MARBL Workflow Approval: Thinking Inside the BOX

A White Paper

“Let us stand by what is good and try to make it better.”
- Atticus Haygood
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The Problem

As part of growing its collection, Emory University’s Manuscripts, Archives, and Rare Book Library (MARBL) seeks and secures items from a myriad of sellers globally. The payment process to vendors and sellers of rare materials was opaque, manually driven, and elaborate. The existing process was paper-based and unstructured, resulting in lost or sharply delayed payments. The process was also frustrating to staff and sellers alike, leading to potential reputational damage. Due to budgetary constraints, only a truly creative and straightforward solution would solve this pervasive issue.
The Solution

In an effort to improve the payment process, MARBL consulted with Business Practice Improvement, Emory University’s internal strategic consulting practice. BPI was able to offer solutions, through a collaborative, structure, transparent, and data-driven approach.

First Step:
Documented the current state practices and identified opportunities for improvement through staff feedback, outlining roles and responsibilities, streamlining the approval process, and ensuring accountability.

By thinking “inside the BOX” and leveraging the cloud, Business Practice Improvement built an automated workflow system in BOX.COM (BOX), a collaborative cloud-based content management service.
The Process

Clearly defined roles and responsibilities with a system solution that allows the ability to track and view updates at any time.
The Implementation Solution

Key insights and applications from the application of this technology (BOX.COM) included:

• Emory’s enterprise account with BOX includes seats for all staff and utilizes a single-sign-on (SSO) Emory authentication.
• Every action in BOX is attributable to individual staff and time stamped.
• In addition, the SSO configuration and global Emory access to BOX means that BOX can be leveraged for electronic submission and documentation. An “approval” in BOX is as valid as an “approval” written on paper and notifications can be pushed to workflow participants.
• All non-PCI documents can be stored in BOX making them quickly accessible & searchable from any device.

Cost to Emory Operating Units: $0.

BOX is an enterprise tool provided at no charge to schools and units.
The Result

- **Yearly Productivity Savings**: From $105,000 – $110,000 based on a conservative analysis of staff hours saved in a year. Actual savings expected to be higher.
- **Decreased Turnaround Time**: Saved 5,000 – 5,500 days annually in payment turnaround by reducing the average payment processing time (incl. MARBL, Library, and Central Finance) from 26 to 5 business days.
- **Improved Reputation**: Payments are made on time. Vendors and sellers are regaining confidence in MARBL.
- **Increased Transparency and Accountability**: Actions and tasks are tracked and time stamped in BOX and allows for clearly identifiable breakdowns and issues in the process.
- **Efficiency Gains for Director**: The Director and support staff can easily navigate to any payment and supporting documentation via CRM, links, or metadata search on their platform (computer, smartphone, or tablet) of choice regardless of physical location.
- **Triple Bottom Line Sustainability Increase**: Entirely removed paper from the process furthering the Emory’s sustainability mission.
- **Ongoing Benefit to Emory**: Traditional workflow approval systems are costly and time consuming to implement. This process can be replicated across Emory at no additional cost to schools and units.

*If additional similar departments leverage this process, the savings will be over $1MM/year on time saved, efficiency, and effectiveness.*