

Mailroom automation facilitates faster citizen service for government agency.



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Director, Purchasing & Facilities
UWV

Background

UWV is the Netherlands' social security organisation. Formed in 2002 after the merger of several agencies, it provides a single source of support to approximately two million people who are unemployed or temporarily unable to work due to sickness, pregnancy or disability. The agency employs some 16,000 people and maintains close relationships with more than 400,000 employers. One of UWV's main functions is to process and deliver benefit payments to citizens, quickly and accurately.

The Challenge

The processing of letters and forms from citizens is a key part of the authorisation and dispatch of benefit payments. As you might expect, UWV receives and processes large volumes of mail each day: some 22,000 pieces, in fact. The manual sorting and routing processes in its mailroom meant that it could take two-to-three days for paperwork to reach the UWV employee handling a particular claim.

“We're supporting citizens who are dependent on the money they receive from us,” says Frans Slingerland, Director, Purchasing & Facilities at UWV. “But it was taking too long to get documents to the desks of the people who could process and authorise a claim. It would take even longer if a mistake was made and a document was incorrectly routed, which was easily done. We needed to do better.”

UWV is always looking for ways to improve the service it delivers and to be more efficient and cost-effective. Mailroom services came under scrutiny in 2006 as a key way to speed up the processing of claims and improve citizen satisfaction with the service.

The Solution

UWV wanted to find a solution that would automate the receipt and routing of both structured and unstructured documents—both forms and letters, for example—as they entered the mailroom. They also wanted incoming paper documents to be scanned and digitised so that all documents—structured and unstructured, paper and electronic—could be processed centrally in a standard way.

Having evaluated several solutions, UWV selected Xerox and eFLOW for its sophisticated functionality at a competitive price.

“We knew what we needed and compared the different vendors' solutions, feature by feature. We found the Xerox solution the best match for our requirements,” Slingerland points out.

In particular, Xerox® eFLOW's ability to handle both structured and unstructured mail was an important selling point, enabling UWV to handle letters of enquiry and structured forms with equal ease.

Automated document routing.

Faster, more efficient customer centric service.

Slingerland explains: “An intelligent keyword search makes the processing of unstructured documents very proficient. For example, we can tell the system that if it picks up a phrase such as ‘change address’ it must look also for ‘new address’ and ‘old address.’ Having captured this information, the software can automatically route it to the appropriate system and person and the client’s records can be changed. It’s very efficient.”

Xerox worked closely with UWV to configure and deploy the eFLOW solution, helping to reduce UWV’s need for specialist expertise in-house and ensuring a smooth and cost-effective transition to the new solution. In addition to helping with the setup of the intelligent automated search algorithms and building the interfaces to UWV’s relevant back-office systems, Xerox consultants gave advice on the design of document templates and standard forms. Xerox continues to support the solution on an ongoing basis.

“Xerox support to get the system up and running was invaluable and remains so,” says Slingerland. “Although the system ‘learns’ as it goes and so will continue to improve, getting it set up right in the first place ensured that we would see the benefits of the solution.”

The Results

With the Xerox® eFLOW system in place, UWV has been able to slice days off the time it takes to process benefit claims and make sure that qualifying citizens get the money they need more quickly.

“Being able to improve this metric was a top priority for us,” says Slingerland. “The Xerox solution puts the right information in front of the right employees in seconds and, as a result, helps to speed up case-handling substantially.”

Prior to installing Xerox® eFLOW, the routing of correspondence was prone to human error. eFLOW automatically identifies the general type of document being processed

and then picks the most suitable recognition technology—using pre-defined rules, keywords, artificial intelligence and learning algorithms—to assess what action the document requires and where it should therefore be routed. Its accuracy ensures that eFLOW delivers the document into the right hands, time and again.

By helping UWV to standardise forms and communications that are needed at different phases of the benefit-assessment process, Xerox has brought greater consistency to the communications that UWV has with citizens and has dramatically reduced errors. “The pre-printed forms have a high recognition rate and have been made as friendly as possible,” says Slingerland.

Overall, with the level of automation and efficiency that’s been achieved, UWV has been able to save a headcount of 40 workers and improve the service that it provides to citizens.

The Future

The Xerox® eFLOW system saves all extracted data, along with the scanned image, in a single repository, ensuring that this information is easily retrievable from anywhere and always accessible at a moment’s notice. This capability is allowing 100 UWV branch offices across the Netherlands to become familiar with the system before cutting over to it completely in the near future.

UWV plans to scan its existing paper document archives into the eFLOW system so that it holds a complete record of customer correspondence and claim activity. It also hopes to extend the eFLOW solution to more business processes; for example, it could be used to improve the processing of incoming invoices through digitising, standardising and automating them in the same way as customer correspondence.

Case Study Snapshot

The Challenge

- Improve benefits processing by speeding up the processing of both unstructured and structured mail received from claimants
- Improve citizen satisfaction with the service received
- Reduce errors in the routing of mail
- Reduce the costs of processing mail

The Solution

- Xerox® eFLOW software with sophisticated document recognition, keyword search and learning capabilities
- Xerox consultancy services to set up intelligent search algorithms and customise the software
- Xerox advice in designing document templates and standard forms

The Results

- Time to process claims reduced by days
- Routing errors dramatically reduced
- Costs cut through elimination of mailroom inefficiencies
- Communication with citizens improved through standardisation

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