

Case Study

Arizona State University

Arizona State University reduced bottlenecks in the graduate admissions process by using Cardiff TeleForm to integrate document capture and workflow.

Arizona State University (ASU) is increasingly seeking to recruit the best candidates to its graduate programs. As a result, the number of individuals applying to its 91 masters and 48 doctoral programs has grown from 13,829 applications in 1999-2000 to 16,423 in 2001-2002, in addition to several thousand applications for non-degree study. About 46% of the degree applicants are international.

The Challenge

Due to physical space and budget limitations, the Graduate Admissions Office (GAO) sought to process an increased numbers of applications with the same number of staff.

As a result, the ASU Graduate College implemented separate scan-from-paper and Web-based processes for receiving and processing graduate applications. The projects were developed in tandem and initially brought significant productivity gains while increasing the university's visibility and accessibility to applicants outside the U.S.

Despite these gains, faculty and staff in the reviewing units sometimes had to wait eight weeks to receive the paper file containing an application and supporting materials. This delay impacted ASU's ability to be competitive with other higher education institutions in making offers to the highest caliber candidates.

In 2001, GAO issued an RFP soliciting a solution to handle paper and online forms in a uniform manner using a streamlined, flexible workflow.

"It was a nightmare to manually match admissions forms and orphaned supporting documents," commented Roger Lurie, applications systems analyst principal for



GAO. "It was also confusing for applicants. We had to find a better way to keep track of the documents and deal with bottlenecks in the workflow."

In order to do this, the solution had to be able to 'talk' to ASU's existing mainframe databases. In addition, GAO wanted the system to include a document imaging capability, so that the 475,000 documents received yearly could be captured, indexed and stored online as soon as they were received.

The Solution

Cardiff, the leading provider of adaptive business process management solutions, and Binary Office, a Cardiff channel partner, were among the dozen respondents to the RFP. Cardiff and Binary Office had provided the Cardiff® TeleForm® information capture solution that GAO was already using to scan data from paper application forms into their mainframe databases.

"In the end, we selected the Cardiff/Binary Office team because of their proven ability to interface TeleForm with our databases and other products," Lurie explained. "None of the other respondents compared in value or capabilities."

Under the new process, Binary Office developed a single TeleForm-based processing engine for both paper forms and online Web submissions. The paper and online forms contain embedded rules that perform lookups and validations on multiple external ASU databases.

Customer at a Glance

Arizona State University
(Graduate Admissions Office)

Industry: Education

Application: Graduate admissions forms

Challenge: Process more applications, faster, with same number of staff.

Solution: Cardiff TeleForm, EMC Legato ApplicationXtender

Partner: Binary Office, Inc., Programmed custom workflow routing

Results: Accelerated admissions process for nearly 20,000 applications per year. Eliminated potential for lost files. Improved service to faculty; can route package electronically with annotations.

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—Roger Lurie, Arizona State University

Binary Office's Marc Carleno explained:

"The name on every application or supporting document has to be matched to the university's main databases, to avoid duplicate files and make sure that related documents get matched up by student ID or other identifier. With TeleForm's 50 scripting points, it's easy to make a call to a customer's database during the processing of a form."

The Binary Office-implemented solution integrated TeleForm with a workflow and document imaging system by EMC Legato. TeleForm passes the indexed form and supporting documents to the EMC Legato module, which stores the documents as images within a high capacity storage container and triggers a workflow process that sends the application package out for review according to university rules.

"Binary Office wrote a process that passes the information from TeleForm into the imaging product," Lurie said. "The result is a single back-office process that handles both paper and online submissions with links to the document imaging and workflow system for routing to the various campuses and back to the graduate school admissions office."

The Benefits of Cardiff

ASU has 315 users and 90 academic units using the new process. The GAO can now reply to applicants faster, certify student credentials within a day of receipt, minimize lost files and documents and re-appropriate the space it gained upon removing now-obsolete filing cabinets. The new process will also improve ASU's ability to effectively recruit the highest caliber candidates to graduate programs.

According to Lurie, the results promise to be phenomenal:

- **Productivity gains.** "Being able to load images to the document imaging system directly from TeleForm and making them accessible university wide for review has eliminated the eight-week backlog," said Lurie. "In collaboration with the Legato workflow system, the results have been astounding."
- **Acceleration of the admission process.** Under the new system, faculty and staff can begin reviewing a file before everything is complete, so high caliber candidates don't get lost in the paper shuffle.
- **Elimination of lost and orphaned documents.** Every document that is received is stored as an image, with indexes linking related documents from the same applicant by a common identifier.
- **Enhanced service to applicants and ASU reviewers.** Lurie explained: "In the past, applicants applying to two departments at the same time would have to send us two identical sets of files. Now we only need one set of transcripts no matter how many applications the individual is filing."

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