

UN mission in Kosovo engages Mindmill for BPO services

Challenges: During the Kosovo War nearly 640,000 Albanians fled or were expelled from Kosovo and their identities were lost or destroyed. Post the war, United Nations had been entrusted with the challenging task of creating a national registry. UN had to find a potential data entry provider who could provide the data in Kosovo language for about 2 million pages in less than a month time. Citizen's data had to be matched and a comprehensive database had to be created so that it could be later used for different purposes like the creation of identity cards, birth and death databases, passport etc.



Solution: Citizen Forms were first scanned in Kosovo, the encrypted images were sent to Mindmill through FTP. Mindmill decrypted the images, and worked on the information to send it back. Mindmill staff double keyed each form, and then each character was electronically compared to fix the problems that were identified. After the completion of these tasks a database validation check was done, followed by formatting the data in the required output and finally encrypting it.

Benefits: The fledging government in Kosovo was able to get a comprehensive database consisting of double checked citizen data. United Nations mandated to create the database and conduct a free and fair elections obtained the database in time to successfully complete the arduous task.

Managing post war conflicts is an arduous task given the Common Citizens would have moved national boundaries, identification and entrusting them with their rights becomes challenging as some records may be lost or when new nationalities get created.

In June 1999, following a 78 day-long NATO campaign, the United Nations was tasked to govern Kosovo through its Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), with an unprecedented sweeping mandate to provide Kosovo with a "transitional administration while establishing and overseeing the development of provisional democratic self-governing institutions to ensure conditions for a peaceful and normal life for all inhabitants in Kosovo.

UN had estimated that nearly 640,000 Albanians fled or were expelled from Kosovo. The identities of the refugees were destroyed or lost.

UN wanted to create identity papers that could be used for Passport, etc and wanted the data to be exhaustive and error free. The major problem was first elections were expected in September 2000 and UN had less than 60 days to complete all the details.

Amongst the service providers who bided for the project Mindmill Software was selected because of its technology competencies and invoice matching capabilities. Mindmill project staff understood that a proper process needs to be followed to compete about 2 million forms each with 400 characters which rounded up to 1.6 G data. Mindmill staff calculated that they had to key 26 million characters each day.

Another challenge was, Kosovo uses primary English characters but there are some Greek alphabets used in the language like alpha, beta etc. The workforce had to be trained of special alphabets and how to cross check.

To get through this problem Mindmill trained its operators to enter those special character sequences for the Greek alphabets and converted them to their ASCII equivalent before storing them in the output database.

To ensure best timelines were met Mindmill setup of 3 shift operation with 200 operators each. All the staffs were trained in language and detection methods.

Before kickoff, dry runs were made in all shifts and the first week's internal error rate was 17%. Mindmill project managers regrouped the staff aligning rights skills with the right team members and the error rates fell to less than 5%.

All staff was trained offline and logged into the process within a week. UN staff at Kosovo sent the images of forms in an encrypted form. These were decrypted at Mindmill, Mindmill staff double keyed each form, and then each character was electronically compared to fix any problems.

After the completion of these tasks a database validation check was done, followed by formatting the data in the required output and finally encrypting it and transmitting it back.

The last batch of the data left Mindmill on 18th August and was readily available for use on the election in September.

Kosovo's elections represented an important opportunity to strengthen democratic institutions, advance the empowerment of minority communities through decentralization, and continue Kosovo's transition to a democratic political system.

Kosovo held its elections in September to start the transfer of power from the United Nations to the provisional institutions of self-government.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan welcomed the event as a "milestone on the road to democracy." Mindmill Software is happy to have contributed its mite for this historic development.

About Mindmill

Mindmill Software Ltd established in 1993, is an SEI CMMi Level 3 and ISO 9001 certified product and software solution provider. Mindmill software is a Microsoft Gold Certified Software Solution Provider, offering world class financial/banking and ERP software.

Mindmill with 150 software product and solution specialists, is present in the five continents covering fifteen countries including USA, UK, Canada, Japan, Switzerland, Austria, France, Australia, South Africa, Israel, Ireland, Sudan, Nepal and India. Mindmill software offerings include financial/ERP software, Invoice & Procurement BPO, Outsourced Product Development (OPD), Bespoke Software Projects and Consulting services.



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