Challenges of Migrating ABS Surveys to Blaise Web

On a Large Scale and Short Timeframe

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Outline

- About the ABS
- Key drivers for change
- The journey
- ECollection migration challenges
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The Australian Bureau of Statistics

- ABS is Australia’s official national statistical agency
- Provide statistics on a wide range of economic, social, population and environmental matters
- Our mission:
  - To assist and encourage informed decision-making, research and discussion within governments and the community by leading a high quality, objective and responsive national statistical service
- My role:
  - Responsible for ABS future enterprise eCollection capability for household and business surveys and the online Population Census
Key drivers for change

• The ABS faces a number of challenges
  • Increasing demands for more timely and diverse statistical data
  • Operating in a fast changing information landscape
  • Increasing collection costs and complexity
  • Budget pressures
  • Increasing provider resistance.
Responding to the need for change

• To remain effective and to ensure we have a sustainable future ABS needs to
  • transform the way we collect, collate, manage, use, reuse and disseminate statistical information
  • transform our operations in order to be more productive, timely and flexible with the information we collect, process and deliver
  • ensure we meet the expectations of users and providers
The Journey

• In 2012, ABS began a program of transforming data collection activities to include eCollection as an option.

• Blaise IS for eCollection in household and business surveys.

• Started in May for December release - adopted a minimalist approach to this initial round of eCollection.

• By the end of 2013, eForms will be implemented for:
  • most quarterly and annual business collections
  • the Monthly Population Survey
  • the Multipurpose Household Survey
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collection</th>
<th>Cycle</th>
<th>Sample Size</th>
<th>First Use</th>
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<td>Half Yearly</td>
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<td>Employment and Earnings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rural Env. &amp; Ag. Commodity</td>
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ECollection Migration Challenges

- Integration issues
  - eForm had to work with ABS legacy systems
  - Incremental fixes and enhancements were needed to ensure a stable eCollection experience

- Testing
  - Insufficient time for end to end testing
  - Increased overall testing required
  - Limited availability of testing environments
  - Deployment of surveys required technical assistance

- Ambitious release schedule
  - Original migration release plan had to be scaled back
ECollection Migration Challenges

• Resourcing
  • Constant competition between business as usual and eCollection development
  • Insufficient skilled staff
  • Not a complete migration to eCollection yet – so we have dual development paths

• Expectation management
  • The initial migration has kept forms very simple and is really a translation from paper
  • Everyone uses the web and has their own expectations of how a web form should look and feel
Lessons Learnt

- Focus on the whole collection process, not just eForm delivery – despatch, authentication, end user experience

- Allow time for skills development, expansion and learning – business and IT

- Allow for increased/different testing processes
  - Functionality, performance, load, security, accessibility, useability, integration
Results so far
Where to Next

• Migrating outstanding collections to eForm (where possible)

• Investigating Blaise 5

• Examine pre-approach and follow-up strategies to increase uptake of eCollection

• Providing an eForm for the Census Major test in August 2014, 2015 and the main event in 2016
Where to Next – Blaise 5

- Load and performance testing is currently being undertaken by an external partner
- Assessment of ABS requirements against Blaise 5
- Security and integration testing
- Determine if Blaise 5 is suitable for use for the 2016 Population Census
Conclusion

• The ABS has successfully migrated a considerable number of surveys to eCollection in a short timeframe

• Overall quality of instruments has been reasonably good (stable and works), but provider experience needs to be improved

• Our ambitious program has not been without its challenges, but we are moving in the right direction
Questions