

## What you need to make digital pen & paper successful

A data collection process is feasible and will be successful if the following are in place:

- **A well understood business process**

Longhand Data will need to fully understand the data process to be automated – including the logic behind form construction and content, how many forms are used and, importantly, the overall business function for which the data flow serves. If any aspect is understood then time and resource will need to be applied to develop that good understanding, a process we can also help with. However, projects can be delayed if shortcomings or clarifications are not explored and refined.

As a rule of thumb, if a process has already been in place for a while, automation will be easier than for projects where the business process is still in a developmental phase.

- **Database**

The business process must be served by a database. Projects need an appropriate home for digitised content coming from the forms. Ideally this should be a web enabled application (eg. SQL) whose data fields match those of the data collection form. A spreadsheet or a MS Access file is less than ideal.

If you do not have a suitable database application, Longhand Data can also work with you to develop this aspect in conjunction with the change to a digital data collection process.

- **IT co-operation**

Availability of a database is one thing, having control of it is another. Customers must have control of the database to the extent of being able to make changes to it to allow auto-extracted data to be routed to it from elsewhere (through firewalls). Where access is not possible, or is difficult, the project may stall. If a database application and IT are provided by third-party IT companies, you will need to be assured from the outset that the IT providers will give both human co-operation and appropriate access to networks and software capabilities used by the database.

- **Data collection**

The data collection process itself must also be within the control of the customer, particularly the in-field activities of the data collection process that populates the data form and serves the wider business process. Where third-party partners are involved in this, their co-operation needs to be assured.

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- **A champion/project manager**

Within your team, it is necessary to have a project manager to resolve in-house issues thrown up by the project. Longhand Data will provide a project manager on the digital paper side – it is beneficial for customers need to provide a complementary role to drive the project from within.

- **A willingness and ambition to automate**

If the desirable attributes above are in place, Longhand Data can design and deliver a pilot project with just a few initial users usually within a couple of months. At the end of the pilot phase, a commercial version is re-drafted and the project can scale up to many users.