Robotic Process Automation accelerates regulation process at the Environment Agency

Working with Capgemini, the Environment Agency implements RPA solutions to transform its environmental permit and license issuing processes

Overview

Customer: Environment Agency (EA)
Industry: Government & Public Sector

Region: England

Client Challenge: The Environment Agency needed to replace the manual activities required to issue environmental permit and licence applications with a fast, accurate, and secure automated alternative

Solution: Developed as part of a strategic partnership with the Cabinet Office, Capgemini's best-in-class Robotic Process Automation solution has replaced the vast majority of labour-intensive manual tasks

Benefits:
- Reduction of processing time in issuing permits from 65 minutes to less than seven
- Improved accuracy and data quality
- Improved staff satisfaction

Protecting the environment for the next generation

As one of the largest of the 33 organisations that make up the UK Government's Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs — otherwise known as DEFRA — the Environment Agency (EA) works to protect, restore, and enhance the environment for people and wildlife and to support sustainable development. To do this, its workforce of approximately 10,600 employees looks after more than 50,000 square miles of land, 22,000 miles of rivers, and 3,100 miles of coastline.

Among its core responsibilities is the management, processing, and issuing of thousands of permits and licences to businesses and individuals. By doing so, the EA sets quality standards and imposes legal controls over a diverse range of activities that have a substantial impact on the environment. These cover imports and exports, the disposal of waste, the use of land for infrastructure projects, fishing, navigation rights, and the abstraction of water from rivers and watercourses.

Strategic partnership develops national RPA capability

Handling and storing the EA's caseload of licence and permit applications is managed by administrative teams carrying out repetitive, time-consuming, manual, and paper-based processes. This meant that with each new case, the organisation risked delays and human error while needing to invest substantial time and resources in further value adding tasks.

The EA knew that automation of these manual processes could transform its performance, allowing its teams to be redirected to more productive, valuable, and stimulating tasks. The Environment Agency were able to access Capgemini's Robotic Centre of Excellence through a Capgemini strategic partnership with the Cabinet Office.

Early RPA implementation demonstrates value of automation

The EA wanted to deliver an automation solution that involved key back office processes and legacy IT. With that in mind, the organization identified administratively issuing a permit or licence as a suitable target for its first automation project within the National Permitting Service. Built in collaboration with Capgemini's Robotic Process Animation (RPA) Centre of Excellence (CoE), the automation solution would provide users with the ability to issue multiple sub types of permit covering Water Quality, Water Resources, Land Waste, and Land Installations. Before the introduction of automation, the manual administrative effort in issuing a permit or licence for these four regimes ranged between 45 mins and more than two hours.

The EA and Capgemini introduced an RPA solution and a reporting capability that improved the speed and accuracy of administrative tasks related to these types of permits. The EA's National Permitting Service was involved in the design, build, and testing phase to ensure that its teams understood and supported the introduction of robots and the resulting benefits.

The RPA solution provided users with the ability to launch a robot that automatically opens up applications, locates relevant documentation, reconciles details, updates applications and legacy systems, and creates all necessary documents for email dispatch to the applicant and consultees. In just a few months, the speed, accuracy, and efficiency of permit and licence processing has been improved, with RPA reducing the time spent on each from hours to minutes. Now, robots issue between eight and 10 permits to every manually processed permit.

> "Capgemini's RPA solution has delivered a significant productivity gain for the Environment Agency's National Permitting Service, by enabling our staff to hand off the administrative, manual, labour intensive issuing of environmental permits and licences to their own personal robot assistant. Our staff were integral to the design, build, and testing of the bot and we've been able to repurpose effort to tasks they enjoy and we value such as customer liaison, creativity, and expert judgement."

Robotic Process Automation, EA Business, Implementation Lead, DDTS Automation CoE Lead Environment Agency.

Staff at the heart of the solution

By introducing automation into its approach to license processing, the EA has increased the speed with which it can administratively issue environmental licences. The Environment Agency's National Permitting Service staff can now work on more challenging and value-adding tasks while applicants receive their decisions more quickly. The success of this showcase automation has led to a project to develop a Robotic Centre of Excellence to serve the entire range of DEFRA agencies, and the EA is now prepared to find new, increasingly impactful ways to use automation to improve its ways of working.

About Capgemini

A global leader in consulting, technology services and digital transformation, Capgemini is at the forefront of innovation to address the entire breadth of clients' opportunities in the evolving world of cloud, digital and platforms. Building on its strong 50-year heritage and deep industry-specific expertise, Capgemini enables organisations to realise their business ambitions through an array of services from strategy to operations. Capgemini is driven by the conviction that the business value of technology comes from and through people. It is a multicultural company of almost 220,000 team members in more than 40 countries. The Group reported 2019 global revenues of EUR 14.1 billion.

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