another department may have written it. You can be confident you’ll always have the very latest version of a document. And you can have access to previous versions as well, as long as the author saves them as a new filename.



Two groups sharing a single copy of a specifications document

For instance, a proposal group can post specifications to VFC that are accessible both to your engineering group and to the sales department. Even your off-site consultant can locate these specifications from any remote location, and be assured that the specs are current. In another company, the human resources department keeps a summary of each employee's benefits in a VFC container. Each employee can access his or her individual records, knowing that the hours reflected for vacation or sick leave are current, since these records are linked to the source document in human resources. These are just a couple of ways in which VFC simplifies your information exchange and keeps your departments horizontally linked to one another.

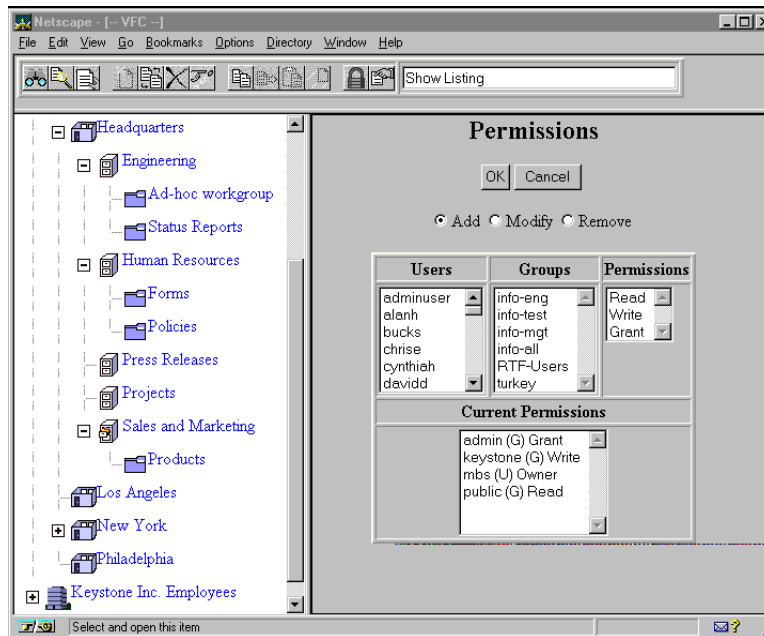
10. What is a virtual office?

The virtual office replicates a paper office but in cyberspace. VFC, becomes the tool to organize a virtual office through a structure of "buildings," "offices," "file cabinets," "folders," and "documents." Similar to the paper office, everything has a place. Quite different from the paper office, however, a virtual office is far more accessible and dynamic. Users have the power to organize their information locally, viewing each linked document as if it were the original and electronically "filing" these linked documents in a way that is meaningful to them.

11. Is VFC a secure system?

Yes.

Information security is a top priority in VFC's design. A system administrator from your company oversees the passwords and logins, ensuring that only individuals with permission to see VFC will have access to it. Within VFC, workgroups will be able to define individual files or containers as public or private, further restricting access and virtually guaranteeing that your documents in VFC remain intact and protected.



Permissions by users and groups

12. I'm heading up an ad hoc workgroup for a short-term project. How can VFC help us?

VFC was created with ad hoc workgroups in mind. Members have the flexibility to organize their own virtual locations and can access documents remotely with nothing more than their browser. An ad hoc workgroup can actually create its own file cabinet, restricting access to members of the group.

13. How flexible is VFC?

Users have the freedom to organize their information in a way that makes sense to them. They don't have to worry about whether a document is up to date because each linked document in their virtual offices will always reflect revisions made to the original source document.

For instance, a company's accounting department posts a timesheet template to the VFC network. Virtual Fred, a company employee, copies the link to that template into his own virtual office. He renames it and puts it in a virtual folder where he keeps all related accounting and human resources forms. This filing system may make sense only to Virtual Fred, but he always knows where the timesheet template is when he wants it, and he knows that the version in his folder is the most current.

14. Can I reconcile VFC's user flexibility with management control?

Yes.

A system administrator from your company creates user accounts and sets up initial access controls as part of VFC's centralized repository management. Department heads or workgroup leaders can allow varying levels of user access at their discretion. The original files are maintained in a central location, making backup easy. This is especially valuable to any organization with quality assurance concerns, such as a law firm or manufacturing company.

15. I want to share information with my partners and suppliers. Will they need to buy additional software to use VFC?

No.

VFC uses a familiar Web browser, which gives your partners and suppliers easy remote access. VFC also uses industry standards such as HTTP, HTML, SQL, ODBC, and JavaScript. By using these standards, you and any of your partners will be able to share information contained in documents.

16. Many of my employees will need to have remote access to our company's information. Is it easy to find files in VFC?

Yes.

VFC's search engine empowers your employees. By initiating a full-text or metadata search, users can locate VFC files by searching document content or by specifying file attributes such as title, author, or description.

17. What kinds of information can VFC handle?

VFC can handle any type of file, from simple text to compound documents with multiple components such as text, graphics, video, and audio. Not only does VFC broaden a company's ability to share information, but it also empowers you to share this information without restrictions on your creativity.

18. "Share Globally, Organize Locally": How does VFC fit in?

VFC functions on two levels: it facilitates easier and broader sharing of information across multiple platforms, while also allowing the individual user to control how that information is organized in his or her virtual office.

19. How can I visit Infodata's Web site?

You can visit Infodata on the World Wide Web at <http://www.infodata.com>

20. When will VFC be available?

VFC will be available in February 1997.

21. Who is Virtual Fred?

Like the virtual office, Virtual Fred can be anywhere — and is everywhere.

He is your employee, your client, your partner — anyone who understands the value of sharing corporate information. Virtual Fred has been eagerly anticipating the arrival of the VFC, Virtual File Cabinet.