

American Heritage Insurance Agency

ABBYY FormReader Puts Auto Insurance Customers in the Drivers Seat

American Heritage Leverages Forms Software to Automate Car Insurance Quotes

In the insurance business, agents live in a whirlwind of paper that bogs them down and slows their ability to react personally and proactively to customer needs. American Heritage Insurance Agency was no different until the company harnessed the power of ABBYY FormReader forms-processing software, bringing the blizzard under control and improving customer service.

Based on its success with FormReader, the West Springfield, Mass.-based agency launched myAutoRater, an online auto insurance quoting solution earlier this year. The system leverages ABBYY FormReader forms processing software to bring customer's most recent coverage information into the online system quickly and accurately—without the delays of manual input.

"ABBYY's software allows us to take customer's coverage data and bring it easily over to the Web database," says Ray Belden, sales manager at American Heritage. "Customers can look at their information and play 'what-if' scenarios with their coverage. With ABBYY, we can give them all their most up-to-date information any time they log in."

The Challenge: Increasing Quoting Flexibility

Although American Heritage was providing solid customer support in traditional ways, the company wanted to apply technology to give its more than 6,000 customers increased flexibility and control, while still maintaining the personalized relationships that mark a successful insurance company. The agency realized it could significantly improve response times to people looking for auto insurance quotes by automating the process as much as possible and migrating away from manual data entry of insurance forms.



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After some research, the company decided forms-processing was a natural choice: The technology allows agents to input standard insurance-application forms, and to quickly and accurately enter customer data. American Heritage contacted ABBYY in mid-2004 as part of its evaluation process. "I wanted to pick the best product out there for the company," says Belden. "With other products, I got poor results when I processed the insurance forms."

The biggest challenge in processing any auto insurance form is the Vehicle Identification Number (VIN), a combination of 17 letters and numbers, says Belden. ABBYY's software was up to the daunting task of accurately collecting VIN information, he says.

"Most of the programs did a lousy job at capturing the data, even when I had a reseller set it up for me," says Belden. "When ABBYY gave us a free 30-day trial, I set the software up myself and it worked flawlessly on this complex data field, without requiring any special configuring."

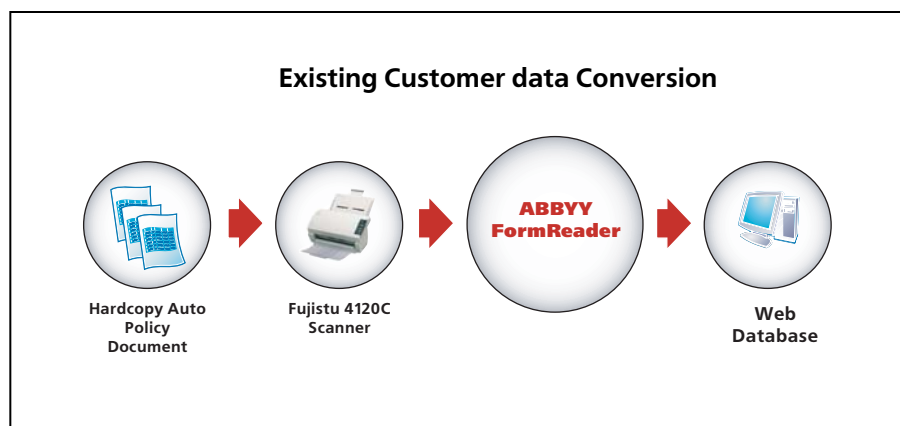
Having overcome the VIN conundrum, Belden easily set up FormReader to capture all of the auto policy coverage selections pages from their insurance carriers so that American Heritage could continuously update its online web database with all up-to-date clients. The myAutoRater online rating system uses this information to allow clients to login and get their current information or explore a new policy.

"The scanning side of the system was the easiest part, because we could readily capture data off the forms using FormReader," says Belden.

The Solution: ABBYY Bridges the Gap

Earlier this year, American Heritage integrated its myAutoRater feature onto its Website. In order to accomplish this, the company uses ABBYY FormReader and a Fujitsu 4120C scanner to scan 12,000 pages of auto policy documents and capture the information to its Web database in a matter of days.

The company estimates that manual input of existing information would have taken about 1,000 hours—nearly six months of full time work. "We were able to justify the cost in just this initial phase of the project," said Belden, adding that even at a minimal wage the cost of manual input would have cost thousands of dollars more than the price of FormReader.



In addition, the company has been able to store images of all its forms for its own reference. "With FormReader, not only do we capture 100 percent of the needed data, but we are one step closer to every agency's goal of a paperless office due to the added benefit of imaging all of the documents. No more lost and misplaced files," says Belden.

The agency also uses FormReader to quickly enter new customer information into its management system. In all, the company scans about 2,000 pages, and saves more than 150 hours in manual input, each month. American Heritage expects it will scan a growing number of pages as it adds customers.

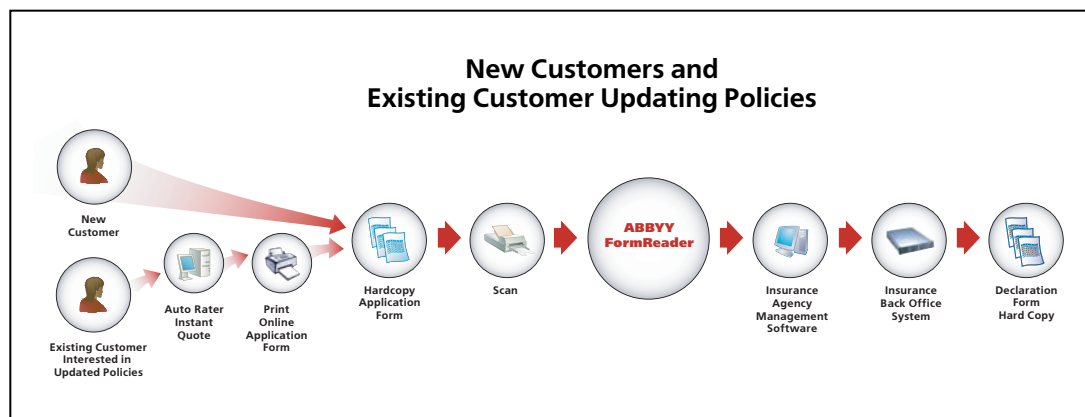
"Some of our agents go out into the field and handwrite form applications," says Belden. "These handwritten forms can be reliably processed by FormReader as well." In addition, American Heritage uses FormReader take information printed from the insurance provider's proprietary system and get it quickly into their own agency management system.

has expanded our customer base and customer satisfaction is very high with the product."

Potential customers also can get an insurance quote using the rating and application system. After finding the policy they want, clients can download application and inspection forms. To get a policy, users must print out the forms and bring them to the agency. This way, the agency has the opportunity to meet the client in-person and help him choose the right coverage, giving agents the opportunity to forge ongoing relationships.

American Heritage credits the online quoting

system with differentiating it from its competitors and expanding the five-person agency's reach. Currently, the company averages five



Today, any of the company's existing customers can log onto the online system and check their existing coverage or experiment with various coverage scenarios, including adding or switching vehicles.

"People often want to play with their coverage to see what it would cost if they changed their coverage to something else or got a new vehicle," says Belden.

The system generates quotes by combining the driver's rating information, which is based on the person's driving record, the vehicle and the coverage desired. "My customers love being able to utilize the Web interface," says Belden "This effort

new quotes per day and acquires one new customer each week through its online system, while still getting the same number of customers through traditional means.

"We are getting a lot more new clients that come in after initially getting a quote through our automated online system," says Belden. "Converting them to customers is much easier than when we didn't have that technology. It changes clients' perception of us."

Originally, American Heritage was concerned users would try to low-ball their insurance needs and the company would be forced to write low-limit policies. However, the fear proved unfounded.

"The surprising thing with the system is that people, left to their own devices, pick pretty good limits for their insurance, rather than the bare minimum," he notes.

Because the forms in Massachusetts are so standardized, American Heritage's template can be readily migrated to any insurance writer, he says. "Unlike other states that have 200 to 300 other carriers that are competing for business with different types of forms, Massachusetts becomes a good environment to use ABBYY's technology for not only my own insurance agency, but to sell to other insurance agencies," says Belden. "The template I created will allow this forms processing technology to work for anyone."

His initial conversations with other agents have been promising, particularly since ABBYY's highly accurate forms processing capabilities allow him to easily demonstrate the technology on-the-spot. "I can step into the office and tell them to get a file for processing, and FormReader grabs the data," says Belden. "It's pretty impressive."

Although not actively selling to other agents yet, Belden intends to take his application public soon. "Agencies like technology and realize that they need to adapt to technology in order to succeed," says Belden. "The face-to-face relationship will always be important, but automating the quoting is certainly an enhancement to their business."

The insurance firm expects to further leverage its use of ABBYY FormReader in upcoming products. For example, American Heritage intends to launch a similar homeowner's insurance quoting system in the next six months, once again using ABBYY's software as the cornerstone of the application, Belden says.

"Currently, we are working out how to capture the correct information from all the homeowners policies and building the online system," he adds. "We aren't worried about the forms recognition. With ABBYY, that is always the easiest part."