

What Small Organizations Know About Online Forms That You Don't

Abstract

Learn how even small organizations are obtaining big benefits using online forms. Discover what to look for in an online form service. See how The Carolinas Center for Hospice is taking advantage of new technology.

"Online forms gave me my life back!"

Mary Lou Miller
Executive Director
Colorado Association for Health

Necessity Is The Mother Of Invention

Unlike large organizations, small organizations must do more with less. Small organizations lack staff, IT budgets, internal technical support, and access to outside programmers.

This being the case, they still need to solve data collection problems similar to large organizations. To do this, they must find tools that allow them to work smarter and faster, without a massive investment.

For many small organizations, on demand Web services are the perfect solution.

Web services allow problems to be solved remotely – freeing organizations from the need to buy hardware and to pay expensive IT staff.

The question is, what should they look for in an online form service?

The Data Collection Challenge

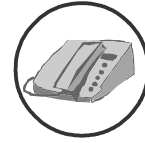
Currently many organizations are using a combination of phone calls, faxes, emails and paper forms to collect information. This process works fine when your organization has a limited number of contacts.

When an organization starts to interact with larger numbers of people, this process quickly becomes unmanageable.

For example, if you currently use paper forms to collect information...

- Forms must be updated manually
- Many forms are filled out illegibly
- Data has to be re-keyed into databases
- Data-entry errors occur
- Cost is incurred for printing, storage, distribution, and disposal

In small organizations, that do not have the resources for extra staff, this problem ruins the effectiveness and happiness of employees/volunteers.



Online Forms To the Rescue

Online form services provide an easy-to-setup alternative to manual data collection. Most online form services provide:

Centralized access to forms.

This provides an easy way to find available forms.

Centralized place to update forms.

This stops old form versions from being used.

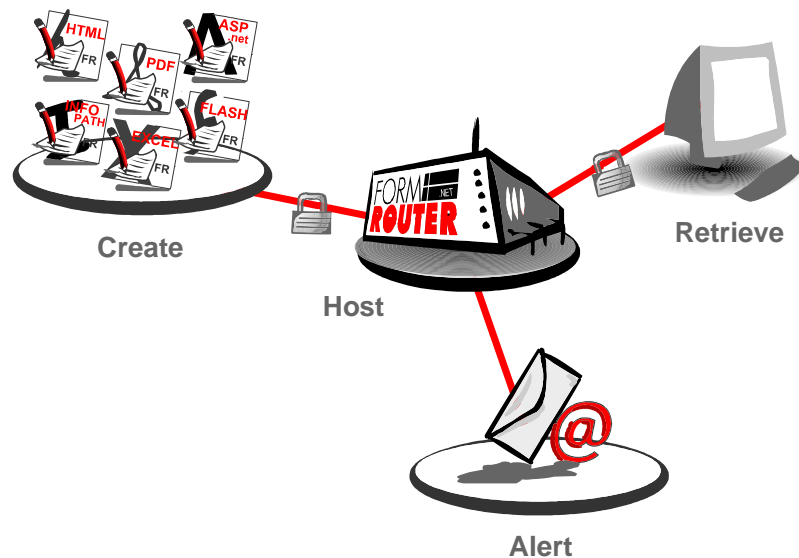
A way to validate input entered.

This ensures that quality data is being submitted.

A way to capture data.

This saves organizations from re-keying forms.

But, not all services are created equally.



Things Small Organizations Look For In Online Form Solutions

A Way To Create Basic Forms Quickly (Without Programming)

One of the reasons that online forms have not been adopted by all organizations is because they are too hard to create. A form solution that keeps the process of creating online forms simple for the non-technical person can create huge efficiencies across an organization.



Educational Resources To Learn How To Create Complex Forms

A solution provider should have training available to teach customers how to build more complex forms as the need arises. The best training comes in the form of live online classes where students can engage an expert directly.



Support For Open Standards

When it comes to online form solutions, support for open standards is critical.

Open standards allow form solutions to support forms that work in popular Web browsers and the free Adobe Reader. In addition, solutions that support many form formats will allow for the most flexible solutions to be created. Listed are the major online form formats that should be supported:

- HTML (Web)
- Adobe® PDF®
- ASP and ASP.NET
- Macromedia® Flash™
- Microsoft® Excel
- Microsoft Word
- Microsoft InfoPath™



Form Building Support

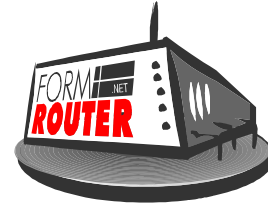
Sometimes, online form problems exceed the skill of the person responsible for creating the form. In this situation it is nice to know that the online form service offers professional services to meet the need in a timely manner.



A Place To Host Forms (Securely)

Once an online form is created, it needs a place to live on the Internet. The server hosting facility for forms needs to be very robust to support peak loads. In addition, the ability to handle massive numbers of secure connections is required for fast data transfer.

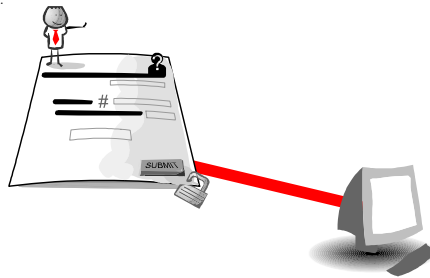
Secure form transmission is mandatory in a world filled with hackers and identity theft.



An Easy Way To Capture Form Responses To A Database

An online form service must provide an easy, secure way to capture form responses. Again, the support for open standards is critical. Each organization has different data output needs. If data output formats are limited, so will be the solution's benefit. Here are the major output formats that should be supported:

- Microsoft Access
- Microsoft SQL
- ODBC
- Text
- XML
- Microsoft Outlook



An Affordable Cost To Fit The Budget

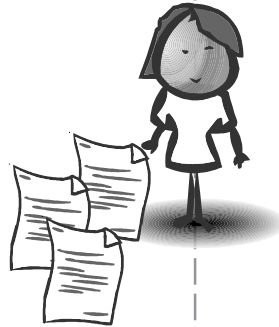
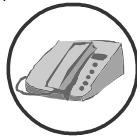
All organizations must deal with budgetary constraints. A flat fee price model that allows organizations to host and submit as many forms as required to solve their problem makes for easy budgeting.

Vendors who lock customers into proprietary form readers, and charge per form filler are not in line with the budgets of most organizations.

Conclusion

Use of online forms can create huge efficiencies in small organizations. These efficiencies allow staff to do more with less. Tools that allow organization professionals to solve problems on demand, without the need for programmers, are now available. Over time, these new tools will support the data capture needs for all those suffering with data collection problems.

Old Way



New Way



“Online forms gave me my life back!”

Mary Lou Miller
Executive Director
Colorado Association for Health

Success Story

FormRouter gives us the ability to easily create online forms at any time.

Karen Robinson, Program Coordinator
The Carolinas Center for Hospice



Donations and Registrations Made Painless

The Carolinas Center for Hospice is a comprehensive resource to improve hospice, palliative, and end of life care, while promoting recognition of the dying process and death as a natural part of life.

Challenge

The Hospice organization needed the ability to create and host secure registration forms online. They also needed a secure way to collect responses directly to a database in their office.

Without this capability, billing for registrations was difficult, their website looked unprofessional and communication with event participants to confirm registration was inadequate. Here were the specific challenges:

Capture annual conference registrations with payments.

Hospice hosts an annual conference that requires an payment to be made. To properly manage attendees, data needed to flow into a desktop database without re-keying.

Capture workshop registrations with payments.

As workshops change, different forms must be implemented. Hospice needed the ability to rapidly create secure online forms with payment processing themselves - without additional fees.

Capture online donations.

A permanent donation form needed to be added to the Hospice website to collect funds during off hours.

Solution

To meet their online registration challenges, Hospice utilized FormRouter technology to manage registrations for their annual conference. Due to the overall success of the conference management, Hospice has since integrated FormRouter technology to conduct anonymous surveys and capture data from affiliates.

Hospice was able to meet all of the above challenges with FormRouter. As a result, Hospice:

- Captures thousands of event registrations, payments and donations
- Developed a database for future events and donations
- Saved significant time and money (a fixed fee per year - all you can eat)
- Took direct control of form creation, hosting and capturing of responses
- Now does surveys and other ad-hoc data collection on demand

Summary

“We spoke to many companies about using forms that they create - then charge us per each registration. We do so many workshops each year with thousands of participants. These were not good options for us. We collect huge amounts of data every year from our affiliates. Now we will be able to capture this data into a form and download it into an Access database with ease. This will be much better for our affiliates as well as for us.”

“I would recommend FormRouter. I did a lot of research for a form solution before I found FormRouter. They are the most affordable and I love the fact that I can create my own forms at any time. “

Karen Robinson, Program Coordinator
The Carolinas Center for Hospice and End of Life Care

About FormRouter Inc.

FormRouter is redefining how large and small organizations deploy electronic forms.

We offer intuitive tools to create, host and retrieve web forms and responses.

FormRouter's hosted service slashes the cost, reduces the time and simplifies the task of collecting data through e-forms.

FormRouter is the everyday tool for e-form data collection.

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