



Automation puts title insurance processes into overdrive

FCT, Canada's leading title insurance provider, achieves straight through processing with the IBM Cloud Pak for Business Automation solution



As Chief Information Officer for FCT—Canada's leading provider of title insurance and real estate technology, a data-heavy industry if there ever was one—it's safe to say that Sam Ishak has a pretty complicated job. But the basic mindset he follows in doing it is surprisingly simple. "If you expect what you used to do would be 'good enough,' you're not



going to survive in this business," he says. "If we as a company want to remain relevant to our customers, we always have to be

striving to anticipate what our customers need. And that means continuously reimagining the customer experience."

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Sam Ishak, Chief Information Officer, FCT

Automation of process flows reduced the turnaround time for new title insurance applications from 2 weeks to

15

minutes

Where deployed, the solution handles a growing share—

40%

and rising—of customer interactions with straight-through processing

Within the broader landscape of real estate, title insurance is one of those in-the-background services that can have a huge impact on the smooth and timely execution of transactions. In the course of buying a home, refinancing a mortgage or other real estate transactions, “defects” in a property’s title—whether from errors, omissions or fraud—can bring the whole process to a halt, or even cause financial loss for property owners and lenders. Title insurance exists to head off and prevent these potentially debilitating problems.

For the institutions that buy title insurance the main factors that define the user experience are simplicity, speed and, perhaps above all, transparency. Whether it’s setting up a new insurance deal, doing title searches or resolving a title problem, customers want to know where their transaction

is in the process, and they want the fastest possible resolution.

As Ishak points out, FCT’s biggest challenge in meeting these expectations was the complexity of its application architecture, the vast majority of which was developed in-house over some two decades. “The fact that we had a lot of different systems that were internally integrated made it difficult to create a seamless, simplified experience for each of our customers—and to change it when necessary,” he explains. “Delivering on that required a degree of flexibility we didn’t have.”

The sheer scope of FCT’s operations, adds Steve Winders, Director of Operations & Transformation for Residential Lending Solutions, further underscored the need for flexibility. “As a national provider, with a diverse

customer base we recognized that although we were meeting the needs of our customers, we had an opportunity to simplify our technology ecosystem and operating model so that we could be even better at responding to evolving customer and market needs.”

FCT recognized that delivering the flexibility, speed and transparency customers had come to expect required a fundamental transformation of its underlying process flow. The crux of its vision rested on two key aims. The first was to standardize and automate the process flow where possible. The second was to create a business rules engine that would make it vastly simpler to adapt process flows to each customer’s specific requirements. “With both of these complementary pieces in place, we’d have the means to deliver new value to our customers.”

The confidence to automate effort

To find the right solution, the company's Director of Enterprise Architecture & Solutions Delivery, Mohsin Khalil, led a team that conducted extensive research on automation tools and business rules engines, focusing particularly on AI support, scalability and dashboarding capabilities. They ultimately selected the [IBM® Business Automation Workflow](#) and [IBM Operational Decision Manager](#) solutions, both components of the [IBM Cloud Pak® for Business Automation](#) suite. Recognizing that they couldn't do it alone, they turned to IBM for advice on a potential implementation partner. That's how Salient Process, a global provider of hyperautomation services and solutions and an IBM



Business Partner, got into the picture.

While IBM's endorsement had significant weight in their decision,

and Salient had strong reference accounts, Khalil and his team wanted the confidence that Salient could not only deliver the solution it was after,

but also meet FCT's transformation timetable. "We saw the choice of a partner as just as important, if not more so, than the technology components," he says.

A successful proof of concept (POC) solution, developed in roughly three months, gave FCT the confidence it sought—and then some, Khalil explains. "We were really satisfied with the spirit of partnership and collaboration, and the shared sense of commitment, that the Salient team showed from the start," he says. "And since then, our relationship has continued to grow and adapt as the project has unfolded. To us, that's pretty much the definition of solid transformation partner."

As an automation solution, the first step in the implementation was to map out and document the process flows to be automated. For each process, Salient's analysts held meetings with FCT process owners to identify and analyze the details of each process flow. The fact that the team relied on the [IBM Blueworks Live](#) solution to visually display these flows not only accelerated the effort, but also uncovered insights that proved invaluable in the subsequent process automation stage.

One of the key takeaways from the process work, says Khalil, was the need to create a kind of "dual-flow" approach to handling lender inquiries, which up to that point had been entirely

one-to-one human interaction. "It's like the '80/20' rule. We determined that much of the more routine tasks could be automated, which would free up time for employees to focus on more impactful work that helps our customers," he explains, "while some—due to complexity or other factors—would require a greater degree of personal contact."

This flexibility is critical for the simple reason that no two lenders are exactly the same in terms of practices and procedures. So having the ability to codify and modify the rules that govern process flows—simply—is an elegant way to accommodate these inherent differences.

A great experience built on straight through processing

As part of its rollout strategy, FCT initially deployed the production version of its process automation solution with one customer in a single province; it has since begun a number of others. Even at this early stage, Winders notes, the results are compelling. "Where we've deployed the solution, we are very pleased with the results we are seeing from an automation stand point."

As expected, these automated process flows have had a dramatic impact on the quality of the customer experience. Consider, for example, the turnaround time for new title insurance applications, from data receipt to policy



issuance. "With the new platform, we are seeing 80% of transactions being turned around in less than two hours. That's a great customer experience for our lenders and for our end customers

who are taking out title insurance," says Winders. "And it's also a huge experience improvement for our employees, who get to focus on more value added activities."

Winders's comments on the employee experience underscore another really important aspect of FCT's use of the IBM Cloud Pak for Business Automation: how powerful dashboard capabilities have shed light on what had been an opaque process flow. That's crucial for operational efficiency for a simple reason. You can't optimize the way title transactions are handled if you can't see what's actually going on, begging questions like, 'How many are currently active?' 'How many of our people are working on them?' And, 'Are they being addressed within our SLAs?'"

In Winders's view, the ability to see these and other metrics through a dashboard has opened the door to a whole new level of decision optimization. "With our task-oriented workflow engine, we're able to redistribute our team resources as needed if we see an issue like bottleneck for a particular lender," he explains. "So when it comes to fixing title defects, we have a level of operational flexibility we never had in the past."

As FCT continues to expand its deployment—eventually across all

of Canada—Ishak sees automation, along with AI, as the linchpins of its competitive strategy. But he's also quick to reiterate a key caveat, that the real force behind FCT's transformation is the constant drive to "reimagine" the customer experience. "By investing in automation, we're putting our own employees in a stronger position to find new opportunities to serve our customers better," Ishak says. "So through our work with IBM and Salient, we're building a foundation for delivering ever-improving customers experiences."

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Mohsin Khalil, Director, Enterprise Architecture & Solutions Delivery FCT



About FCT

Based in Oakville, Ontario, [FCT](#) (link resides outside of ibm.com) provides industry-leading title insurance, default solutions and other real-estate-related products and services to approximately 450 lenders, 43,000 legal professionals and 5,000 recovery professionals, as well as real estate agents, mortgage brokers and builders, nationwide.

Solution components

- IBM® Blueworks Live
- IBM Business Automation Workflow
- IBM Cloud Pak® for Business Automation
- IBM Operational Decision Manager



About Salient Process

Founded in 2011, [Salient](#) (link resides outside of ibm.com) is an IBM Business Partner and their leading hyperautomation services and solutions provider. Salient specializes in process mapping, mining and analysis, robotic process automation, business automation workflow, business rules management (decision), and hyperautomation solutions.