

Case Study

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National Collegiate Athletic Association

Ricoh Digital Imaging Services Gets the Win for Speeding Transcript Processing and Reducing Costs with NCAA Eligibility Center

It made perfect sense to do away with an on-site processing model that required fixed costs for staff and technology. Instead, Ricoh came up with the ideal solution for the NCAA—off-site processing and price per consumption.

ABOUT THE CUSTOMER

Transcripts pour into the NCAA Eligibility Center each year from high school athletes who want to take their talents to college. The NCAA receives about 100,000 transcripts a year—the bulk in the summer months—and the staff wants to make sure the process maintains the utmost integrity.

This information comes in all forms: paper, faxes and electronic. All of which needs to be entered, tracked and indexed into the NCAA's back-end system on a timely basis. It's an understatement to say that making all of this information work is a complex and difficult task. Having worked with the eligibility center and other areas of the NCAA in the past, Ricoh proposed a solution to significantly increase efficiency, greatly improve turnaround times and reduce costs.

CHALLENGE

There's a lot involved with eligibility certification for student athletes and their prospective colleges and universities. Typically, it took five to seven days from receipt of transcripts to visibility within the NCAA's public-facing system. That's because once the document reached the center, the transcript had to be scanned and indexed and then manually matched with the correct student athletes. The center regularly received a high volume of calls and emails inquiring about the transcripts.

The NCAA established its eligibility center nine years ago to handle the influx of transcripts, yet was experiencing a high rate of returns with documents. The majority of transcripts processed at the center involve students in the U.S., but there are some submitted from international students.

CHALLENGE

- Quality control issues
- Costly, on-site transcript scanning services
- Mix of paper, faxed and electronic transcripts
- Volume seasonality, yet fixed costs

SOLUTION

- Pilot test with Ricoh Digital Imaging Services
- Align paper and e-transcript processes
- Match pricing with volumes
- Off-site, secure transcript processing

RESULTS

- Expected first-year 15 percent-plus cost savings
- Digitized transcripts visible within 48 hours
- Status calls cut in half
- Seamless paper and e-transcript processing

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While much of the world runs on digital today, some high schools providing transcripts had been slow to adopt electronic submission. It was still very much a paper-based process where transcripts were either mailed or faxed to the NCAA and then the managed services team on-site had to scan and index each record. For those schools that did want to submit electronically, the NCAA had worked with a vendor to create the infrastructure and roll out a process for electronic transcript submission.

In a typical summer month, the center was processing more than 20,000 transcripts while in non-summer months, just over 4,000. Yet costs—for labor, hardware and software—remained fixed.

The NCAA also had another vendor for on-site mail services who performed the initial sorting and prep for incoming transcripts. This service team was also a fixed cost for the NCAA.

Ricoh had handled some one-off scanning of the NCAA's international transcripts in the past, provided device support and was currently working with the nonprofit's legal department. Seeing an opportunity to help the NCAA overcome its challenges in the eligibility center, Ricoh approached the NCAA and proposed a better way.

SOLUTION

The NCAA has always outsourced the scanning and indexing of transcripts to another vendor. But Ricoh recommended taking that model a step further—to off-site processing with Ricoh Digital Imaging Services. It was the way forward to improve document processing efficiency, increase turnaround time and reduce costs.

Pricing could be aligned with volume. Fewer mail staff and processing equipment would be needed on-site. Document turnaround times could be reduced. Follow-up call volumes could be decreased. And the paper-based workflow could be aligned with the eligibility center's established e-transcript process.

The NCAA agreed to a six-month pilot test with Ricoh Digital Imaging Services and its off-site document processing center leading up to the busy summer season. With just a year to go on the contract with its current on-site provider, the NCAA wanted to test Ricoh's people, processes and technology to make sure they could handle the workflow and maintain document integrity before changing its processing model.

Ricoh showed the NCAA it would follow rigorous chain of custody protocols to ensure the integrity of each transcript from the time it leaves the eligibility center to the time it's processed and delivered. They demonstrated their

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secure and seamless automated processes for scanning, indexing and classifying each transcript. Ricoh even proved it could accommodate the necessary file format and upload requirements as the eligibility center migrated to SharePoint® as the repository where all transcript information would live.

Four months into discussions and testing, the NCAA was pleased with the service. Ricoh would work with the NCAA and take over transcript processing just before the busy summer months. Nearly all transcripts from that day forward were sent to Ricoh's document processing center.

RESULTS

Any given year, it is unknown how many students will register with the eligibility center and seek certification. The NCAA estimates that nearly 65 percent of its costs related to volume are variable.

Given this, it made perfect sense to do away with an on-site processing model that required fixed costs for staff and technology. Instead, Ricoh came up with the ideal solution for the NCAA—off-site processing and price per consumption.

It used to take up to a week for a transcript to become visible with the previous on-site solution. Now, it's visible within 48 hours.

Flexible Model, Aligned Costs

The end goal from the very onset of working with Ricoh was to align NCAA costs to demand. If demand drops, so does cost. If demand spikes, costs will go up.

Fast Turnarounds, Fewer Inquiries

Efficiency is important. It used to take up to a week for a transcript to become visible with the previous on-site solution. Now, it's visible within 48 hours. And these transcripts are automatically matched to the student athletes—eliminating a highly manual process that added steps and time.

As for inquiries, they have dropped significantly, in part due to the fast-tracked, seamless processing of transcripts by Ricoh Digital Imaging Services. Inquiries regarding eligibility have also been cut in half. And with Ricoh processing all the transcripts, the NCAA has been able to reduce the footprint of its mail operations.

Form Agnostic, Daily Dialog

There's no longer a division between processing paper and e-transcripts at the NCAA. Ricoh handles both forms, delivering digitized paper records to the NCAA in one batch and electronic records in another. Both batches are then seamlessly uploaded by the NCAA—along with their corresponding indexed CVS file—into its database to make the information visible to students and school personnel.

Ricoh provides daily updates to the NCAA on the number of transcripts it has processed and alerts the eligibility center to spikes in volume ahead of time so staff can prepare for the incoming surge.

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