

Your process – when to convert to digital pen and paper

A data collection process is worthy of conversion to digital pen and paper when:

- Re-inputting data from existing paper forms is a slow process; especially where the inputting office has to wait for forms to be returned by hand or post.
- Current forms are large, complex or big in volume/year. Re-entering data is slow if forms have many data fields or where the forms have a mixture of free-text, digits, check boxes and pick-lists. Automation suits large, complex or voluminous projects.
- Current data volume is scheduled to increase; particularly if additional support staffing is either not possible or not desirable. Typically volume refers to projects in the thousands or tens of thousands.
- Several form types are in circulation. The greater the variety of forms being processed, the more complex is management of the data entry process.
- Other automated systems like PDAs and laptops have been tried or considered but rejected on grounds of cost/complexity/lack of real-world practicality.
- The data collection process itself is difficult. For example, where the data collector has to tease information out of others or where the collection takes place both inside and outside – in sunshine and dimly lit buildings. These are tough environments in which to use PDAs or laptops. Writing on paper with a pen is a much more natural experience and suitable to many more conditions.
- It is preferable to stay with pen and paper when the data collectors are not technically proficient and for any one of a number of reasons; age, experience, cost, preference to be skilled in the task rather than IT. Staying with pen and paper removes the need and cost for IT training.