

Customer Success Story



PARASOL

Industry: Education

Location: Sydney, Australia

Overview

Challenge

- PARASOL was facing a increasingly growing number of manual processes affecting their efficiency
- Changes in regulations increased their amount of paperwork
- PARASOL wanted to automate and streamline their business processes but did not know how

Solution

- ABBYY FlexiCapture: automated data capture with Optical Character Recognition (OCR) and Intelligent Character Recognition (ICR)

Customer benefits

- Reduced manual processes and human errors
- Significant cost savings and reduction in paper waste
- Improved time efficiencies

Konica Minolta comes to PARASOL's Aid: Saving 10,000 hours in the first year and growing the business

PARASOL is an RTO which provides First Aid and Occupational Health and Safety training through a network of 300 third-party co-providers across Australia.

PARASOL has four offices across Australia and employs more than 300 contractors at any one time. It is Australia's leading professional provider since 1996 of first aid courses, WHS, fire, safety training and equipment and is a trusted brand with years of experience. The organization has worked with Konica Minolta to streamline its business processes for more than a decade.

The Challenge

Until recently, PARASOL was processing at least 70,000 enrolments for training courses from 55,000 students each year (with some students enrolling for multiple courses). Staff entered students' details manually into a central database. Sixty thousand registrations were entered annually for first aid courses and at four pages per enrolment form, totaling 240,000 pages of data.

This year, due to changing Government regulations, PARASOL had to increase the number of questions on their enrolment forms and the growing amount of paperwork posed a problem for efficiency. The manual transcription of all the data also often produced errors in the database. The business also faced pressure to reduce costs, improve productivity, use less paper and protect the environment.

CEO of PARASOL, Peter McKie, wanted to increase automation in the business and tackle the problem head-on but was unsure which systems to put into place.

The Solution

Peter McKie and Brent Carlisle, Commercial Account Manager at Konica Minolta, consulted Konica Minolta's solutions consultant, Mark Gett, and together they examined PARASOL's business processes from end-to-end. They concluded that a data capture solution would save the business money and time.

Konica Minolta's solution was for PARASOL to extract details from student forms using its high end, double-sided, multi-feed scanning MFDs – and capture the data using ABBYY FlexiCapture (an accurate, scalable data capture and processing software with Optical Character Recognition and Intelligent Character Recognition). ABBYY FlexiCapture allows remote users to upload images to the main server using web based front end application and almost immediately receive back the data, recognized from the hand-filled fields and images. In this way it provides a single entry point, transforming streams of different forms into business-ready data.

CEO, Peter McKie was keen to rigorously test the solution before transforming the whole business to smooth out any glitches. Konica Minolta first installed this software at PARASOL's headquarters in Canberra and then distributed Web Capture Stations among some of PARASOL's third party training organisations so that the onus for entering and checking the data was transferred from PARASOL's staff onto their partner trainers delivering each course.

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“So far, I would estimate we have saved each member of staff at least half an hour of admin per course which represents at least 10,000 hours in the first year. We are now productively spending that time on accounts, on IT and other important administration as well as, crucially, on pulling in more business. We are becoming more rounded employees and better using our different skills. Changing our focus to growing the company, rather than just trying to stay afloat, is the biggest benefit.”

James Coate, Customer Service Administrator - PARASOL

In a first stage of transformation, the software turned each form into a CSV file which could then be stored, interpreted and managed by PARASOL's central database. Once this process was working smoothly, Konica Minolta and PARASOL began stage two, working with ABBYY FlexiCapture to upload the scanned data straight into its Cloud-based database, the Learning Management System. This stage is almost complete.

The Konica Minolta and ABBYY FlexiCapture team redesigned the essential student enrolment form to facilitate a more accurate capture of handwritten information and further streamline PARASOL's operation.

James Coate, Customer Service Administrator at PARASOL, commented:

“The team tested 10 batches of forms after the redesign - probably a lot more. There were possibly 100 total reiterations of the form before it was perfected. The original form was missing certain fields and was grey scale with black writing. We changed that to white with black writing and the result is a lot clearer.”

An initial group of approximately sixty course trainers are now using the new data capture solution, sending the relevant captured data back to the PARASOL database in a timely manner. They simply log on to the PARASOL website to create new forms as necessary. Konica Minolta has also provided PARASOL's partner providers with their own MFPs capable of processing a high volume of data.

The Result

The process began in February and PARASOL was introduced to ABBYY FlexiCapture in March. Together the team had the software and the central server up and running at the main office in Canberra within a month.

Konica Minolta supplied one day's training on the ABBYY FlexiCapture solution to a first group of PARASOL's trainers and, in April, they began to roll out the solution from Canberra to Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne. By May, Konica Minolta's job was done.

The success of this process is that it has significantly reduced the amount of administrative work for PARASOL, saving staff the time spent entering the data (which varied from person to person but could take up to 2 hours for 20 lines) and also the time spent checking the handwritten information (which is now automatically read and interpreted, reducing errors), massively improving their efficiency.

James Coate, Customer Service Administrator at PARASOL, comments:

“So far, I would estimate we have saved each member of staff at least half an hour of admin per course which represents at least 10,000 hours in the first year. We are now productively spending that time on accounts, on IT and other important administration as well as, crucially, on pulling in more business. We are becoming more rounded employees and better using our different skills. Changing our focus to growing the company, rather than just trying to stay afloat, is the biggest benefit.”

Finally, the data that is entered into PARASOL's Learning Management System is more accurate as a result of the automatic data capture, the newly designed form and the verification at the point of entry.

Peter McKie, CEO, concludes: “This has been a great investment. We have seen an increase in accuracy and a decrease in the amount of physical work and paperwork that the guys are doing and that will only improve over time.”

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