

CASE STUDY: MERSEYSIDE POLICE

+Web Forms MOVING TO A MORE EFFICIENT DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

EACH YEAR MERSEYSIDE POLICE - ALONG WITH 43 OTHER POLICE FORCES IN ENGLAND, WALES AND NORTHERN IRELAND - SUBMITS ACTIVITY BASED COSTING (ABC) DATA TO THE HOME OFFICE, ENABLING COMPARISONS BETWEEN POLICE FORCES ON RESOURCE DEPLOYMENT AND ITS EFFECTIVENESS AT TACKLING CRIME.

The task of collecting data is very labour intensive as it demands analysing the activities of 2,500 Police Officers in 15-minute increments over a two-week period. Having established a "tried and tested" paper-based system for capturing data; Merseyside Police began to look for ways to streamline the process and reduce the administrative burden for all those involved. The use of web forms promised these efficiency gains and improved data accuracy.

“ Web forms don't require printing or scanning – so you save money on the cost of hardware as well as the reams of paper involved when working with paper forms. More importantly, they are instantly distributed and retrieved, which saved us a lot of time and effort. ”

CATHERINE CRANE,
INFORMATION MANAGEMENT & DISCLOSURE UNIT,
MERSEYSIDE POLICE

THE NEED

Merseyside Police has been using Fusion software to automatically process hand-completed activity cards for seven years. However, the distribution of activity cards to six Divisions, training liaison officers, collecting the completed cards, scanning them, validating a proportion manually and finally analysing the results was proving an onerous task. When the Government decided that the activities of Community Support Officers (CSOs), Crime Scene Investigators (CSIs) and Specials should also be included, Merseyside Police turned to Formic Web Forms module to provide some relief.

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MOVING TO A MORE EFFICIENT DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

Moving an already successful paper forms process to web forms in a single move presented a daunting challenge. Merseyside Police ran a three-month pilot with over 250 CSOs, CSIs and Specials to prove the process and smooth out any problem areas. The success of the pilot program provided the confidence to rollout across all six Divisions; Wirral, Sefton, Knowsley, St. Helens, Liverpool North and Liverpool South.

THE SOLUTION

The new Web Forms module enabled Merseyside's existing activity card design to be instantly deployed to the web, where it could be completed by Police Officers returning to station at the end of their shift. Each activity entered is automatically cross-checked with other data on the form, for example, location and officer rank to ensure sensibility and validity.

“ Formic's Web Forms module has validation built in, which makes it virtually impossible for a police officer to submit an invalid activity card. Suddenly, the liaison officers realised that a big chunk of their work was gone – something they clearly appreciated.

CHRISTINE DYSON

Data from completed Web Forms arrives pre-validated at the Information Management & Disclosure Unit's server, where it is analysed using the Formic DataView module before being transferred to a cost accounting system for Activity Based Costing (ABC).

THE RESULT

Despite some initial reservations of Police Officers to the new web-based technology, the unit soon achieved their target 90% return rate for each Division. One per cent of all data was dip sampled and verified against notebook evidence to ensure complete accuracy.

Christine and Catherine will analyse the results and support their conclusions with, for example, crime data from Command and Control systems. These reports will be presented to Divisional Commanders with a series of recommendations.

“ The results of these surveys will aid the decision of budget allocations for each force. Those that show cost effective usage of resource are likely to be looked upon favourably.

CATHERINE CRANE

CUSTOMER DETAILS

Christine Dyson & Catherine Crane, Force Activity Managers, Information Management & Disclosure Unit, Merseyside Police

FUSION USER SINCE

1998

MAIN BENEFITS GAINED

- Web Forms in-built validation negates the need for a manual validation process stage
- Instant deployment to the web of existing activity card designs
- Users receive comprehensive prompts and feedback to encourage fast and accurate completion
- Full and robust validation increases data accuracy and reliability
- Simple data analysis prior to transfer to cost accounting system for Activity Based Costing (ABC)
- No need for scanners, printers or reams of paper