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Policy Automation: How a Single Technology Is Empowering End-Users and Saving Organizations Money across Multiple Industries

Introduction

Immigration offices, hospitals, banks, government departments and insurance agencies — whether national or international — may offer different services, but they all face common problems: stiff competition, cost constraints, frequently changing legislation, a skills shortage and demanding customers. Fortunately, there is an out-of-the-box tool that can help organizations improve service delivery and cut costs, whether they're focused on approving visa applications or healing flu-stricken patients.

Welcome to the world of policy automation. Dedicated to designing, testing and deploying policies, policy automation tools are helping organizations in countless industries effectively deliver services and consistently determine policy obligations while maintaining full compliance with laws and regulations.

No longer must companies rely on costly call centers and overworked officials to route customers to timely and accurate information. Instead, policy automation tools let companies automate lengthy and costly processes. Better yet, these processes can be tailored to suit a company's or a country's unique governing regulations and organizational policies.

The good news is, unlike many of today's industry-specific solutions, policy automation tools can be applied to a variety of industries including immigration, insurance, financial services, social services, healthcare and tax services.

Case study: Immigration

Scenario: A 29-year-old male Canadian resident wants to apply for an Australian visa for a two-month vacation in the Outback.

Solution: A Web-based policy automation tool that lets users quickly and easily find routine visa and citizenship information online via a 'Visa Wizard' module. By filling out an online interactive questionnaire, he gets online guidance and can quickly determine visa eligibility.

For example, he is asked a few simple questions such as, "Why do you want an Australian visa?" "Where do you expect to be when you apply for a visa?" and "What is your date of birth?"

In this case, he is automatically informed that he is eligible for one of two visas: a Tourist visa or an ETA Visitor visa. Both types are described in detail, including fees, summary sheets and links to application forms.

Benefits: Rather than having to contact a departmental office or call center, the applicant discovers a fast and easy way to find the right visa and determine eligibility using a customer-friendly interactive portal. As for the immigration department, the benefits are numerous including the ability to:

- Automate the visa, passport and citizenship determination process
- Easily manage changing policy rules and quickly determine applicant eligibility for visas, passports and citizenship
- Ensure accurate and lawful determination against complex migration policies
- Reduce reliance on technical staff and adjust rules rapidly by allowing immigration experts to author rules in natural language
- Simplify rules by realizing the impact of changes to policy with what-if analysis (including legal/regulatory changes)
- Empower applicants with information and reduce call center costs through self-guided questionnaires
- Rapidly transform policy documents and manuals into executable form

Case study: Insurance

Scenario: A 45-year-old woman is applying for an automobile policy with a new insurance provider.

Solution: A Web-based policy automation tool that assesses the woman's eligibility through an interactive questionnaire. This tool lets an insurance company quickly deal with eligibility

determination while boosting the self-service capabilities of today's policy seekers. Better yet, the system generates a full audit trail that lets insurance company representatives and policy seekers alike view, document and justify each step of the decision process.

Benefits: Many rejected policy seekers are left wondering why their applications weren't up to snuff. The transparency of policy automation, on the other hand, increases accountability and engenders greater trust between an insurance company and its consumers, thereby significantly reducing complaints and appeals. Additional benefits include:

- Reduce reliance on technical staff by allowing experts to create rules directly from complex legislation
- Easily determine eligibility
- Easily manage changes in policy regulations that occur over time

Case study: Financial services

Scenario: A first-time homeowner wants to take advantage of a bank's brand-new loan program in order to fund some home renovations.

Solution: A Web-based policy automation tool that determines the homeowner's eligibility, enabling consumers to quickly capitalize on new-to-market financial products. A guided interactive questionnaire walks the homeowner through the application process without having to schedule a face-to-face encounter with a bank representative. And factors, such as if an applicant's deposit is less than 25 percent of the loan amount, can be flagged for an in-person follow-up with a bank loan officer.

Benefits: By quickly qualifying a first-time homeowner for a loan, policy automation helps financial institutions introduce new product innovations in record time. While financial regulations may differ according to country, the tool can reflect a specific company's laws and policies. The result is a win-win situation: the bank gains a competitive first-to-market edge in a highly saturated industry, while the customer achieves empowerment via a self-service loan application process. In fact, policy automation can be leveraged for a variety of financial services-specific applications including:

- Mortgage origination
- Billing operations
- Fraud detection
- Business process management
- Regulatory compliance
- Pre-authorization

- Automated trading
- Trade order routing

Case study: Healthcare

Scenario: A 52-year-old kindergarten teacher doesn't feel well and fears she may have contracted H1N1.

Solution: A policy automation solution that allows people to perform a detailed self-assessment of their condition via a Web-based interactive questionnaire.

First, the teacher answers a number of questions relating to her condition including, "Do you have a stuffy nose?" "Are you coughing?" and "Do you have a sore throat?" through an online symptom checker. The self-guided questionnaire helps determine whether she is showing possible signs of H1N1. Based on these responses, the tool automatically determines whether the teacher may need a more detailed assessment, require the assistance of a healthcare professional or be eligible for home treatment.

Benefits: Forget about having to wait in a hospital emergency room to be assessed by a healthcare professional. Policy automation ensures that emergency rooms are cleared of common cold sufferers, and in the case of an actual H1N1 case, a healthcare professional is ready and waiting, armed with a number of details pertaining to a patient's current symptoms.

By addressing people's health concerns in an easy and approachable fashion, policy automation helps organizations:

- Slash labor costs
- Reduce legal liabilities
- Cut call center expenses
- Expedite service delivery
- Salvage precious medical resources

Case study: Tax Assessments

Scenario: A 21-year-old man would like to claim his state and local income taxes.

Solution: A Web-based interactive questionnaire such as a Sales Tax Deduction Calculator can help this 21-year-old man figure out the amount of optional general sales tax he is eligible to claim in mere minutes. He simply selects the tax year for which he is preparing a return. Then, using his ZIP code and just a few entries from his draft Form 1040, the Sales Tax Deduction

Calculator automatically figures the amount of state and local sales tax he can claim. The results are shown immediately on the computer screen.

Benefits: No taxpayer wants to suffer through countless voicemail boxes and long wait times to finally have a government official walk him through the calculation process over the phone. In turn, governments can easily incorporate changes to the tax code and educate taxpayers.

Policy automation has advantages for constituencies on both sides of the issue. It:

- Ensures adaptation to rapid changes in tax rules as government tax and revenue authorities are constantly challenged to adapt their processing systems in reaction to changes in legislation.
- Eases interactive taxpayer decision support, whether it's determining sales tax deductions or spouse relief eligibility on tax refund cases.
- Reduces contact center costs and improving consistency of advice and accuracy of calculations

Case study: Social Services

Scenario: A mother of two wants to apply for food stamp benefits.

Solution: A Web-based policy automation tools that pre-screens applicants for program eligibility. Rather than wait weeks to meet face-to-face with a social services representative, this tool lets food stamp applicants find out about many health and human services programs, the application requirements and each program's criteria for eligibility.

Benefits: In today's tough economy, government agencies worldwide must empower their citizens to find out if they're eligible for temporary assistance, food stamps, health insurance, tax credits or other programs with a click of a button. A policy automation tool does just that.

Additional benefits include:

- Easy determination of eligibility
- Self-service options for citizens
- A cost-effect means for ensuring that citizens' needs are met promptly and efficiently
- Enhanced customer centric service delivery via multiple channels, including online questionnaires, call center assistance and face-to-face interaction
- Better manage complex legislation and regulations

Conclusion

For industries as disparate as healthcare, immigration and insurance, policy automation is proving to be a unifying force that transcends verticals. That's because in today's tough economy, no

company is impervious to high labor costs, skills shortages and legislative hurdles. By offering self-service functionality and helping companies better manage policy rules, policy automation delivers across-the-board perks including:

- Automated accurate decision making based on Web-based interactive questionnaires
- Rapid implementation of regulatory policies
- Reduced cost through integration with legacy and modernized systems
- Enhanced customer service
- Better handling of complex changing legislation
- Improved policy accountability
- Cost-effective eligibility screening
- Reduced training costs

Corporations also benefit enormously, especially those looking to cut operational and labor costs. Consider, for example, the cost of operating a call center. Experts estimate that the fully loaded costs of a 3- to 4-minute consumer call with a call center representative — including labor, occupancy and telecommunications fees — range between \$2.70 and \$5.60 per call.

But that's not all. Increasing development in foreign countries is contributing to a brain drain that's making it difficult on both public and private companies to recruit for positions including call center operators and customer support representatives.

By avoiding the need for lengthy call center calls, and minimizing end-users' reliance on customer support representatives, a Web-based policy automation solution helps companies significantly cut costs and maintain quality service delivery to its customers. And those are bottom-line benefits that any industry, from any country, can appreciate.



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