

tapping the home-based workforce

“Snippets” Offer Security When Outsourcing Sensitive Data

CAN STATE REVENUE AGENCIES SECURELY DISTRIBUTE SENSITIVE TAX DATA TO HOME-BASED WORKERS FOR PROCESSING? PENNSYLVANIA FOR ONE HAS SAID YES; AND THEY’RE LOOKING TO EXPAND.

You know the old saying—the only things in life that are certain are death and taxes. Does that mean processing taxes must always require tight deadlines, second and third shifts, staff turnover, accuracy problems, and other common tax processing challenges? Some state governments are finding life doesn’t have to be so hard during the tax season crunch.

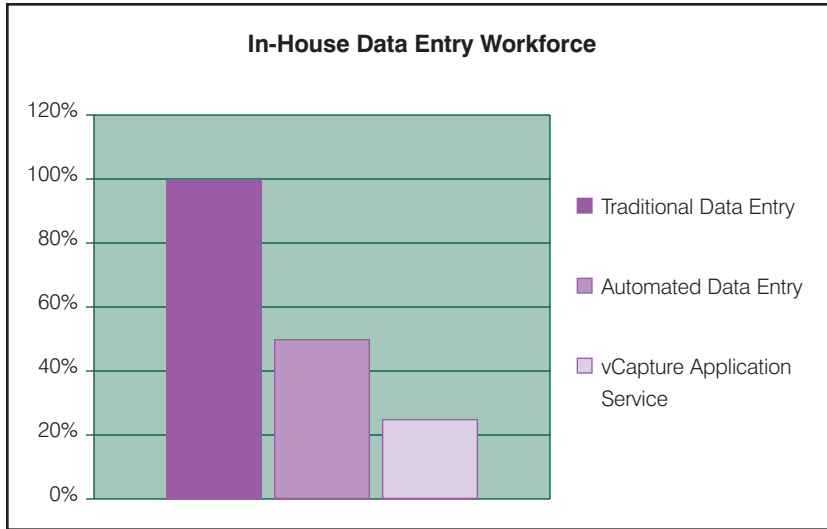
In a perfect scenario, overflow keying could be done by a readily available, virtual workforce of hundreds of key-entry operators—allowing current staff members to focus on core business tasks. Second and third shifts could be eliminated and the spikes that accompany deadlines could be handled easily. States like the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania have already proven that such a scenario exists. Using vCapture, a technology developed by **Virtual Solutions** (717-731-6200 / www.virtualsolutions.com), the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has been able to maintain data security while distributing its workload.

While various methods have been tried over the years, the main obstacle to using a distributed workforce of key entry operators has always been security. How can people outside the organization be trusted with the sensitive information on tax forms? The vCapture software represents a class of products that addresses these security concerns. By combining the

capabilities of imaging with the power of the Internet, these systems use sophisticated data processing algorithms to disassemble, distribute, and reassemble form-based information that is impossible to compromise.

At Pennsylvania, a vCapture server acts as a standalone step in the tax processing workflow, breaking apart images into snippets that are impossible to reassemble on their own. Those snippets are then sent to a Web site hosted by Virtual Solutions where hundreds of qualified keyers turn those meaningless snippets into data. The process monitors the results for consistency, requiring every piece of information be validated at least twice. The result is an added bonus—in addition to being secure, the information is typically more accurate than traditional dual-key processes.

As the snippets are turned into data, the information is sent back to the server, which recombines the data with the original images and feeds them back into the tax processing workflow. Since the on-site server’s proprietary algorithm is the only entity that knows how the data fits together, security is a non-issue. The pieces of data being transferred outside the building are meaningless by themselves, and there is no correlation between one piece and another. Not even the tax processing staff on-site can piece the data together.



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In addition to reliable security, a distributed workforce produces high quality data in a fraction of the time and cost. Virtual Solutions has created an online Internet system for matching up keyers

and workload, and since the security puzzle has been solved, almost anyone can sign up. Hundreds of operators are already keying vCapture data, and many more are on the waiting list. The cost

savings are real—data collected with vCapture typically costs 20% less, and it is more accurate.

The system plugs right into a tax department's existing systems. Every dollar spent on existing technologies such as imaging and character recognition can be reused. The technology is flexible enough that it could be used in almost any data capture situation.

Last year the Pennsylvania Tax and Revenue Department used vCapture for a segment of their tax flow to see how well the concept would work. The cost reductions, time savings, and increased accuracy exceeded their expectations to the extent that this year almost all of their major personal and corporate tax form processing will depend upon vCapture. It's now a seamless part of their tax process—a process that no longer requires additional shifts and the headaches that go with them. ■

