Case Study

cerenade

Cerenade's eForms Technology Saves the U.S. Department of State Millions

Over the past decade, an exciting transformation from a paper-bound world to a world of new applications and efficiencies opened up for the U.S. Department of State – resulting in a savings of millions of dollars!

This paper revolution took place in the State Department starting in 2003 when the Government Paperwork Elimination Act (GPEA) mandated the allowance of the submittal of information electronically. Most activities of the U.S. Department of State – and of the Federal government - begin and end with a form. So, with forms accounting for half of the government's $320 billion total annual regulatory burden on citizens and businesses, it was an opportunity to save dollars.

In fact, beginning in 2002, even before the GPEA act went into effect, the State Department had seized the moment - and movement toward the paperless office - and saw it as an opportunity to:

· Strengthen consular and management capabilities
· Implement a centralized forms management program
· Build automated, effective business workflows integrating eForms
· Meet obligations required by other Presidential directives and regulations

Today, the U.S. Department of State has deployed Cerenade Enterprise Server on an enterprise-wide basis and supports over 68,000 employees worldwide (270 overseas posts and domestic facilities), manages over 1,700 electronic forms, and supports the Bureau's offices by automating their complex business processes into easy-to-use eForms-centric workflows.
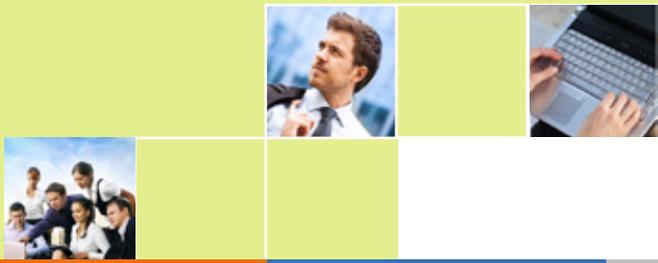
The State Department is also a leader in deploying forms with electronic signature capability and, to date, boasts approximately 360 forms converted to an electronically signable format. Most significantly, these changes are saving them close to $3.5 million and 25 trees annually.

About the U.S. Department of State

The U.S. Department of State is mandated to "shape and sustain a peaceful, prosperous, just and democratic world and foster conditions for stability and progress for the benefit of the American people and people every-where"... a daunting task with a core budget of $47 billion for FY 2012.

Yet, as required by the Presidential directives and regulations, there must be a focus on resources and efficiency. As stated in State Department's Executive Budget Summary for the Fiscal Year 2012, "we have been working hard to become even more efficient and effective".

Hence, with an eye on the effective allocation of resources, the U.S. Department of State implemented acentralized forms management program, as well as automating internal processes, which together reduced costs and improved Return on Investment (ROI).

As s result, today a comprehensive solution exists to automate forms and processes based on business needs, but arriving here was a complex exercise that involved due diligence, research, and a lot of planning.

Search for a Centralized Forms Management Program

The search for a Centralized Forms Management Program began with the directive to find paper reduction solutions while still optimizing agency resources. The search was then on for solutions amongst an army of providers including: Adobe, Amgraf, Avoka, Cardiff, IBM, Formatta – and, Cerenade.

The overriding goal was to find a versatile electronic forms solution capable of addressing a wide range of requirements
such as:

- Online availability of forms for other interagencies to conduct business with the U.S. Depament of State, share information, and foster interagency collaboration
- Utilize electronic signatures to increase department-wide efficiency
- Handle vast geographic dispersal of workforce (every country in the world)
- Efficiently manage approval processes so as to not adversely impact the sensitivity of the mission
- Ensure proper controls are in place

The Solution: Cerenade

With a lot of time and dollars on the table, the U.S. Department of State discovered that Cerenade's eForms technology provided standardized elements and a coherent enterprise structure that could help reduce the burden of paperwork inefficiencies. In 2002, State Department purchased and launched Cerenade's Enterprise Server, a Commercial-Off-The-Shelf (COTS) application that enables them to:

a) Design and issue forms with a coordinated numbering system
b) Allow users to electronically access and complete forms, including using secure electronic signatures
c) Store the information securely
d) Using wizard technology and automated workflow features for routing and delivering data
e) Integrate information with other applications for processing

More importantly, the Cerenade solution provided them a broad range of advantages, including:

· Cost Savings
· Robust Functions
· Ease of Converting Legacy Forms
· Training and Support Services
· Compliance with Federal Regulations and Security Requirements

More than Just Forms: Creating Efficiencies and Building Workflows

With a centralized forms management program in place and with 1,700 forms, the U.S. Department of State was aware that managing and processing these forms could quickly become formidable. Thus, they relied on the eForms application provided by Cerenade's Enterprise Server to bridge the gap between policies and business processes by providing an application that is an end-to-end electronic process. Part of the selection of Cerenade was based on knowing that automated business processes would be put into place to cover a wide spectrum of activities, including:

· Request for supplies and support services
· Guest speaker grant program
· Handle premium class travel requests
· Streamline the process for individual grants
· Prepare foreign contact reporting
· Process employee security requests
· Reserve diplomatic reception rooms
· Submit leave requests
· Streamline new user intake process
· Streamline CRMS change control
· Standardize property disposal processes
· Grant network access
· Support mobile diplomats
· Allow foreign applicants to submit applications via mobile device

All these business processes – and more – were successfully implemented. In short, the automation of the business processes have impacted the State Department across geographic boundaries (Frankfurt, Shanghai, Egypt), across bureaus (Educational and Cultural Affairs, Diplomatic Security, Resource Management, and Administration to name just a few), and across functionalities (time sheets, speaker requests, reservations, program approvals, supply requests, and more).
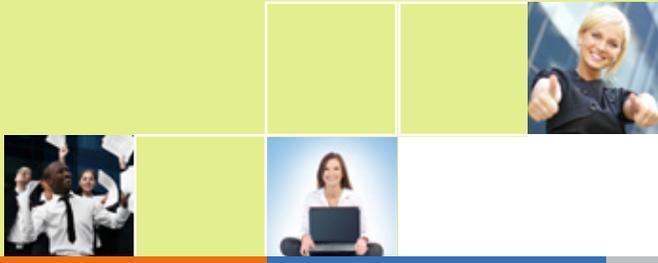
Additionally, there has been a plethora of other benefits resulting from the automation of business processes, such as:

- Improved accuracy
- Better tracking and automatic notifications
- Archive abilities and online historical records
- Automate manual steps
- Save time and money
- Reduce resources spent processing requests
- Better validation of data
- Reduce burden on managers to track employees
- Save paperwork for returning employees
- Avoid duplication

Along with the benefits realized by each specific application there is a wide range of other benefits that impact the U.S. Department of State at large, such as:

Description of Change	The Benefit
Centralized design	Eliminate redundancy since forms design is done centrally instead of at each office, which also helps maintain design integrity/standards.
Centralized Numbering System	Maintain a numbering system to track all forms.
Online collaboration	Facilitate online collaboration and the passing of information electronically between all forms users.
Share information	Collect information via forms, which can then be shared and/or integrated into databases for multi-purpose utilization.
Compliance	Design forms that are Section 508 compliant.
Electronic signatures	Facilitate the completion and processing of forms.
Personally Identifiable Information (PII)	Protects PII.
Archive centrally	Archive centrally and properly manage to meet Presidential initiatives of open government accountability and transparency.
Retention schedules	Meet federal records retention schedules with ease.
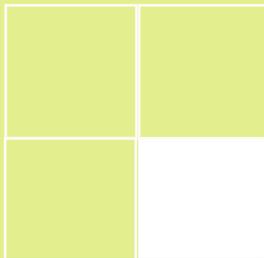
The Aftermath: Saving Millions

Nearly a decade later and with a lot of blood, sweat and tears, paper has experienced a disappearing act within the U.S. Department of State. Today, the State Department acts as a leader in utilizing electronic signatures to increase department wide efficiency, as well as multiple other efficiencies achieved through improved workflows. But, it begs the question: what is the bottom line?

Given the widespread use of eForms and automated business processes within the agency, it is conservatively estimated that each employee saves at least one hour annually. It is significant that even one hour of savings per employee equals millions of saved dollars, which lessens the financial burden on the American taxpayers.

The end result is the bottom line has been greatly impacted – to the tune of millions! The following outlines an estimate of annual cost savings:

The cost of time saved by employees (As of 12/30/11)	
No. of employees worldwide	68,766
Time saved	1 hour
Average hourly cost per employee	$42
Dollars saved by U.S. Department of State and by the Taxpayers	$2,888,172

Taking the analysis a step further, State Department also ascertained that there are other cost savings that fall outside of just the time savings. It was calculated that the cost of non-electronically signed documents is approximately $1.70 per document and that each employee uses, on average, 5 forms per year.

The cost of paper forms saved by employees (As of 12/30/11)	
No. of employees worldwide	68,766
Average cost per form (includes cost to print, scan, archive, fax, mail/courier)*	$1.70
Average number of forms per employee	5
Dollars saved by U.S. Department of State of State and by the Taxpayers	$583,686

*below industry average estimates

By combining the cost savings for time saved and for money saved by eliminating paper forms, the U.S. Department of State was able to save a stunning $3,471,858 annually. It is significant that this is not a one-time savings, but annual savings ... which translates to a savings of literally millions and millions of dollars over time!
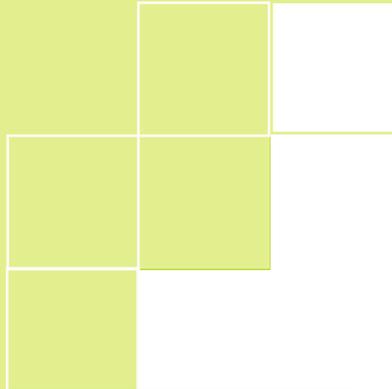
Mission Accomplished

Beginning in 2002, The Office of Directives Management within the U.S. Department of State was mandated with managing the centralized forms program. Today it manages an enterprise application with dedicated staff ready to:

a) Develop customized forms, Smart Forms, integrated workflows, data integration
b) Provide a varied range of business consultant services and training

Their office has received awards and accolades both internally and from private organizations for their handling of this program. Today, other federal agencies seek their expertise in modernizing their forms program, as well as being requested presenters at technology conferences and exhibits.

In short, the individuals that led the way through this process had their own internal team goals they hoped to accomplish: the ability to design forms, the common use of architecture and infrastructure, and strengthening core information management systems, but they accomplished so much more ...

Cloud computing -- Online conference registration -- Electronic signatures -- Interagency collaboration -- Section 508 compliance for the visually impaired -- Going Green -- And millions of dollars of savings.

Mission accomplished, indeed!

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