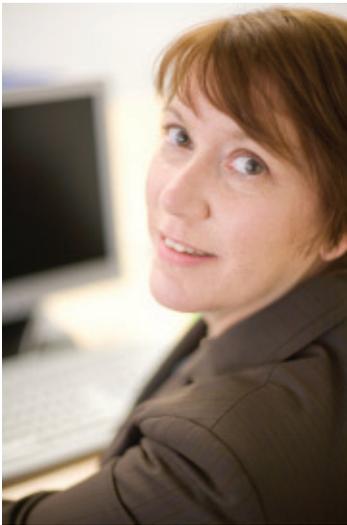


How to avoid FOI fines, fear and faux pas: new software helps you monitor FOI and other information enquiries



Penny Bailey, Managing Director, Bailey Solutions Ltd.

FOI deadlines and compliance are a tricky business but many government departments and public bodies are finding themselves falling short of compliance. Whilst the Commons Justice Committee maintains that well-run public authorities can cut the cost of FOI considerably, how do you manage enquiries coming into various enquiry points? How do you achieve consistent levels of customer service, meet deadlines and monitor the outgoing information for compliance with privacy and legal compliance? Moreover, if you set up an in-house system for monitoring FOI and information enquiries what happens when the legal guidelines change as it looks likely?

Bailey Solutions Ltd, a UK-based software company, has created enquiry tracking software that handles FOI requests and other types of enquiries. Their KnowAll Enquire™ system is highly flexible, configurable and designed to cope with changes in the compliance rules. Out of the box it comes with a FOI workflow that handles every stage of the acknowledgement, acceptance, rejection and appeal process (see Fig. 1). The current reasons for rejection are also included and if required can be changed at a later date. Simpler workflows for other types of enquiries can also be created and can be team based. The workflows can be designed so that mandatory stages cannot be by-passed.

Bailey Solutions developed KnowAll Enquire™ in recognition that there was a gap between traditional IT helpdesk systems and client relationship systems, which were both failing to meet the need for a specific FOI workflow and workflows for other information requests. Many organisations find they have enquiries coming in via email to various group and personal accounts. Email boxes are difficult to monitor and above all do not provide statistics. These would have to be entered into another spreadsheet or database. Emails may have a deadline in the body of the message but are not apparent in the inbox. With group email accounts it is difficult to know who has worked on an enquiry and for a team leader to ensure there has been a consistent response. KnowAll Enquire™ works by intercepting emails sent to a group email address. Emails sent to an individual can be forwarded to the system. So there is no need to change user behaviour and a variety of submission methods is encouraged.

Enquiry workers benefit from a dedicated enquiry handling system as all the tools to receive, answer and record the enquiry are in one application including emails if they need to communicate with the requestor. Messages templates can be used for a consistent response. A timer function promotes accurate time recording and statistics are automated. Alerts ensure that deadlines are not missed. A searchable knowledge base encourages enquiry workers to learn from each other. Team leaders can keep an eye on the enquiry queue workloads and make sure that difficult or 'unpopular' requests do not languish unattended. It can also help them spot training gaps in their team.

Senior managers can review performance across all teams with one reporting mechanism. Standard management

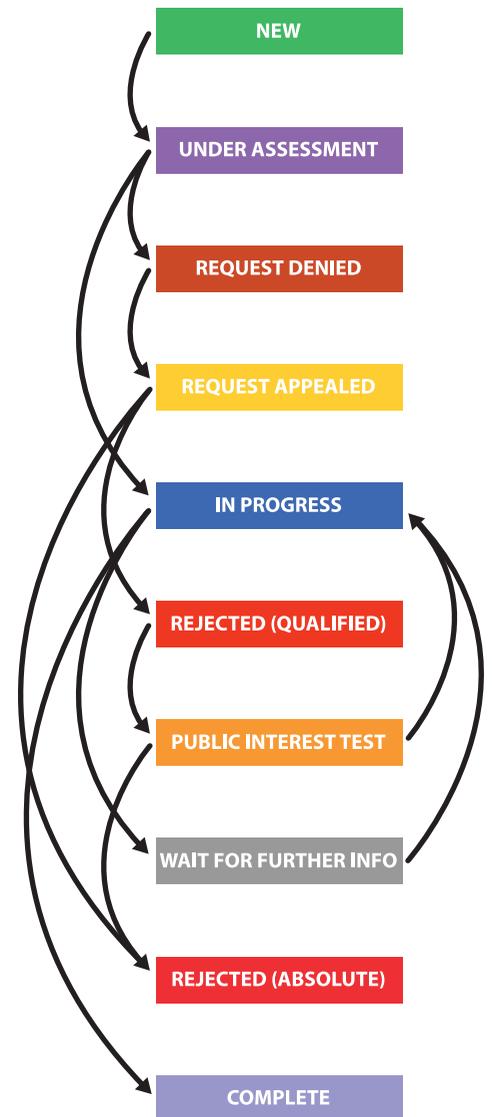


Fig. 1: FOI workflow diagram

reports include types of enquiries answered, input method, input time, time spent on enquiries, satisfaction levels, costs incurred, length of time to complete enquiries and of course deadline and SLA compliance. In essence, KnowAll Enquire™ reduces chaotic, disjointed or inaccurate enquiry responses that can lead to fines or public humiliation.

More information can be obtained from Penny Bailey, Managing Director, Bailey Solutions Ltd. Call now on +44 (0)1273 773788 or visit us at www.knowallenquire.com



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