

Paperless

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Berlin to New York. This isn't a new flight route we are talking about. In fact, it is the distance that would be covered by placing end to end all the sheets of paper that will be saved over the course of the next 10 years by the Berlin State Authority for Citizens and Regulatory Affairs (Landesamt für Bürger- und Ordnungsangelegenheiten) due to its use of Wacom's STU-500 LCD signature tablet.

Manuela Sandhop, project manager at the authority for the introduction of the new German identity card, explains the background to the paperless initiative: "The introduction of the new identity card has led to a significant increase in the amount of paperwork we have to handle. Each application involves three or four sheets of paper, and these must then be stored for 10 years. In the state of Berlin, between 350,000 and 400,000 new identity cards are applied for each year. This would result in approximately 16 million pieces of paper being handled and stored in any given 10 year period."

As this wouldn't just result in increased consumption of paper, but also raised issues with regard to archiving, Manuela Sandhop started looking for a solution that would make the process as digital as possible. With paper archiving, all the paper would have required scanning in order to allow the documents to be stored digitally. Retaining the paper copies would also have required a great deal of space and caused increased costs – not purely for the physical premises but also in order to implement measures ensuring compliance with the strict legal regulations regarding retention. In contrast, the use of digital applications obviates the need for scanning, uses less space and ensures that documents can be found rapidly in the event of queries.

Signature tablets were already in use for some tasks in the Berlin authority, for example to allow citizens to confirm the receipt of documents. It then had to be ascertained whether or not these tablets could also be used for the application process for the new German identity cards. This issue was resolved by the Federal Printing Office (Bundesdruckerei), which evaluated the STU-500 LCD signature tablet and issued certification allowing the tablet to be used for this process. The Wacom tablet is the first tablet to receive such certification.

Tests were first conducted at the state authority in order to check the integration of the STU-500 with the existing software and to ensure a smooth introduction of the

tablet. Following successful completion of these tests, all the Citizen Offices in Berlin were equipped accordingly, and 650 STU-500 tablets are now in use.

Thanks to the close cooperation between the project management team, the Federal Printing Office and Wacom, all the Citizen Offices in Berlin are able to use the STU-500. Inhabitants of Berlin that apply for a new personal identity card can provide their signature electronically, and all the documents are available digitally. When they are filled in, the applicant can follow the whole process on a monitor. They are filled in on a monitor that allows the applicant to follow the whole process. "Only the so called control form now needs to be signed in the traditional way," states Manuela Sandhop as she summarises the current state of the project. "We weren't able to programme that in the short space of time available before the launch, but will be implementing it as soon as possible."

The acceptance of the STU-500 LCD signature tablet among citizens is high. Only a few insist on receiving paper copies of their application documents. For Manuela Sandhop, it is also important that the tablets are robust enough to withstand constant daily use. The pen and tablet surface used really impressed the project leader and convinced her that the tablet was the right choice. The signature field on the STU-500 is also large enough to cope with long signatures. The tablet itself is flat and robust and works smoothly even when used intensively.

Following the implementation of the procedures for handling the new personal identity card, Manuela Sandhop is already thinking about possible further areas of use: "The tendency to implement paperless administration is on the rise. We should therefore think about other areas in which we could make use of Wacom's signature tablets in order to save paper. Who knows, the amount of paper saved might eventually stretch right around the world."

The Berlin State Authority for Citizens and Regulatory Affairs decided to make use of the STU-500 because:



1. the tablet could easily be integrated into the existing software environment,
2. the tablet is robust and is therefore suitable for intensive use in Citizen Offices in the city,
3. the tablet offers the potential to achieve paperless administration in other areas as well.

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