

CASE STUDY

CHARITY COMMISSION

CHARITY COMMISSION CHOOSES TOPLEVEL E-FORMS SOFTWARE FOR MAJOR TRANSACTIONAL E-BUSINESS PROJECT



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THE COMMISSION COMPLETED
THE ELECTRONIC SERVICE
ROLL-OUT TO ALL 190,000
REGISTERED CHARITIES IN
ENGLAND AND WALES.

In Autumn 2005, the Charity Commission launched its online services portfolio to all 14,000 charities in England and Wales with annual income in excess of £250,000. This service integrated the Toplevel OfficeForms e-Forms software into an online portal which included additional service developed using the Microsoft .NET architecture.

The electronic forms – the Annual Return and Summary Information Return – were delivered using Toplevel OfficeForms. Legislation requires that all charities – subject to their income level – must submit an Annual Return and for the larger charities the Summary Information Return is also required.

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CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

REQUIREMENT

In addition to providing the solution for the submission of the statutory forms, Toplevel has provided the authentication solution for all facilities in the Commission's online services portal. The portal has to meet the required levels of security for UK Government services.

Through this portal, charities can send secure messages, submit documents, and complete and submit their annual returns. The portal also enables charities to view and amend the charity information held on them by the Commission. This service, delivered in .NET, is integrated into the portal service which is managed by the OfficeForms product.

Changes submitted through this portal are then managed by the Commission, and the updated information is normally used to update the online Register of Charities within 24 working hours.

Nick Allaway, Executive Director, Charity Information and Corporate Services at the Charity Commission said: "Toplevel OfficeForms has enabled the Charity Commission to help charities get advice that they need and access to the services they want at a time convenient to them.

The new system not only allows charities to submit their annual accounts and returns through an online portal, but also allows them to update trustee details and get in touch with us securely online."

The Charity Commission ran a proof of concept between August and November 2004, after which, the decision was made to go with Toplevel OfficeForms. This early work was based on another service – the charity registration process – which will be launched in early 2007.



SECURE SOLUTION

A seven month development programme included the integration of the system into .NET, the integration of anti-virus tools and rigorous stress and security testing to ensure compliance with all government security standards. All e-forms and attachments sent by charities are virus-checked before the message is accepted.

With the previous paper-based system, the Commission mailed Annual Returns and Summary Information Returns to the charities who completed them before returning the forms by post. The Commission then entered the information manually into their systems.

BENEFITS

The new electronic forms are faster, more accurate and will significantly reduce costs for the Commission. For the charities, the service is quicker, easier and available 24x7. Lost forms will become a thing of the past and on-screen prompts and reminders will make sure all fields are completed. Charities can still communicate by mail, but the response to the new system has been very positive with 41,000 transactions in the first six months.

"We have been providing internal electronic forms for the Charity Commission for a number of years" says Toplevel Sales Director, Jane Roberts.

"We were very pleased to be asked to become involved in this crucial area of the Commission's work, and are delighted that real benefits are being delivered, and that the electronic forms are being so well received by the charities themselves."



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