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**CERTIFIED PUBLIC MANAGEMENT
PROJECT**

**How to Improve the Research Process for the
Department of Motor Vehicles Titles and
Registration Office**

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FEBRUARY 12, 2004

Research is asking questions and finding answers. It involves locating and retrieving information and working with or communicating that information. If you know where to go or the person to ask to get answers to your questions, you've developed a skill that you can use all your life.

How can we improve the research process? We first have to look at the past, the present and the future. We can't change the way things were handled in the past, however we do have control somewhat on the way we do things now, which will affect the future. There are a lot of elements that play a vital role in improving any type of process. Many enhancements have been made that continue to make our researching process more efficient.

My goal is to empower the employees in the Titles and Registration Office, at South Carolina Department of Motor Vehicles, with the necessary tools and skills to be effective as well as efficient in performing the tasks that are before them daily. This requires additional training and equipment.

In order to improve the research process, we must first look at the research tools that we currently have to work with. Currently we have two computer systems that we use to do research. Before August of 2002, we use what is commonly known as micro-film and micro-fiche. Our documents were stored on one or both of these types of film. Performing any type of research, required a manual search, which could take from a few minutes, to days. This is part of what is known as our Main Frame computer system. Our new computer application was implemented in August 2002, namely Project Phoenix. From this system we have our document management system called Ascent Capture.

There are many different ways information is entered into the computer to perform a thorough search. For vehicle information, some of the searches would be, vehicle identification number, title number, owner's name or license plate number. Once you have this information, and are still unable to retrieve the desired information, the real task begins. For example, was the information entered correctly in the beginning? In a

vehicle identification number, there are no alpha "O", they should always be the number "0". The most important part of improving the research process is to make sure the information is handled in the beginning properly. To get a correct out-put, the in-put must have been handle properly.

How do we received research request? There's a number of ways request of information is received. A few are, by mail, fax, phone and in person. Let's look at how the mail is handled when received. If the correspondence is sent by registered mail, priority mail, Federal Express, Airborne or certified mail, it is all track by the number that is assigned to it and the date received. Therefore if a customer should call and inquire about a request that was sent, we would be able to inform them of the status of the inquiry. We also have the clerks that process this type mail to list on a log sheet (see attachments) if the request was process or returned for additional information or funds. If the request was sent regular mail, at this time it is kept by the date received until it is process. If that request can not be process, a letter is also sent requesting additional information or funds. We are still working on a possible metering or bar coding system that we can log all incoming mail.

For research request by fax, or in person, the necessary forms (5027A) must be submitted at the time of the request. The phone request are only done for account holding customers that have the Privacy Agreement that is required by law on file with the department. These requests on keyed into our system so that the account can be charged and also this gives us a records of who requested the information for further research requests.

Even when you request information from the department, your request becomes a part of our files that will or could later be part of a research. Now, let's take a look at the new system that we have and how it has and is effecting the way we do business here at the Department of Motor Vehicles. We will start with the type of system and how it worked in August of 2002 in comparison to how it is working now. What has changed

and what still need to change? Has it helped make our job easier? How does it compare to the old system?

WHAT IS INFORMATION STORAGE AND RETRIEVAL?

An information storage and retrieval system combines a reference database system with the ability to retrieve desired document pages as text or as images and to print or display them. With the system we have, namely Ascent Capture, with Kofax software, the documents are first prepared for scanning, then the scanning process take place, followed by recognition and validation, which involves an indexing process. The documents are then released for retrieval.

When this system was first implemented, the goal was to have all documents scanned at the place of origin, namely at the branch office where the transaction were process. The procedure was to have a person or persons to check the documents for all the necessary information. This person or persons would be a part of what is call the Quality Assurance group or (QA). The documents would then be scanned and released for retrieval. Having the work scanned at the place of origin, reduces the chance of documents being mishandled or lost in route to a centralized location.

Some of the things we experience were documents being left out or put with the wrong transaction. If the work was reviewed and scanned at the place of origin, the clerk would notice that something is missing, locate the missing documents before the work was scanned. When the documents are sent to a centralized location, the clerks that are doing the scanning, are not familiar with what paperwork is needed to perform the transaction, therefore incomplete documents are being scanned. The recommendation is to put the scanning process back in the branch offices, with trained personnel to review all documents before they are scanned. This would improve the research process greatly. The less we handle a document, the chances of it being lost or misplaced decreases. Since this was not an option at the time, we had to look at improving the way that documents were handled in our centralized location.

HOW TO PREPARE DOCUMENTS FOR SCANNING?

To ensure documents are received on a daily basic, a log sheet had to be developed to track when a branch office sent in work to be scanned. (See attachment). Once the work is logged, it is then reviewed for completeness, and prepared to scanning. Any torn pages are repaired and all staples are removed. All odd size pages should be taped to a full size sheet of paper or copied onto a full sheet. The work is then separated by document type.

For each document type, there is certain information that should be present on the cover sheet to make the retrieval process easier. For example, if the transaction that is being done involves the transfer of a title from one individual to another and the purchase of a license plate, the cover sheet should reflect the following information: document type, customer number, customer last name, vehicle identification number, title number, license plate number. Also the bar code at the top of the cover sheet should be dark, and there shouldn't be any marks or breaks in the above reference information.

The Quality Assurance unit that is preparing the documents for scanning had to be trained to recognize when information is missing. The needed information is researched and added in order to have the documents scanned correctly. This process can be as simple as re-printing a cover sheet or adding a license plate or vehicle identification number. In other cases, it can be as complicated as the wrong customer was selected, and the complete transaction need to canceled and process correctly. This would involved letters being sent to the customer and the lienholder is there is one to get back a incorrect title and registration.

Once the QA unit was trained, we still had some cases when everything appeared to be in order, but somehow the documents was scanned out of order. We had to develop ways to find documents that was not retrievable the conventional way.

When we had utilized the normal or the conventional way as set forth by the KoFax software application to retrieve a document with no success, the real task came. How

will we find these documents? I spoke with the IT Manager about some enhancement to the methods for searching for a document. Another search field will added that would allow us to do what is comparable to the way we browse, or manually searched the old Main frame system. The field that was added was a document number field.

Once a document was scanned and released, it was issued a document number. In order to search by document number, you would have to have the date of application and the clerk that perform the transaction. From that you would have to pull that clerk's activity report for that date and check some transactions before and after the transaction you're searching for. Our success rate of retrieving documents since this enhancement have improved about 80%.

We have the problem of multiple customer numbers for the same customer. Until the database is cleanse and the customer numbers are combined, we have to search under all the customer numbers. Therefore, we had to make sure we were performing correct and complete searches in order to provide the information that is requested. For example, if a request came in asking for all vehicles owned by an individual, we had to check all name variations to make sure we have all vehicles on record for that customer. This search could involve searching under difference customer numbers for the same individual. *For the research areas to become proficient in this area, it took some extensive training.*

The next problem we had was documents being scanned under the incorrect document type. For example a title document should be a document type TL followed by a number. And a drivers license document should be a document type DL followed by a number. Therefore since we discovered document being scanned under the wrong document type, we had to search under all document types for the customer. Our success rate have greatly improved using this search method.

Our new Document Management system is a wonderful way to make documents available at each clerk's desk. Once the necessary training and methods of searching for

documents was identified, the ability to provide effective and efficient customer service improved greatly.

I have found that with any new system, until all the enhancements and adjustments have been made, we sometimes have to change the way we do business in order to receive the output we are looking for. My goal was to find ways to improve the research process. Empowering the employees with the tools and the knowledge was the biggest obstacle. The department had a new computer system installed August 2002. Therefore, we all had to learn the new system, and also make sure that all the information was converted correctly from the our old system. Our way of doing business, changed completely. This was definitely a process improvement challenge. This change, not only affected the headquarters office, it affected all branch offices in the state.

There was clearly a problem that needed an immediate solution. The Titles and Registration Research office was the center of attention as to finding a solution. After numerous brainstorming sessions with the Information Technology office, the Director's office, and Customer Service Administration, we knew that something had to be done. With input from the clerk's in the research department, we develop a plan and set guidelines as to how to perform proper searches, what to do when we are unable to locate documents and when to notify IT or the scanning department when we feel that there is a technical problem.

Field Office Name/No.	Date Received At HQ	Date On Envelope From F.Office
01 Abbeville		
02 Aiken		
03 Allendale		
04 Anderson		
05 Bamberg		
06 Barnwell		
07 Beaufort		
08 Moncks Crnr.		
09 St. Matthews		
10 Charleston		
11 Gaffney		
12 Chester		
13 Chesterfield		
14 Manning		
15 Walterboro		
16 Darlington		
17 Dillon		
18 St. George		
19 Edgefield		
20 Winnsboro		
21 Florence		
22 Georgetown		
23 Greenville		
24 Greenwood		
25 Hampton		
26 Conway		
27 Ridgeland		
28 Camden		
29 Lancaster		
30 Laurens		
31 Bishopville		
32 Lexington		
33 McCormick		
34 Marion		
35 Bennettsville		
36 Newberry		

Date _____

Field Office Name/No.	Date Received At HQ	Date On Envelope From F.Office
37 Seneca		
38 Orangeburg		
39 Pickens		
41 Saluda		
42 Spartanburg		
43 Sumter		
44 Union		
45 Kingstree		
46 Rock Hill		
48 North Augusta		
49 Greer		
51 Irmo/Ballentine		
54 Lake City		
55 Shop Road		
56 Batesburg		
57 Mail In Regstn.		
58 Bluffton		
60 Charleston		
61 Columbia		
63 Greenville		
64 Belton		
65 East Cooper		
67 Dutch Plaza		
74 N.Myrtle Beach		
75 Titles F. Wdw.		
76 Titles		
79 Woodruff		
80 Fountain Inn		
81 Ladson		
83 Mobile Unit		
85 Christn D Ctrl.		
87 Spartanburg		
89 Pageland		
92 Decker Mall		
93 Ashley Landing		
94 Myrtle Beach		
96 Rock Hill		

Date _____

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EMPLOYEE NAME _____

Date	Type of Mail	(Please list the entire number) Tracking Number	(List first & last name) Customer's Name	P Process	R Return