

ABBYY® FlexiCapture



UK Not-for-Profit Leverages ABBYY FlexiCapture to Automate the Collection of Survey Results

Each day companies and organisations around the world struggle with the monumental task of processing documents – all of which need to be entered into the computer in the quickest and most cost-efficient method possible. Connexions Berkshire – one of several Connexions companies across the UK – was one such organisation.

Background

Connexions Berkshire wanted to conduct a survey entitled Participation in Positive Activities (PIPA) amongst roughly 9,500 of their young people. The results would require the capture of approximately 13 data items per person and all of the returned information would then need to be entered into the Connexions database. Estimating only a 50% participation rate would have meant over 60,000 data items flooding the Connexions staff who would then have to record the data manually. As Knowledge Manager for Connexions Steve Maddison put it, “obviously this would have been a huge task to do manually and would have required either the recruiting of temporary workers or placed a massive extra burden upon existing staff.” The natural conclusion was to seek out a Form Processing and Data Capture solution that could automate the entire process.

Solution

Steve Maddison tested and compared a number of different solutions in his quest to find the right one for Connexions. “We found many products that were inexpensive, but they all lacked the flexibility and special features that we would need as we developed our skills,” he explained. “Others were too rigid about the form template parameters and we could not risk being left with thousands of forms that could not be read.” With time running out before the deployment of their first survey and no clear solution in site, Maddison luckily came across the name ABBYY FlexiCapture.

FlexiCapture is an intelligent data capture system which automates the process of inputting information from forms and other documents into backend computer systems. Powerful and adaptable, FlexiCapture reads and retrieves data from three of the main types of documents in use today: fixed form surveys, semi-structured documents such as invoices, shipping orders, and bank payments, as well as unstructured documents – most commonly in the form of contracts and letters - a category in which FlexiCapture’s features truly outperform.

FlexiCapture met all of the most important criteria for Connexions. First on the list was a cost-efficient solution with a significantly high and quick return on the initial investment. Next, Maddison wanted a solution that was robust but easy to use and which afforded them flexibility in the type and design of the forms they used. The stability and reliability of the software was also critical to Connexions, which means that forms would need to be read consistently even if they were less than perfect or even if they had been created on a wide range of print devices. Last but of equal importance, was the speed with which the software processed the forms. With so many survey results arriving in a short period, the job had to be done quickly in order to ensure the relevance and usability of the collected data.

About Connexions

Connexions is a service in England for all young people aged 13 to 19, and those aged up to 25 who have learning difficulties or disabilities. The organisation provides a range of services ensuring that every young person gets the very best start in life. Personal Advisers work closely with other organisations such as schools, colleges, youth and social services to help all young people get the support they need to make a successful transition into adult life.

Contact

www.connexions-berkshire.org.uk



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A request for a consultation and a demonstration of the ABBYY suite of products was quickly answered by the UK office. After conferring with an ABBYY consultant over the scope of the project, Connexions decided that FlexiCapture 8.0 Professional was the right solution for their needs. *"It met our functionality requirements and had a reasonable price. We were very happy with the service we received from the UK Sales team who were very interested in what we were doing and very responsive to our requests and requirements. Going forward we are quite happy that our main software supplier Career Vision is also certified with ABBYY's FlexiCapture and can help us with our data capture needs."*

Now that FlexiCapture 8.0 Professional is installed and running, the process for handling the surveys that arrive at the Connexions office is quite simple. All survey results are quickly scanned in on-site, processed by FlexiCapture, and then the data is captured and exported into the Connexions database. FlexiCapture helps Connexions maintain a central distribution and collection point with no need to outsource any aspect, ensuring both a timely process and a secure oversight of data.

Results

After ten months in operation, FlexiCapture has helped Connexions reduce the time to process survey results from many weeks to just two days and has eliminated the need to hire temporary staff. In this time, well over 15,000 forms have been processed and Connexions expects that number to reach nearly 30,000 within the coming months by which time they estimate to have already recouped their costs.

"ABBYY FlexiCapture simply makes possible tasks that we would not have been able to undertake before, and has streamlined our survey process so that our staff has less work to do on administration and can focus their time on working with young people," explained Maddison.

Looking Ahead

Connexions Berkshire has already decided to add to the number of licenses they have. Additionally, a demonstration of ABBYY FlexiCapture functionality and the findings of the pilot test run by the Berkshire location were shared with all Connexions organisations across England. The result has been the widespread adoption of FlexiCapture by many other organisations, and following on from the successful pilot project by Berkshire a much wider national survey will be carried out covering 600,000 participants. *"I honestly can't believe how we managed for so long without this technology,"* asserted Maddison. *"We expect the surveys to grow each year in number and without ABBYY we would not be able to cope with the workload."*

About ABBYY

ABBYY is a leading developer of document recognition, document conversion, data capture and linguistics technologies.

ABBYY's products include: FineReader and PDF Transformer – end-user applications for document conversion; Recognition Server – a server-based OCR and PDF conversion solution; FlexiCapture and FormReader – data capture programs for processing forms, semi-structured and unstructured documents; FineReader Engine SDKs that provide a full spectrum of ABBYY's recognition technologies; and Lingvo – a line of dictionary software.

More information about ABBYY at

www.ABBYY.com