

Extending Data Capture Beyond Medical Claims

"I see this as a project that could go on forever, expanding to include the entire company..." -Ed Davis, Director of Support Operations at BCBSAZ

With more than 700,000 members, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Arizona (BCBSAZ) is one of the Grand Canyon state's largest health insurers. Like many large managed care insurance organizations at the beginning of the 21st century, BCBSAZ faces a daunting array of technical and organizational challenges to keep pace with growing business opportunities, while adhering to increased governmental regulations. Recently, BCBSAZ has implemented an enterprise-wide capture solution for processing the thousands of health claims, superbills, enrollments, and related documents that flow through the company's Phoenix-based mailroom every day. The solution integrates Datacap Taskmaster for Medical Claims with Kodak scanners, Fujitsu scanners and a FileNet document management system to create a comprehensive imaging environment for the entire organization. Since implementing Taskmaster, BCBSAZ has tripled their document volume, with a small increase in staff.

The Challenge

After a decade of steady growth in the 1990s, BCBSAZ had accumulated a number of input systems to process its workload of 20,000 documents a day. An early user of scanning and OCR (Optical Character Recognition), the company was relying on a system from the early 90's to process about a third of the 12,000 claims a day they receive. Another third was processed manually, with the balance outsourced to local service bureaus. Enrollments and other documents were also scanned, and documentation was stored on microfilm.

If a customer called with a question, it took 24 hours to retrieve the microfilm and print a hard copy. Often it could take several return calls to get a claim inquiry resolved. BCBSAZ envisioned a system that would heighten productivity of claims processing, streamline their complicated document management strategy, and help reduce operating expenses, while still maintaining the positive aspects of its existing business practices..

The Solution

Given responsibility for the project, Karen Abraham, BCBSAZ's Vice President of Finance, applied Total Quality Management techniques and emphasized cross-department cooperation. "We included everyone with a stake in the outcome - IT, Claims, Finance, Operations, etc. - and we made sure that we were respectful of everyone's input," reports Abraham.

The team developed a list of goals, which included financial objectives, such as "Reduce Operating Expenses," but also benefits, like "Create A Single Point of Entry for Images," "Reduce Training Time," and "Shorten Time To Resolve Customer Inquiries," which became the template for selecting a solution. Abraham and company assumed they'd need a combination of capture solutions to feed the organization's diverse legacy systems. However, when Taskmaster for Medical Claims proved that it could capture and route all of BCBSAZ's documents through one input, the choice became easy.

The solution begins with three Kodak scanners. Next, Taskmaster for Medical Claims receives the images, applies dual OCR recognition and passes them through a series of validations. Following background processing, claims are reviewed by an operator, using the Taskmaster for Medical Claims verify screen, which highlights low-confidence characters and failed validations for fast repair. Claim data is then uploaded to one of four different adjudication systems, while claim images are stored on a Hewlett Packard optical jukebox. Non-claim documents, such as correspondence and enrollments, are indexed for storage and forwarded to the proper department. The FileNet document management system provides the access and permissions for each department to use data or images as they need.

The Result

Claims processing productivity has tripled. Now, all claims are going through the Taskmaster system and operators are processing more than over 1.1 million claim images a month. This represents an average of 260,000 claims, 180,000 of which are processed with OCR technology. In addition, Blue Cross Blue Shield Arizona, processes enrollment documents, medical reviews, correspondence, credentialing, provider contracts and utilization management documents.

Microfilming was phased out in March 2001. After scanning, images are indexed and stored for easy retrieval on a Hewlett Packard optical jukebox. With claim images available to Customer Service at the touch of a key, most inquiries can be answered during the initial call. All scanning for the organization has been consolidated into one centralized area and training of data entry operators is much simpler.

BCBSAZ is currently using 7 scanners to deliver document images to Taskmaster, four Kodak 9520's and a Kodak i830 and 2 Fujitsu 5900's.

"It used to take six weeks to train people to work with our software," attests Ed Davis, BCBSAZ's Director of Support Operations. "Now we can get someone up and running in a matter of hours." Perhaps the best measurement of success is that other departments, not initially part of the project, are eager to take advantage of the flexible solution that the Blue Cross Blue Shield team has created. "I could see this project going on forever, expanding to include the entire company," says Davis. "That's why we like Datacap software, because it gave us an enterprise-wide solution that we could scale up as we went along."

BCBSAZ is currently processing 100 different "jobs" or document variations. They are also deploying accounts payable and human resource applications with Datacap Taskmaster.

About Datacap Inc.

Since 1988, Datacap Inc. has provided leading document capture and forms processing software solutions to organizations worldwide. Datacap Taskmaster software efficiently transforms paper into information, reducing data entry costs and improving information accuracy. A client/server, rules-based document capture workflow platform, Taskmaster provides highly flexible solutions for both image indexing and data entry automation. Taskmaster also enables scanning, indexing and administration from a browser and integrates with all leading document management solutions. <http://www.datacap.com/>