



managing input across the enterprise

Industry: Government

Swiss Tax Office Processing More Returns for Less

WITH INPUTACCEL, ORGANIZATION ABLE TO ENJOY SAVINGS AND HANDLE 60% INCREASE IN THROUGHPUT

As the eighth largest city in Switzerland, the tax office in Lucerne processes the tax returns of about 40,000 people. Using Captiva's InputAccel, they were able to adjust to a major increase in throughput, while concurrently speeding processing and generating cost savings, all of which contributed to them realizing a return on investment in only two years.

THE CHALLENGE

Since January 2001 tax authorities in Lucerne have been faced with a revision of the tax law that involved transitioning from a two-year taxation system to a one-year system. Until the year 2000, the following system was in place: Every odd year (e.g., 1999), taxpayers received a tax form. This form was used to declare income and asset information for the two outgoing years (in this case 1997 and 1998). But with the new tax system, taxpayers are now required to submit a tax return every year, which created a 60% increase in the amount of tax returns to be processed annually.

To handle the increased workload, the tax office in Lucerne would have had to increase its staff by at least 15 people, which would have meant additional spending of approximately one million Euros per year. Dr. Esther Müller, director of the tax office in Lucerne, summarized the challenge: "Our goal, ambitious as it was, was to handle this 60% increase without increasing the number of tax officials."

Achieving this goal was also complicated by the fact that this project was the first of its kind in Switzerland, and many uncertainties had to be cleared up for the Lucerne tax office employees—work processes had to be modified, and fears of handling new technology had to be eliminated.

THE SOLUTION

The Lucerne tax office first hired Interact Consulting, a company that had already garnered valuable experience in the efficient handling of extremely sensitive personal data during their "Swiss Federal Census 2000" project. Interact selected InputAccel, Captiva's enterprise level document-capture solutions, and DOKuStar from OCE, a combination they had previously implemented with great success.

The project was done in two phases: Phase 1 consisted of capturing returns from the previous tax assessment period with automatic document recognition, which allowed staff to gain digital access to data for previous tax periods. Concurrently, the tax forms were customized to meet the new technical requirements. In Phase 2, the system was used to automatically read and process taxpayers' handwritten information on returns from the current tax assessment period. This data was then transferred to the new tax assessment solution, which activated an automatic tax estimate for each.

The tax returns, mostly filled out by hand, and their related documents are now scanned directly at the mailbox with the help of InputAccel capture software. The taxpayer's various forms are automatically recognized by the system using DOKuStar. The main focus in all of this was to automate the routine work so that employees could concentrate more on the core duties for which their tax expertise was needed. An additional reason for choosing InputAccel as the capture platform is the timely and geographically flexible task processing it provided with its signature strength of distributed capture.



THE RESULTS

The tax office in Lucerne now possesses the most modern tax return processing solution in Switzerland, which delivers some very impressive benefits within the overall workflow and directly to the bottom line.

Not only was the tax office able to easily handle a seemingly overwhelming increase in workload—60%—but they were able to do so without hiring additional staff, which would have cost millions. On top of that enormous savings, they added an additional cost reduction of approximately 5.33 Euros per return (213,200 Euros annually), and witnessed a complete return on their investment in only two years.

Additionally, the tax office has witnessed a higher level of customer satisfaction as taxpayer inquiries are handled much more quickly than before. However, it's not just the customers enjoying the benefits of the new system; it's also the staff members themselves. As mentioned, at the beginning of the project many Lucerne tax office employees had reservations about changing work habits and adapting to new technologies...but not anymore. Now, clerks enjoy having information available in only seconds

with just one mouse click, which in turn provides them with more time for tasks wherein their true expertise lies, such as generating tax assessments. Employees are as busy as ever, but where they were previously busy pushing paper they are now performing qualitatively high-value tasks, increasing their worth to the organization, and working more productively within the new parameters of the paperless office.

“The decisive element for our success was the introduction of a new and flexible scanning system,” says Dr. Müller. “We are very satisfied with the project results and are now seeing other possibilities for the concepts used here.”

With InputAccel as their capture platform, the Lucerne tax office now has a powerful, flexible solution that can address their existing processing needs and be easily scaled to adapt to new requirements when they arise. Their staff members are experiencing increased job satisfaction, their customers are enjoying faster service, and the overall organization is benefiting from faster, more accurate throughput and tremendous cost savings.



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