



Customer Success Story: The City of Winston-Salem, North Carolina

Overview

The City of Winston-Salem and Forsyth County are part of a rapidly growing community in the heart of North Carolina comprising of about 400 square miles with a population of 280,000.

Challenge

The City of Winston-Salem's existing applications are mainframe systems developed over 15 years ago. With such an old system in place, the City was having difficulties maintaining them at a level capable of delivering the desired level of customer service. The City decided to replace its legacy mainframe systems with a robust client-server environment that gives it the maximum flexibility it needs for future growth.

In addition to revamping its mainframe systems, the City was also faced with costly manual processes and decided to select a Business Process Management (BPM) solution to automate, manage and control these processes.

The City wanted to focus first on automating its purchasing request process – a process that was extremely cumbersome for its employees. Collaboration among the requestor, purchasing department and accounts payable department for receiving materials and paying invoices was very inefficient. In addition, its paper approval method was slow and created a very long approval cycle. Often paper-based forms would be lost, purchase requests would have to be re-submitted and invoice payments would be delayed or late.

Highlights

Government

Processes Enabled:

- Purchase Request
- Accounts Payable Invoicing Process

Customer Benefits & Results:

- Ensures timely and accurate budget appropriations, approvals, bidding, allocation of funds
- Users can now process a purchase request in less than a day
- Allows the City to act quickly to obtain the best prices and services available
- Eliminated bottlenecks that deplete time and resources

Solution

The City of Winston-Salem selected Metastorm's BPM solution to manage its procurement process. The City has deployed Metastorm BPM® to support a Web-enabled, streamlined, collaborative procurement process to facilitate collaboration between internal departments and external vendors.

Metastorm partner, Strategic Technologies, a leading advisor and integrator of business and technology, developed the solution for the City using Metastorm BPM and integrated it with the City's Mitchell Humphries financial system and SpesCom document management systems. Metastorm was selected because it enabled rapid design, development, deployment and optimization within the City's existing IT environment.

City employees are now able to initiate a purchase request form by accessing forms displayed in their own GroupWise email client or Web interface. These forms look similar to the paper forms they replaced, but provide helpful hints and validation to ensure simple, yet accurate completion of each field on the form. From the initial submission to the final processing, each action required is intuitive. Users are provided with the right information, at the right time, every time to make informed decisions. Behind the scenes, other systems are automatically updated, documents are stored and tracked, and when necessary, alerts or email reminders are sent.

And, because the solution logs all steps and actions taken throughout the process, anyone who needs to review, analyze or report on procedure steps can do so quickly and easily.

In addition to the procurement process, the City is using Metastorm BPM for its Accounts Payable invoicing process to track materials received. This process allows the requestor to receive material on the purchase order, route the receipt throughout the department via Metastorm for payment approval, and once approved route it to the AP clerk for processing and automatic entry into the Mitchell Humphries financial system so that payment can be processed.

Results

With over 200 employees using Metastorm BPM, the City now has an automated means for its purchasing process and has already realized significant benefits. To date, it has eliminated inefficient manual steps and given the City the ability to monitor each procurement activity at any point in the process. The system ensures timely and accurate budget appropriations, approvals, bidding, allocation of funds, and delivery, and alerts users to potential problems in a timely manner. Users can now process a purchase request in less than a day with full cooperation from all approvers.

Overall the City has realized a reduction in process cycle time that allows them to act quickly to obtain the best prices and services available, eliminated bottlenecks that deplete time and resources, and improved employee productivity by eliminating repetitive data entry.

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