

CUSTOMER PROFILE

THE NATIONAL EYE INSTITUTE AUTOMATES ETHICS REPORTING WITH BP LOGIX PROCESS DIRECTOR



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*The **National Eye Institute (NEI)** is one of the US National Institutes of Health. The establishment of the NEI, a seminal event for vision research, legitimized the field as a distinct and important component in advancing the health and welfare of the American public. It also provided the foundation for building the scientific and clinical infrastructure that has made significant contributions in the treatment and prevention of eye disease.*

The NEI leads the federal government's research on both the visual system and eye diseases. With the mission of prolonging and protecting the vision of the American people, the NEI conducts and performs research into treating and preventing diseases affecting the eye or vision. The Institute also supports the basic and clinical science programs that result in the development of sight-saving treatments.

NEI research has led to sight-saving treatments, reducing visual impairment and blindness, and improving the quality of life for people of all ages. The Institute's vision research is supported by the NEI through approximately 1600 research grants and training awards made to scientists at more than 250 medical centers, hospitals, universities, and other institutions across the country and around the world. The NEI also conducts laboratory and patient-oriented research at its own facilities and is the lead Federal agency for the vision and hearing chapter in Healthy People 2010, the nation's blueprint to improve public health.



TERRY WILLIAMS
CIO



MARK ADKINS
IT Specialist

A ROBUST INFRASTRUCTURE

A part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the nation's medical research agencies, the NEI is one of 27 Institutes and Centers. In accordance with policies developed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, all NIH Institutes conduct and support basic, clinical, and translational medical research independently. As a result of its responsibility to provide a robust IT infrastructure to support scientific research, the NEI must respond to both regulatory and legislative requirements. Because the Institute is funded by taxpayers, the Institute also needs to demonstrate that it is fiscally responsible and prudent in its decision-making.

Terry Williams, the NEI's CIO, is responsible for providing IT support and security for the Institute. One of his team, who administers key applications and database integration, is Mark Adkins. Like many of his counterparts at other Institutes, Williams has an ongoing requirement for better document management, as well as a document retention process and procedure. One of the most visible sets of documents that Williams must address involves the NEI's ethics reporting.

Williams was looking for a system that would enable him to develop a process, including workflows and forms, routing and approvals that would enable the NEI to address its ethics requirement. "We have a lot of requirements with which to comply, as everyone who works here has to complete forms, validate ownership of funds, and be prepared to address financial and also moral ethics requirements," Williams remarked. "This has been a big burden for us as an organization -- as well as for us as individuals."

With numbers of forms to be completed and information gathered for several hundred employees, both scientific staff as well as management, the task of compiling and documenting information was burdensome. It demonstrated the need for a system that would enable the NEI to be better organized and more effective. "We no sooner completed the current year's ethics reporting than we had to begin the process of vetting employees for the new year," Adkins observed,

AN ETHICS REPORTING REQUIREMENT

Although the requirement to provide documentation regarding ethics reporting is universal across the Institutes, their IT groups conduct themselves independently. After concluding that the existing manual process with its spreadsheets and email communication was too time-consuming and cumbersome,

Williams set out to find a new and more automated approach. He wanted a format that employees could work with, that would look familiar to them and would provide the detailed reports that were required by the Department of Health and Human Services, the Office of Personnel Management and the Office of Management and Budget. Since the reporting requirements change from year to year, a system that was easy to configure, and that would enable information to be extracted and analyzed, was at the top of Williams' list.

In the process of defining the specifications for the proposed system Williams discovered that the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) had already selected and deployed BP Logix Process Director for its ethics reporting requirement. Williams's initial idea was to piggy back on the work that NIMH



had done to address its ethics reporting requirements, and then subsequently collaborate on other areas in the future.

ADDRESSING KEY CRITERIA

Acknowledging that there were lots of products that could build forms and integrate with existing databases, Williams and Adkins knew that they were looking for a solution that also needed to be: 1) Flexible, 2) Easy to use, 3) Enable rapid development of workflows and 4) Save time.

According to Adkins, "In order to jump start our efforts we reviewed what NIMH had done.. That was very beneficial. Being able to see production forms and workflows gave us an immediate and positive impression of the software." At that point Williams started to look into pricing and functionality. "From an IT perspective, Process Director appeared to



have everything we needed – including the ability to quickly transition from an outline of a process to a functional workflow,” he added. At his recommendation the NEI acquired BP Logix Process Director.



Process Director provides a robust infrastructure that enables business users to define, automate, manage and report on business processes and moves business process management (BPM) under the direct control of the users themselves: no coding is required. The product features one-of-a-kind Predictive BPM™ (pBPM) and Process Timeline™ technology, leading to faster and more accurate decision-making.

THE GOAL: REDUCE PROCESS TIME

Adkins began building the Institute’s first production workflow. He discovered that it was possible to set up demo workflows in about 15-20 minutes and that it took only 10 minutes to define a process. The ability to drag and drop events was easy – and being able to manipulate them to define what he needed was also straightforward. In addition, it has been easy to connect to the Microsoft SQL Server database. A new team member will

also be joining the staff to work on more infrastructure aspects of Process Director. That employee will develop templates for re-use, another very important benefit to the NEI.

Looking ahead, the Institute has a number of general purpose business transactions with forms that have to be completed every day. “Once we get going and build templates, I expect to see progress become exponential,” declared Williams. “If we build a good underlying methodology with good utilization in mind, the others will come more easily. We must have IT security requirements built in. That means it takes longer to get the product on the user’s desk but it’s better than the alternative,” Williams remarked.

Adkins appreciates users responses to Process Director. “People who have seen Process Director in action, even some who have just stopped by my office, get excited. They can see the potential. Once they know it is here and can do what we need it to do, it will snowball. We’ll have our work cut out for us in terms of requests. Our own IT processes will also benefit from using eForms and underlying workflows – plus the reporting and Process Timeline will help us to determine what is causing the bottlenecks,” commented Adkins.

Ease of use, timely and knowledgeable customer support and the strength of the product won the hearts and minds of users and management alike. “While ethics reporting represents our first process, we have lots of different kinds of documents and needs, including document disposition, initiation to final storage and retention that also need to be addressed,” stated Williams. “With Process Director in place we can consider the entire life cycle of documents and their requirements,” he concluded.

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