

“Initially, our two main goals were to address the growing approval backlog and provide consistent and timely adjudication of licence applications. It soon became clear that we had a third goal to incorporate: establishing a system of secure two-way messaging. The PosteCS service from Canada Post provided the next-generation secure messaging our team needed.”

Vikesh Srivastava, Business Manager, Natural Health Products Online Solution



Natural Health Products Directorate (NHPD)

The PosteCS™ service from Canada Post establishes a two-way electronic communication system that can transfer significant amounts of sensitive information—totally securely

The Natural Health Products Directorate (NHPD), as part of the Health Products and Food Branch of Health Canada, regulates natural health products sold in Canada. The NHPD began regulating natural health products in 2004 and, since then, has received approximately 40,000 applications to review and assess items such as vitamin and mineral supplements, herbal remedies and homeopathic medicines. The NHPD's mandate is to assure that Canadians have ready access to natural health products that are safe, effective and of high quality while respecting freedom of choice and philosophical and cultural diversity.

AT A GLANCE

COMPANY

The Natural Health Products Directorate (NHPD) of the Health Products and Food Branch of Health Canada

INDUSTRY

Government/Health care

CHALLENGE

To transition processing of product applications from a paper-based system to a more efficient model that would not only transmit information electronically, but also accommodate the NHPD's unique requirements such as being able to interact securely with individual applicants.

SOLUTION

The PosteCS™ service, which is an Internet-based document-delivery service that transmits electronic documents securely with speed and convenience to anyone with an Internet email address and a web browser. An Electronic Postmark™ provides proof that a document existed at a certain date and time, and has not been tampered with prior to receipt.

A COMPLETELY NEW PROCESS

The NHPD had established a paper-based process to evaluate products already available as well as new product licence applications. Transformation to an electronic-based business process and underlying infrastructure was identified as an opportunity to achieve operational efficiencies and, ultimately, better outcomes for the public and industry partners.

Conscious of its mandate not to unduly hinder consumers' access to natural health products, the NHPD started looking at ways to transition the application process to a more efficient model that would transmit information electronically and accommodate the unique circumstances of individual applicants. The requirements were to establish a secure, easy-to-use, standardized electronic two-way communication system that would be capable of transferring significant volumes of sensitive information.



THE POSTECS SERVICE DELIVERS THE IDEAL SOLUTION

After an independent security consultant suggested it, the PosteCS service from Canada Post generated immediate interest at the NHPD. Not only did the service meet the NHPD's requirement for a secure two-way messaging system, but it is also a simple, out-of-the-box solution that is fully customizable and doesn't burden existing bandwidth or IT resources. The PosteCS service, which allows for flexibility when integrating with NHPD's systems and importing forms into databases, is also inexpensive when compared to alternative solutions. The main issue was how the service would meet privacy and security considerations.

The fact that the PosteCS service comes from Canada Post—a federal Crown corporation that must comply with the same stringent security rules as government departments and agencies—was an important consideration. More significantly, the PosteCS service is a mail service legally protected by the *Canada Post Corporation Act* and enforced through the *Criminal Code of Canada*.

NHPD also gave high marks to Canada Post for making the contracting aspect simple, straightforward and flexible, and for doing much of the leg work on the administrative side. A relatively simple Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was drawn up, negotiating a preferred flat rate. End-users of the service signed their own service agreements with Canada Post, which means that the NHPD did not have to manage the economic aspect of the service.

“The PosteCS service was a well-kept secret. We were looking for the next generation of secure messaging, which we didn’t think existed. The PosteCS service from Canada Post was a perfect fit for NHPD’s needs, allowing for two-way messaging in a secure environment, at a reasonable price.”

Vikesh Srivastava

Business Manager
Natural Health Products
Online Solution

SIMPLE SET-UP AND CUSTOMIZATION

In November 2007, implementation of the PosteCS service began with a pilot project for the electronic submission of product licence applications by a number of volunteer NHPD partners. For the pilot, the NHPD developed a formalized "trading partner management" process, which is used to enrol partners and verify their credentials using the PosteCS system.

Setting up and customizing the PosteCS service for the NHPD's internal use was straightforward. The service's one-click desktop interface and small program size easily integrated into the NHPD's existing IT infrastructure. Employing the PosteCS service enabled the NHPD to concentrate on back-end solutions to feed into the system, such as improving forms, databases and internal processes, while the PosteCS service handled the communications. Once installed, the service can be continually tailored to meet the changing needs or demands of partners. This gave the NHPD the flexibility to build some tools after the service was adopted.



THE NHPD AND CANADA POST: WORKING COLLABORATIVELY

Staff at the NHPD finds the PosteCS service easy to use. The feedback that the NHPD received from current trading partners has also proved to be very positive. Users find it easy to use the service to send applications and supporting documentation to the NHPD for review. Applications are approved more rapidly, communication between the NHPD and applicants is more streamlined, and applicants save money and get their requests to the NHPD more quickly. Additionally, Canada Post is a well-recognized and trusted organization, which has encouraged the NHPD's clients to sign on and use the PosteCS service.

As a result of this project's success, Health Canada security experts have recommended that the PosteCS service be used for secure messaging needs by other Branches within the Department.

POSTECS: PART OF THE SMARTFLOW™ SUITE OF DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT SERVICES

SmartFlow Document Management Services is an advanced suite of scalable services that helps manage business processes and customer communications more efficiently—improving document workflow, delivery, returned mail management, customer response time and transaction cycle time. Included in this suite of services are *SmartFlow* Send, *SmartFlow* Recover and *SmartFlow* Respond

SmartFlow Send provides organizations with the capability to transform data from their billing and customer-care platforms into bills, statements and other transactional documents, and then manage the delivery of these documents through a full range of electronic and physical channels—including the epost™ service, secure email with the PosteCS service, mail, courier and fax.

™ Trademark of Canada Post Corporation

"Adopting the PosteCS service from Canada Post was beneficial to the NHPD in more ways than one. In the fall of 2008, the NHPD, along with corporate IT partners, won a gold Government of Canada Technology (GTEC) award for establishing the first phase of its new system."

Vikesh Srivastava

Business Manager
Natural Health Products
Online Solution

"We had a lot of positive feedback from our clients during the pilot. Canada Post's service has exceeded our expectations in every way. There really was no other solution that came close for our needs."

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For more information about *SmartFlow*™ Document Management Services from Canada Post, visit canadapost.ca/smartflow.