



Wonderful Workflows

Design and deploy processes that work for your credit union.

By Michael Ball

More credit unions are leveraging electronic workflow solutions to automate and accelerate virtually any process, within any department. Meanwhile, those that have not adopted this type of technology might wonder how *exactly* these solutions work.

In a nutshell, electronic workflow solutions help staff members break down a project into individual tasks that can be assigned to a particular person. The system will alert the person responsible for a task when it needs to be done—which is typically much more effective than putting a document on a co-worker’s desk with a sticky note explaining what to do next.

Electronic workflow systems also allow documents to be shared and for signatures to be collected and routed electronically. In all, these systems force documents and processes to stay in their prescribed order, which can be easier on staff and move processes along faster and more efficiently. Ideally, electronic workflow integrates smoothly with other business applications—such as a loan origination system—allowing for data to be pulled from or pushed to the business application from the workflow system.

Those uninitiated about electronic workflow solutions ask such questions as: How are electronic workflows designed and

deployed? How many does a credit union need? Do I need a couple of master workflows or specifically designed workflows for every transaction type? The answer is ... there is no correct answer.

However this article will provide several examples of how credit unions have successfully implemented IMM’s workflow solution and developed workflows specific to their particular challenges and processes. The technology might be the same, but the strategies are all their own.

EFCU Financial Made the Most of a New Core

When \$315 million EFCU Financial (www.efcufinancial.org), Baton Rouge, La., underwent a core conversion to XP2 from Fiserv (www.fiserv.com), a CUES Supplier member based in Brookfield, Wis., the CU wanted to use its new system as efficiently as possible. This meant going cold turkey on paper.

“We decided to ‘rip off the Band Aid’ and become paperless in a matter of one weekend,” says Wynter Roy, chief operations officer. “I know this was the right decision for us.”

EFCU Financial coordinated the deployments of its new core and its new workflow system to ease the implementation and training processes. Roy acknowledges that if the credit union had not taken this

approach, additional training for employees would have been required down the road.

The combination of the new core integrated with the workflow solution creates other efficiencies, too. “There is very little information that has to be typed onto the documents themselves because almost everything comes over from the core,” Roy says. “This cuts down on errors that happen when you rekey information.”

To date, EFCU Financial has launched 17 workflows and, like all credit unions, had its own approach to using the technology. “When deciding how many workflows to create, I had to choose whether it made sense for us to have workflows for every single document,” he explains. “But that would be restrictive and absolutely *not* allow for any mistakes. Instead, we elected to develop fewer workflows that give users a bit more freedom and flexibility. We are still able to simplify and control processes, but having fewer workflows means less administration and maintenance in the future.”

For lending in particular, EFCU Financial implemented three unique workflows: one for consumer loans that go to the state department of motor vehicles, the second for all other consumer loans, and a third for home equity loans.

The credit union has also developed electronic workflows for accounting documents such as automatic transfers and debit

card disputes, as well as for member service documents including account opening forms. “We didn’t just stop at lending (workflows); we jumped in,” Roy says.

EFCU Financial also wanted its workflow solution to reduce scanning needs. “Before we added workflow, every staff member spent considerable time scanning documents. We reached a point where branches could not keep up with their own scanning, and we questioned the need for a department dedicated to scanning,” he notes.

A point we commonly hear from credit unions about the creation and design of electronic workflows is that it forces staff to carefully think through their current, paper-centric processes. This initial step is essential to effectively streamline and improve tasks by adding automatic routing, rules and notifications that simply cannot happen in a paper-based environment.

Communication FCU Sees Transformations

For \$1 billion Communication Federal Credit Union (www.comfedcu.org), Oklahoma City, adding a workflow solution created both front-end and back-end transformations. The credit union developed five workflows to use across approximately 40 different products. “Our primary focus was to reduce the paper load—acknowledging that especially on the lending side, we *had* to make a change,” says Stephanie Miller, senior training specialist. “We have approximately 40 different lending products, and asked ourselves whether we needed to create a workflow for each one, assessing the particular processing path of our products.”

Communication FCU looked at the workflow for each product—including signature loans, auto loans and credit cards—based on how documents would ultimately be signed, routed, and archived. The credit union determined which documents would be signed in branch via a signature pad and which would be signed remotely, and created a defined path for each.

“We also designed a distinct workflow for co-branch transactions,” Miller says. “For members who wish to initiate a transaction at one branch, but complete documents at another, employees at any location can now easily access documents. Without a workflow solution, it would be much harder to offer this convenience to our members.”

For Miller, “The value of workflow quickly expanded beyond reducing paper. We were able to look at the product and really

see how we could better manage areas, such as lending and e-services. From the first point of contact all the way through final archiving, we can route documents to key people and see where they stand at any point in time. Visibility into how documents flow through the credit union leads to fewer mistakes, and our employees have embraced it as a great resource, not as additional steps or rules they have to follow.”

Veridian CU Says Good-Bye to Missing Forms

\$2.7 billion Veridian Credit Union (www.veridiancu.org), Waterloo, Iowa, had high expectations of workflow before deploying the IMM solution.

“We previously had several processes that required us to email documents across departments,” explains Katie Ledtje, the CU’s forms and technical operations specialist. “For instance, employees emailed forms to our ACH/payroll department for processing, which left us with the chance documents would be emailed to the wrong department, attachments would be forgotten, or the email could even be overlooked entirely.

“Additionally, any completed forms that employees did not remember to archive never reached our imaging system. With workflow, forms consistently reach their destination without hurdles; the system guides the document to its next location and reduces the risks of human error.”

Veridian CU has also been able to remove the back-and-forth email surrounding its debit/credit card transaction disputes. Instead of scanning and emailing supporting documentation along with completed dispute forms, employees can attach this information, which is then routed to the appropriate department for processing.

Beyond these efficiencies, the credit union highly values the auditing capabilities that accompany the workflow technology. “At any given time, we can see exactly who touched a document, when they opened it, and the actions taken,” Ledtje says. “Searching for specific forms through email was hit or miss. Now, with workflow, not just documents, but the notes taken along the way, are all maintained in an audit file.”

Adding workflow leads many credit unions to undergo a valuable editing exercise in addition to assessing their processes. Veridian CU took a deep look at its forms, carefully considering which needed

updates or which could be eliminated altogether. With improved, updated documents, the credit union better arranged its particular workflows by thinking through the best document flow for every form.

Some credit unions choose to pilot workflow technology at one or a select number of branches. Others, like Veridian CU, launch it at all branches simultaneously. Of this strategy, Ledtje says, “This all-or-nothing mindset allowed us to create consistency across all 27 branches and simplified the process of adopting our new workflows.”

Take the Guesswork out of Compliance

In addition to cost and time savings that result from automating processes, workflow technology can help overcome compliance challenges, notes Communication FCU’s Miller. “By regulating and controlling business process flow, we can more easily uphold requirements without the guesswork. Workflow solutions are empowering employees to minimize mistakes and improve their productivity, which can translate into improved member service.”

In a world where every transaction relies on a document and a signature, or multiple documents and multiple signatures, credit unions need a way to be certain critical forms reach the right person at the right time. Progressive credit unions are proving there is no right or wrong way to implement a workflow solution. Instead, credit union leaders must evaluate these solutions and determine how to mold the technology based on their own products, departments and, most importantly, their members.

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