



Case Study

As a flexible outsourcing partner Capita creates and runs completely new service infrastructures. This enables end user organizations to step-up service efficiency, quality and flexibility, while increasing customer satisfaction and loyalty. Capita's public sector communities and customers currently serve some 33 million people a year.

For almost twelve years Capita has provided a facilities management service for a Liverpool-based agency of the Home Office, which assists a wide variety of organizations to make safe and reliable recruitment decisions, connecting government departments including the Home Office, the Departments for Education and Health, and police forces across England and Wales. This bureau has a critical responsibility to ensure accurate and timely information gathering at all times.

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A new way of thinking

The bureau currently receives around 12,000 application forms into its mailroom every day, along with a significant volume of related correspondence, known internally as 'white mail'. Any envelope coming into the system can contain the application form itself, supporting white mail and other documents such as proof of identity, along with check payments. It was equally important to meet demanding turnaround SLAs for all applications received, while also maintaining the highest possible levels of data integrity and confidentiality.

When the contract was initially set up with Capita, an agreement was already in place to use an existing scanner solution, which the team quickly realized was approaching the end of its useful life. Amanda MacFarlane, Service Delivery Manager, Capita, explains: "We took this opportunity to investigate new scanning solutions that could potentially offer better throughput, higher OCR accuracy and better disaster recovery capabilities – these were the key elements we wanted to try to improve. Initially we considered a solution based on post-scan validation, using scanners similar to the existing one, with bespoke software being developed internally to perform validation steps on the scanned images. Once we started looking into how the technology had developed, we realized that more modern scanners such as the ibml ImageTrac® – combined with their leading-edge SoftTrac® Capture Suite software – could do it all for us! This completely altered our thinking."

Taking the intelligent route

The application form contains over twenty mandatory fields – previously, an individual staff member would manually check that all fields had been completed properly before the form went into the scanner. Mrs. MacFarlane continues: "The incumbent system required a huge amount of physical operator involvement before any actual scanning took place, and OCR capabilities were, to be kind, less than brilliant. It was critical to bring in technology that could take on more of the 'decision making' – if the scanner could do more of that processing for us, then the staff could be doing other, more worthwhile things."

The decision was taken to install an ibml scanning solution which has been able to automate much of the previous manual process and introduce a hitherto unimaginable degree of intelligence into the system. Using SoftTrac Capture Suite, the two new scanners can detect the type of document being scanned (application form, white mail or check) and perform the appropriate processing accordingly. Checks are routed to separate sorter pockets, while the forms are validated 'on the fly'.

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"We've been able to build most if not all of the validation into the scanning engine rules," explains Mrs. MacFarlane, "So now the scanner itself can determine whether or not a particular mandatory piece of information has been provided. As a result, something that had been a very labor-intensive manual process has become almost entirely automated. The two new scanners have increased the throughput of the team while at the same time the pre-scan prep area is now much smaller than previously." In fact the introduction of the ibml intelligent scanning solution has allowed Capita to reduce headcount by around 15% within the bureau's operations.

Flexibility on demand

Equally important to the client was the flexibility of the ibml approach: the bureau's operations are highly seasonal in nature, and at different times of year the department receives far higher volumes of applications from different sectors of the workforce. It was therefore important for Mrs. MacFarlane's team to be able to amend the processing rules at any given time without having to involve external resources, as she explains: "When we first discussed our requirements with ibml we started with a kind of 'pick and mix' wish list, asking them to build in a wide selection of business rules, and then we've been able to choose which ones to deploy depending on our current workloads. In practice it has proven surprisingly straightforward for our local IT team to make changes for us on demand."

Indeed throughout the project, ibml's professional approach has made them stand out as a business partner for the Capita team, as Mrs. MacFarlane enthuses: "ibml gave us a great deal of support at the start in helping our staff to understand how to create the scanner engine rules, and indeed in how to get the best out of the devices themselves - not just in terms of throughout and volume handling, but perhaps more importantly in terms of the inbuilt intelligence in reading and interpreting our critical data."

While perhaps not on the same scale as many of ibml's worldwide success stories in terms of sheer volumes of documents being processed, the Capita story shows the return that can be gained by applying intelligent scanning technology in situations where volumes are low, but where process and data integrity is key.

For more information, visit www.capita.co.uk