



## White Paper

### **Discussion Paper for Outsourcing Data Capture Processes**

- How using a specialist to capture your business data will save you time, money and risk of embarrassment.
- Strategies, business metrics and solutions for public sector managers that provide improved customer service, reduce costs and help meet e-government requirements.

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## The Business Problem

Many public sector agencies need to collect data about their clients – to assess applications for benefits or grants, check compliance, develop policy and make decisions. Typically this data is collected via forms.

But what kind of form? Paper? Online? What about clients who prefer to use the phone? Or fax? Someone will need to design the form. And send it out. And receive it when it is complete. And check it and enter it into the computer system. What about privacy? And security?

Collecting quality data securely and efficiently requires answers to all these questions, and more besides. Big agencies that collect a lot of data can afford to invest time and money in forms design and capturing their data electronically. Even they must periodically re-evaluate whether they are achieving best practice.

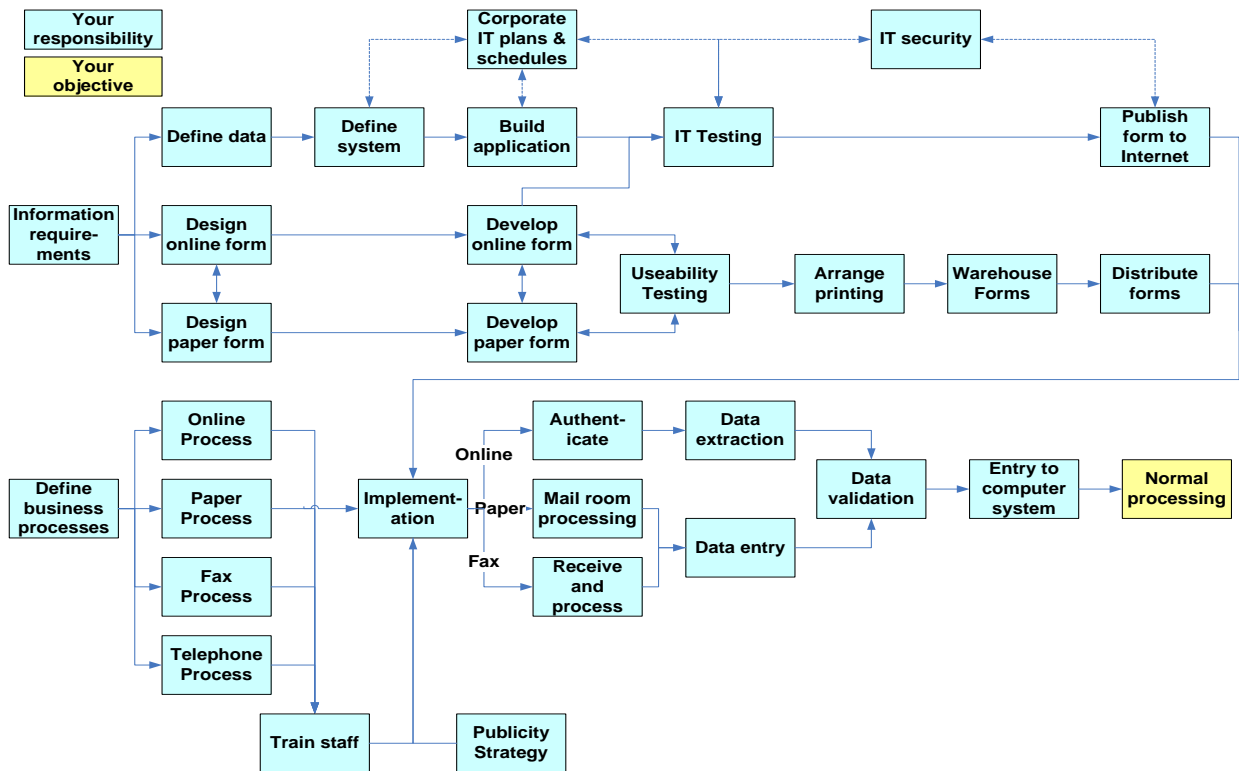
For many agencies, however, forms and business process design for data collection is not core business.

- The need to collect data may be intermittent or periodic, such as a grants campaign or survey.
- Staff are likely to be experts in their fields, focussed on business outcomes. They will not be knowledgeable in designing forms and the business processes for dealing with them efficiently and effectively, nor skilled data entry operators.
- IT support may be limited and unable to offer new or specialised technologies or support multiple IT platforms.

In these circumstances, setting up and running an in-house data capture process can be a costly and complex headache. In many cases, the effort in obtaining the data overshadows the real business of interpreting and applying it.

## Forms / Data Capture Life Cycle

This is a complex and expensive process when all you really want is the data at the end!



## Use a specialist

Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) is one of the fastest growing areas of the IT industry. Gartner estimates the global BPO market will be worth \$US173 billion in 2007, with the big question for most organisations not “if” but “when”. Gartner estimates that 30 to 60% of back office operations could be potentially moved to a BPO service provider, with significant savings and efficiencies (Computerworld 13 July 2004).

By focussing on their area of specialisation as core business, BPO providers achieve economies of scale, optimum use of technologies and efficient use of expert staff, operating in a competitive marketplace. In addition, organisations which use BPO are able to reduce their internal IT projects and infrastructure, with further savings.

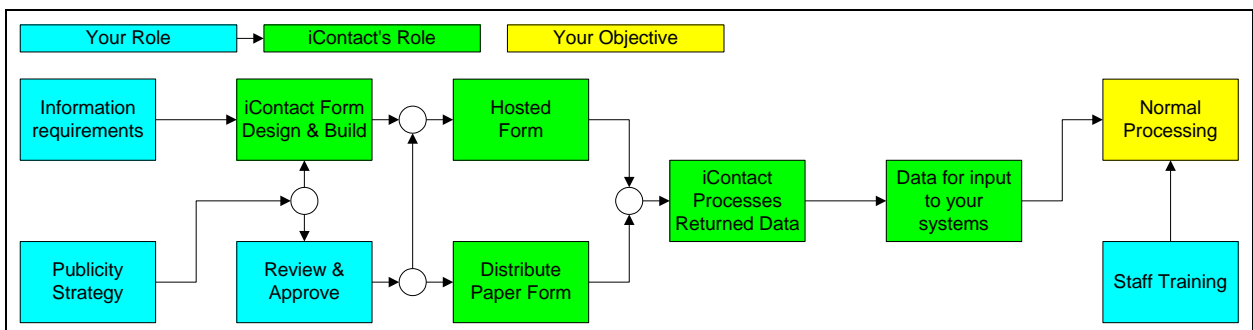
With potential savings of millions of dollars available, Gartner warns that managers who ignore BPO in their strategic planning are making “career limiting decisions”.

## iContact is the specialist

iContact is a specialist provider of integrated information distribution and capture services that enable government agencies to communicate efficiently and cost effectively with their clients. iContact provides

- Initial information and business process design
- Intelligent forms offering
  - A web compatible online form which can be saved to the user's PC for multiple sessions or sharing before return. Supports digital signatures if desired.
  - A paper form for applications requiring “wet ink” signature, which is imaged.
  - Innovative 2D barcoding includes customer ID for ready record matching.
- Automated data extraction and on-the-spot validation to minimise errors and delays
- Printing, distribution and fulfilment of orders for paper forms
- Full mail room functions
- Effective data capture for all form types and platforms – online, paper, fax, IVR – using skilled operators and specialised equipment (scanners, fax server, IVR)
- Integration of data from different form types and platforms for seamless processing
- Delivery of quality data in any format – to your network or application interface, or on disk
- Delivery of evidentiary quality document images, with paper documents already archived
- Website / forms hosting.

## The iContact Process



iContact makes it simple. iContact's flexible services range from consulting on the initial forms design through to fully managed services.

**The iContact Forms Solution comprises:**

1. **The Form**, which allows you to deliver the latest form functionality, with low user overheads and built-in data validation, to provide superior user experience that ensures the highest quality client data;
2. **Hosting Services**, which allows you to simply establish a professional, hosted client interface website, with the security and capacity problems outsourced and collect your high integrity data as it is returned. iContact Hosting Services also provide full integrated support for legacy forms technologies.

## **Case Study**

A major Federal Government department in Canberra runs periodic grant campaigns to a diverse group of community organisations. Some still need to send paper forms through the post, some prefer to fax, and others have varying online capabilities and platforms. For evidentiary reasons, the application form must be signed with a “wet ink” signature from a designated signatory from the community organisation.

Staff were receiving and entering data from forms received through the post, fax and email attachments. Records were scattered through paper and electronic files.

iContact used its Forms capabilities to design integrated paper and online forms for the grant application. The complex form was simplified and the flow of questions made more logical, with context sensitive help and prompts at every point. The online form could be saved to the user’s PC and completed over multiple sessions or shared with others in the organisation. This made the forms much easier for community organisations to complete.

iContact provided a fully managed service for the campaign, hosting the campaign website and online forms and receiving and processing all application forms. All application forms, irrespective of format, were converted into images by scanning or programmatically. The data was then extracted by a combination of 2D barcoding and data entry by skilled operators. The consequent data file was uploaded to the department’s computer system for normal processing by staff.

The department achieved savings of 29% in costs while processing 30% more applications than in its previous campaign.

## How do iContact's forms compare with other forms technologies?

Feature	Paper Forms	Web Forms	Intelligent Forms	iContact Forms
Time to Market	Days to Weeks. Involves design, testing, printing, warehousing and fulfilment	Days to Weeks Involves design, layout, programming and testing	Days to Weeks Involves design, layout, programming and testing	Hours Layout, programming and usability testing are all built-in
Cost to Produce	Very high	High	High	Low
Delivery Time	Days by Post, after the client requests a copy	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible
User Incurred Costs	Significant. Typically will require a visit to a Post Office	Small, depending on form size and Internet data download costs	Small, depending on form size and Internet data download costs	Negligible
Quality of User Experience	Poor	Can be good if the form is well designed	Not as good as web forms as user help is more removed	Excellent
Return Time	Days by Post	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible
Data Extraction Cost	Very High. Forms need to be prepared, scanned, keyed and/or OMR/OCR processed	Negligible	Negligible if data is submitted by upload, significant if data is submitted by 2-D barcode	Negligible
Security & Reliability	Significant risk of loss in the Postal service. Requirement to accurately interpret handwritten responses	Data is secure if SSL is used but your website could be hacked, overloaded or subject to denial of service attacks and robots could attempt spurious responses	Good – data is stored on the User's PC until submission. If encryption is not used on uploads, data is exposed during submission.	High – data is stored on the User's PC until submission. Encrypted transmission used for data uploading. Web interfaces are hidden and outsourced so you have no security issues
Data Quality	Fair. Subject to interpretation of handwritten responses. Typically it is not economic to extract all data to electronic format so a scanned image is used for some data	High. You get exactly what the user entered. Quality can be enhanced by in-form data validation but this may degrade the user experience	High. You get exactly what the user entered. Quality can be enhanced by in-form data validation but this requires extra high-cost programming effort	High. You get exactly what the user entered. Quality is enhanced by in-form data validation that is easy to define
Cost of Supporting Users	High. Unless the form is only provided as a downloadable PDF, there is a need to provide a call centre to take orders for Postal delivery of forms. User request for form-filling assistance are typically more frequent due to the lack of support in the form and the discontinuity between the form and printed help	Low, if the form is designed to provide data validation feedback and context sensitive help	Higher than for the Web form because context sensitive help is not available	Low. Question-centric help and advanced data validation feedback are standard form features
Enterprise Resource Requirements	High to Very High. Production and distribution of the form requires co-ordination of a wide range of specialist services. data extraction, if done in-house, can present spiky workloads for non-core activities	High Production of the form in-house will require significant co-ordination and programmer resources. Outsourcing eliminates the programmer load but increases co-ordination requirements	High. Typically, outsourcing form development will have a high co-ordination workload	Low. iContact uses its expertise and re-usable form / web page components to minimise tasking and co-ordination.