

Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation: Licensing System

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Regulatory Agency Streamlines Processing of Business Licenses with Integrated, Online Services

Rather than the usual paperwork and long lines, professionals in the state of Florida now renew their business licenses quickly online or over the phone, seven days a week, 24 hours a day. By leveraging the Accenture eGovernment Accelerator and other Microsoft-based tools, the license renewal process is being streamlined and duplication eliminated.

Business Challenge

Situation: Antiquated and Fragmented Systems

The Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation (DBPR) is a \$1.5 billion state agency regulating one million professionals and businesses to ensure quality services for the health, safety and welfare of the people of Florida. The agency licenses one in 16 Floridians, ranging from electricians to real estate agents to professional boxers. The state has 198 licensee categories and nearly every resident and visitor to Florida is affected by a licensee everyday.

The DBPR's management process for registering, renewing and receiving payment for licenses was handled by 74 antiquated and fragmented systems. Some transactions were done manually while others used outdated software applications that couldn't be integrated with each other. As a result, restaurateurs, for example, would have to apply for separate licenses from both the agency's Division of Hotels and Restaurants and its Division of Alcoholic Beverages and Tobacco. They would receive separate license renewal forms and be visited on separate occasions by different government inspectors from the same department.

More than 40 percent of DBPR's 1,700 employees handle customer inquiries, but they did not have access to accurate, timely information and there were no customer service management metrics. This cost the agency time and money, and resulted in unsatisfactory customer service.

"We get over three million customer calls a year," says DBPR Secretary Kim Binkley-Seyer. "Most calls are general in nature, such as 'How do I get a form?' or 'Is this person licensed?'. These questions should be answered very quickly, but we have 226 different offices with their own phone numbers and somebody has to decide which one of those phone numbers a call has to go to. Many were transferred to an incorrect number or were left unanswered."

How Accenture Helped

The Exchange decided to team with Accenture, a business partner of 10 years' standing, to create the solution. The result of that creative partnership is RSP Gateway, a highly innovative, custom-built messaging architecture that gives retail brokers and RSPs a single, consolidated connection for routing quote and execution messages.

The strength of the Exchange's existing relationship with Accenture was key to the realization of the RSP Gateway solution. The Exchange had worked with Accenture on several large infrastructure-related projects, including the replacement of the Exchange's legacy trading systems with SEQUENCE, a top-performing platform for institutional securities trading.

"Accenture knows our business very well," says David Birch. He also knew that Accenture had the global resources, including a strong network of partnerships and alliances, technological know how and experience in Web services to create the solution the Exchange sought. Furthermore, Accenture's ability to swiftly assemble an integrated project team of professionals skilled in the relevant applications and technologies, including technology experts from Avanade, co-owned by Microsoft and Accenture, would help accelerate delivery.

Value Delivered

Benefits: Customer Satisfaction with Tangible Cost Savings

Applying for a professional license in the State of Florida no longer will be characterized by long waits in line and lots of paperwork. The Department of Business and Professional Regulation is meeting customer demand for real-time access to information with a central point of contact. Processes have been streamlined, license renewal turn-around times are faster and there is less duplication of agency resources. There is a capability to share information and present an integrated interface to customers. And because people typically enter their own details correctly, the self-service component reduces the risk of error. All this results in tangible cost savings.

"We change over 100,000 addresses a year," says Binkley-Seyer. "So if 20 percent of those people go online and change their own address, that eliminates 20,000 pieces of paper and about 10,000 phone calls since half of them call in to ask for a change of address form."

For DBPR employees, spending less time on data entry means they can spend more time providing direct support and guidance. They can follow up customer complaints, and conduct audits and research, such as making sure applicants are qualified for their licenses. "Before it was just paper coming through and they were drowned by all of it," says Shackelford. "Now they get to concentrate on their core competencies."

"We're making their jobs much more challenging, much more satisfying," adds Binkley-Seyer. "We're giving our employees the tools to offer superior customer service. When you have outdated technology and it takes a long time to research information or give answers, the public tends to view that as incompetence. Now, with the touch of a fingertip, staff is able to pull up information and give people what they're looking for in a timely manner."

The protection of the public is also maximized with instant access to accurate information. For example, the DBPR can ensure that someone who is being disciplined for a license infraction in one area isn't able to receive a license in another area without correcting the first problem. The system also dramatically improves the effectiveness of health and safety inspectors and compliance officers. With the elimination of their cumbersome paper process, the Division of Hotels and Restaurants, for example, can focus on their core mission to make sure hotels and restaurants are safe and clean.

The Future: Building Stronger Relationships

Eventually Florida citizens also will be able to go online and file complaints against license holders and check on the legitimacy of professionals before hiring them. Already home buyers can verify they are working with a licensed real estate agent who has complied with state laws governing the sale and purchase of property. This capability will be extended to other professions, such as building contractors and certified public accountants.

The DBPR is undergoing a major business transformation and building stronger relationships with licensees and citizens in the process. It is fulfilling a vision to dramatically raise the bar for customer service by creating and sustaining customer confidence across the state of Florida.