

A challenge from:



Automation of Customer Query Handling for Certification of Origin Process

Context

Founded in 1837, SICC is Singapore's longest-serving business association for local and foreign companies from all business sectors. One of the services we provide to the business community is the certification of origin of trade goods.

SICC is one of five authorized operators of Singapore Customs to issue Certificates of Origin and endorse other shipping documents. In certifying consignments, we establish country of origin, the bona fides of the parties involved and assess the consignment for risk of fraud. Exporters typically outsource their responsibilities to their shipping agents and/or freight forwarders, who provide the documentation to make our certification assessment.

Many entities that use such service show little knowledge of the process and documentary requirements. The quality of the documentation (and types of documents) provided varied, which affects the ability to process matters quickly. Often, SICC need to request clarification or additional information.

Many customers repeatedly call the office in an attempt to expedite their case or get an update of the status. This has the unintended consequence of further disrupting the processing team and delaying processing times.

As such, SICC want to speed up processing through automation, starting with the immediate pain point: handling the high volume of queries that currently manifest as phone calls to the team. These phone calls cause unnecessary stress to be placed upon the team and the interruptions can lead to additional staffing issues, such as talent retention and motivation.

In solving this challenge, SICC is also open to tackle the following two other major barriers that will speed up processing, while maintaining the integrity of decision-making:

- Improving the quality of documents coming in from industry**
- Automating certain aspects of the certification assessment itself (currently a manual decision, based on human review and assessment of the document submitted.**

Simplified Overview of Certification Process

How might we improve quality of documentation (not in scope)

Customer provides documentation and unsigned certificate

How might we automate majority of inquiries to minimise disruption to processing?

Customer currently calls for updates and clarifications repeatedly, disrupting processing

Certificate collected by the customer

SICC reviews documentation, and asks for additional information if needed

SICC assesses documentation and, if satisfied, signs and issues certificate

How might we increase the speed of processing? (not in scope)

How might we automate the majority of phone queries from our customers, so that our staff can focus on speeding up processing of certificates of origin?

Possible Use Cases

- 1) An exporter seeks a certificate of origin for some locally manufactured goods that are for export to Thailand. They provide us with copies of the Exporter's Invoice, a letter of goods of origin (with company information, description of goods, quantity), the export permit, the bill of lading, and a completed (unsigned) certificate of origin. While we are reviewing these documents, the exporters get impatient, and could use the solution to get a live update on the progress of the application and an expected completion time that is automatically generated by the solution. With technological advancements, Technical Standards will evolve over time. The system will continue to learn and make accurate matches between patents and new Technical Standards, generating accurate and relevant EOUs.

2) A freight forwarder is managing a complex trade, involving multiple parties, goods of foreign origin that are being transhipped. They provide us with multiple invoices (local and foreign), the import permit, and the letter of credit. As we assess the case, we see that the bill of lading is missing, and request for it (via email). Meanwhile, if the customer happens to check on the progress of certification via the solution, a reminder notification will prompt for the missing document and why it is needed.

What are we looking for?

A prototype solution with AI capabilities for handling the following customer inquiries:

- When they seek an update on the processing status of their certificate of origin (estimated completion time).**
- Communication and explanation of issues that are holding up processing, that require actions from the customer (for example, incomplete documentation).**

In performing these tasks, the solution needs to:

- Provide a better experience for our customers through self-service via the solution, so that they are incentivised to use the solution for their information needs, and not call us directly**
- Substantially reduce the number of phone calls coming in to the office, as customers prefer to use the solution instead of calling**
- Give back time to our staff so they can focus on assessing and granting certification (for example, the solution should not involve creating more work around data entry, negating the time saved from not handling customer queries) and therefore lead to a better workplace experience**
- Help our customers to improve the quality of documentation over time as they better understand what they need to provide to get a quick result**