A NEW ERA IN AUTOMATION

Autocene
Use Case Series

State of Washington Department of
Children, Youth and Families – Telework IT
Solution

April 2019

AUTOCENE

Washington Selects a Workforce Intervention: Telework

Problem Statement & Solution

In early January 2019, John Fluke, an Evaluation Lead for a national research study being conducted by the Quality Improvement Center for Workforce Development, was having difficulty finding the right technology to rapidly create an application that automated a specific process for a group of State Government Agencies and Universities.

The consortium was looking to solve a very difficult business challenge, while also collecting the associated data to conduct academic research.

John reached out, hoping to use the **Autocene** to create a flexible and configurable solution. This solution was required to collect specific data, integrate that data with other systems and automate the process flow that was associated with this complex joint research project.

This joint project was being conducted by:

- The Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF)
- The Washington State Department of Social and Health Services
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and
- The University of Nebraska Center on Children, Families and the Law's Quality Improvement Center of Workforce Development (QIC-WD)

Washington State DCYF is a state-administered system with a total of 3,075 employees. There are approximately 1,600 field operation staff and 260 field operation supervisors, that make up most of the child welfare workforce in the agency.

Agency surveys continuously showed that employees wanted the ability to work from home. A telework policy existed, but without the proper tool in place, implementation was poor and the majority of employees did not telework. In 2016, Washington governor Jay Inslee's executive order, required that state agencies increased the mobility and flexibility of work environments, to better meet employee needs.

Previously, Washington State DCYF had piloted telework with a small number of employees in non-case-carrying roles and the results showed improvements in productivity and satisfaction. In conjunction with Nebraska's QIC-WD, DCYF partnered with **Autocene** to implement a consistent, fair and transparent process. This involved expanding telework amongst its employees, providing necessary supports, monitoring for successful implementation and producing evidence about the impact of telework.

Autocene Customer Success Manager, Penny Foussekis, worked with the multi-state consortium to rapidly configure an **Autocene** Automation Application or **"Workcene"**. One that fully automated the implementation and tested the effectiveness of telework for child welfare field operations staff and their supervisors.

The data produced and collected during the telework testing was of great importance to DCYF. Activities for evaluation included an assessment of telework processes and outcomes such as:

- Performance
- Work-life balance
- Role overload
- Stress and burnout
- Organizational commitment
- Job satisfaction
- Intentions to remain in the job
- Turnover
- Child and family outcomes

With **Autocene**, all this important data had been collected, stored and analyzed. This gave DCYF the ability to draw a connection between telework activities and positive outcomes amongst employees throughout the state. Research showed, that the benefits of telework resulted in improvements in job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Washington selected a telework intervention, because they also wanted to explore the affect that telework strategies had on child welfare, which were previously untested.

Autocene was ultimately selected due to a variety of factors, including:

- The ability to create a configurable No-Code automation application, that allowed state staff to apply for and automatically process employee's applications for telework.
- The capability to capture data associated with the Telework Application and to help evaluate the implementation/ assess the effectiveness of the Telework project.

Customizable Application Development, Intelligent Automation & Hybrid Data Integration

DCYF's IT staff determined that the new Telework IT Automation Application would not be created using any of the existing technology solutions they had in-house. The choices were to either conduct the process manually, with a mix of paper forms, emails and redundant data entry, or, hire an IT consultant to create a custom software application. The second option would be expensive and have little chance of hitting their April "go-live" deadline.

John Fluke, the Evaluation Lead for the project conducted by QIC-WD, knew that he needed to find someone or something that could create a web-based application capable of being accessed on desktops, smartphones and tablets on any web browser. The application also needed to pull data into drop down boxes, to simplify and limit applicant responses. The application also needed to have default settings and be dynamic, with the ability for employees to skip certain items.

The Telework application also needed the capability to operate both internally and externally to DCYF's environment, in order to collect data from various participants, like the following:

- Telework Applicants
- Supervisory Approvers
- Department of Human Resources
- Department of Information Technology and
- The Telework Evaluation Team

While the process and application functionality of the Telework IT Application was complex, DCYF needed that complexity to be shielded and hidden from end users, to remove the need for additional training or endless questions associated with the application. If not, this would greatly reduce the value of the application. The **Autocene** Telework IT Automation Application was able to give DCYF the power it needed with the simplicity it required, for State employees at all levels of IT to use.

Unique and complex use cases are nothing new to state and local government organizations. These organizations face tough choices (high manual work or expensive consultants) and complicated IT solutions that end users end up unwilling to use. A rapidly deployable no-code solution is only the first step.

DCYF and QIC-WD also required a solution that:

- Could manage the volume of 1,000 applicants in year one
- Was extremely easy for users to understand
- Sophisticated enough to deal with a complex approval workflow
- Could collect data and integrate it into multiple other software systems and
- Provide output in formats like CSV files and Printable PDF's

There were also must-have functionalities that were required for the Telework IT Automation Application. This included:

- External applicant self-assessments
- Formal application and submission - both internal and external to DCYF
- Identification of IT equipment needs
- Collection of information regarding that equipment
- Intelligent processing and routing of applicant requests to supervisors for assessment and approval
- Administrative assessment and approval processing
- Withdrawal from Telework program processing
- Ability to rescind Telework privilege processing
- Ability to request research consent from applicant and supervisor
- Research instrumentation
- Ability to print a hard copy for record keeping and
- Correctable/Editable Telework Applications

The Autocene Process – A Unique Approach to a Common Problem

Like most other state and local governments, DCYF staff members are already required to learn and use many different software applications, just to complete their daily tasks. This was something the multi-agency team really wanted to avoid.

By utilizing the **Autocene** Telework IT Automation Application, end users can access their application by simply:

- Accessing the browser-based version on a PC/Mac
- Using the mobile version on any smart device or
- Interacting with the application directly from within their email via MS Outlook, Office 365 or G Suite

Due to the strict timeline for deployment, DCYF decided to introduce the new application through the **Autocene WebApp**. This deployment approach resulted in an extremely quick roll-out and high adoption rate.

Applicants who wanted to initiate a new Telework Application could simply:

1. Open the **Autocene WebApp**
2. Select a new **Telework Request**
3. Fill out and complete the request
   a) (Optional) Supporting documentation can be attached
4. Click Submit
   a) Once a user clicks submit, **Autocene** will automatically route the application to the applicant's correct supervisor
      i) **Autocene** collects all data and metadata in the **Autocene** SQL database
      ii) **Autocene PASSPORT** integrates all hierarchical data from either Active Directory or an HRIS system
5. The applicant's supervisor receives an email where they can then review the submitted data
   a) Data can be directly viewed from the email message or they will be taken to the **Autocene WebApp**
6. The receiving supervisor can then take different kinds of **Actions** on the application submission
   a) This application requires a simple **Approve** or **Deny** Action
      i) For other automations, Actions can be more complex—for example: "Create Record in SAP", "Send Agreement to DocuSign for E-Signature", "Store Document in SharePoint", etc.
7. The application's automation flow will continue whether there are 2 steps or 2,000 steps
   a) Applications are fully customizable and can be rapidly deployed because **Autocene** is a completely No-Code solution

Autocene has the capability to support both simple and complex automations and can create automations for any use case. The User Interface associated with each step is dynamically created "on-the-fly" and is presented to the user with only those fields required for completing that request. Automation rules may be defined statically or based upon data that is entered by the respective users.

For example, if the application's automation rules dictate that a telework request must be routed to a specific person/group/team within HR or IT, that routing occurs automatically. In cases where there is more than one level of approval, the telework request will be routed in accordance with the rules put in place.

At each step in the application's flow, the approver can take actions that can be virtually anything and are determined by the customer's specifications. The data moves through the automated process, acquiring the necessary sign-offs until it is either approved at the desired level or denied. Once one of these **Actions** takes place, the telework applicant can receive an automated alert.

No need to send any additional emails or to check on the status. With **Autocene** it's all fully automated!

Effortlessly, the applicant can simply send the request and be alerted to the outcome without any further steps.

REPORTING & AUDIT

Each time applicant data is entered into an **Autocene** automation application, all data, metadata, and attachments are automatically stored within the database. That information can then be accessed through custom real-time reporting by authorized users, or automatically integrated into ANY other existing enterprise applications.

For the Telework Application, the research team wanted to have data sent to an analytics software, for research activities. Data available within the reports were fully customizable and could include any or all data/metadata captured during the application's flow. With **Autocene**, users can view reports which can then be sorted, grouped, and filtered by any field within the application. This allows staff to interpret data in multiple ways.

Discover Autocene

Autocene Enterprise Automation Platform give customers the flexibility of a Code-Free Application Development Platform, combined with the power of an Intelligent Process Automation solution. It gives enterprises the ability to rapidly deploy fully configurable **Autocene "Workcenes"** that are capable of automating even the most complicated business processes.

Autocene Workcenes improve productivity by automating both high value, mission critical processes and eliminating time consuming repetitive tasks. **Autocene** makes both Attended, Semi-Attended & Unattended automations easy, freeing end users and adding value to your organization's critical processes & bottom line. All with no developers needed!

Autocene Passport bidirectionally integrates data with any of your existing Enterprise applications & databases (On-Premise or Cloud Hosted). Data can seamlessly travel to and from multiple disparate systems and/or **Autocene Workcenes**, monitoring databases and automating integrations, centralizing data for end users & eliminating time-consuming manual data entry.