Deploying RPA to rapidly centralise services as part of a 'lean' service review

South Norfolk COUNCIL

South Norfolk Council embarked on a 'lean' service review, which highlighted three areas for improvement: to integrate disparate systems, to implement more self-service and to bring more services into a central contact centre. To do this, the Council is using SX, NDL's RPA Platform, to underpin a wide range of integration projects. It is rolling the solution out widely, supporting both improved service delivery and one-off data integrity projects. As a result it has considerably **exceeded its target for time saved and will more than recoup its investment in less than 12 months.**

The Challenge

In common with many authorities across the country, South Norfolk Council implemented an efficiency drive and carried out a 'lean' service review across all business units. There were three key areas of improvement identified:

- Connecting its plethora of back-office business applications from different suppliers. This lack of integration had resulted in too much wasteful re-keying and duplication of effort across different systems

- Streamlining and increasing self-service via its website, across four areas: 'Pay for it', 'Request it', 'Report it' and 'Apply for it'. Previously, online requests simply triggered an email or a work item for staff to action manually: the Council needed to find a way to remove this wasteful step

- Migrating all customer telephone contact to the central customer services team with the aim of a large percentage of requests handled at first point of contact. However, it would be over-ambitious to expect the customer services team to become competent in all existing back-office

Key Benefits

320 days saved in the first year

Self-service across multiple services

Improved customer service

Greater data integrity

Swift ROI

> "Using SX has brought significant benefits for the customer service team: it's doing a lot of work on their behalf and has removed the frustration of double entering data in different systems. These time savings can be put back into providing even better customer service and taking in more first points of contact for other departments.

Paul Adams, Customer Service Manager, South Norfolk Council

The Solution ↓

applications and it did not want the complexity and expense of deploying a CRM system.

South Norfolk Council recognised that the best solution in achieving its aims for self-service and improved handling of calls was to implement generic web forms which could be used by both customers and staff. However, it needed to find a way for the data collected to be automatically entered into its disparate back-office systems.

The Solution

To address all of these issues, South Norfolk Council looked at the alternative approaches it could take including traditional systems connectors and direct updates of databases. It decided however that a different solution would meet its exact requirements: using SX, NDL's RPA Platform. SX is a cost-effective, flexible and versatile alternative for integration which avoids the often complex need to use individual vendor APIs or adaptors. It links to and from the front office, or joins back-office applications together, thus dramatically improving business processes and workflows.

> **The PoC project passed with ease. We were impressed with the non-invasive approach through which SX interfaced with the operating system rather than updating the back-end databases directly. This reduced the risk of corrupting third-party systems databases.**
>
> Mark Alger, Business Solutions Manager
> South Norfolk Council

A proof of concept was carried out which focused on garden waste collection orders. This took information entered into e-forms by customers via the website or by customer services staff and automatically entered the data into both the Capita Integra finance system and the Civica APP Environmental Health system.

The Council has now rolled SX out across other service areas. Some of these are achieving significant on-going savings as well as improved customer services; others are one-off projects to improve data quality which would not have been carried out without the automation provided by SX.

Within the first year of buying the product, South Norfolk Council has undertaken the following:

Self-service projects:

• **Environmental Services:** using eforms for customer self-service or for use in the customer service centre for ordering bulky waste collections, booking pest control treatments, reporting missed bins, fly tipping , street cleansing and lost or damaged bins. These projects have all replicated the eform system designed for garden waste collections using SX to integrate with Civica APP

• **Planning:** enabling enquiries and comments about planning applications to be carried out online or via the customer service centre, using SX to integrate eforms with the Idox Uniform system

Data migration/data cleansing projects:

• Housing register: updating records automatically in the Capita OPENHousing application and removing customers no longer relevant as a result of the disbanding of the Greater Norwich Housing Partnership. This comprised **cancelling 7,400 applicant records, which would have taken a member of the Housing Team 19 days to cancel manually.** Using SX, this task was fully automated

• New housing policy: removing non-bidders from the Capita OPENHousing database. This involved **cancelling 900 applications, saving 2.5 days of manual processing**

• Environmental Services: synchronising 38,000 premises addresses within the Civica APP

system with the Council's Local Land & Property Gazetteer (LLPG) and **creating 1,500 missing street records**

- Planning Enforcement: 5,000 notices were **updated** as part of migration to the new Idox Uniform system

- Planning: 8,000 parameter records were migrated from the old Northgate M3 Planning system into the new Idox Uniform Planning system, **saving 38 days of manual processing**

- Planning Enquiry: updating the status of 13,000 closed Planning Enquiry records after the migration to the Idox Uniform Planning system

- Reconciliation of two systems: automatically correcting the disparity of data between Capita Integra Finance and Civica APP. This **took two days to develop and saved 30 days** of manual processing time

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Other projects include **Parish payments:** automating the creation of the bi-annual payments of precepts to Parish Councils. This comprises 240 payments a year, which previously needed two people to raise

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and post due to the audit requirement for separation of duties. Using SX has enabled this process to be fully automated.

> **SX does all the jobs we didn't have time to do. But as well as all the time savings,it's also generated other significant cost benefits.**
>
> Melanie Wiles, Business Transformation Officer
> South Norfolk Council

The Benefits

As a result of innovative and widespread use of SX, South Norfolk Council will exceed its target of recouping its investment – the equivalent of one FTE - in 12 months: **it estimates that, within the first year, it will have saved the equivalent of 320 days or 1.5 FTE.** These developments are now realising cashable savings as well as improving customer service and data integrity.

What's Next?

South Norfolk Council is now moving on to more self-service projects, including abandoned vehicles and applications for absent, proxy or postal votes. It is also introducing a Tell Us Once form, which will enable customers to notify details such as change of address or bank account once, following which SX will be used to update multiple back-office systems.

The Council has also just assumed the running of a regional building control partnership which will require the migration of data from several councils on to its Idox Uniform system. SX will be used to assist in cleansing and transferring this data: indeed, the Council's track record with the system was one of the reasons it was awarded leadership of the partnership.