INSURANCE TECHNOLOGIES

Accelerating Contract Issuance by Digitizing Suitability Data Entry and Review with FireLight® API Integration

Nationwide® Automates Fixed Suitability Data Processing by Leveraging FireLight, Increasing Their Real-Time Suitability Review Efficiencies and Accelerating Contract Issuance Time.

Company:
Nationwide®

Challenge:
Overcome pain points associated with suitability data entry and review processes for fixed annuities

Solution:
FireLight® with Suitability API

Result:

- Eliminated data entry and potential errors
- Reduced suitability data entry time by 95%
- Improved new business review time
- Digitized and integrated 95% of suitability review data
- Increased data integrity/confidence
- Enhanced speed and productivity for Operations teams
- Streamlined workflow process
- Increased member and advisor satisfaction
- Decreased need for callouts to advisors

Nationwide® is one of the strongest, diversified, Fortune 100 insurance and financial services companies with a mission to help protect people, businesses, and futures with extraordinary care. To assist financial professionals as they serve their clients, Nationwide is committed to improving their back-office suitability process to reduce suitability review inefficiencies and accelerate contract issuance time. In 2020, the company began using APIs to systematically integrate application data captured in FireLight into their suitability application with real-time rule automation and review for their fixed annuity suitability process.

Nationwide conducts fixed annuity suitability review for a variety of distribution partners, and although new business data was being passed electronically to Nationwide via FireLight and the DTCC, the data collected in the suitability form was not passed electronically. Nationwide needed a level of customization that wasn't supported through the standard forms and data feeds.

While we were already getting all the new business data and order entry automatically through FireLight, the suitability data transmission and review process still required data input.

When the application was submitted through FireLight, the suitability data was being passed to Nationwide as a PDF form via batched DTCC attachment files. Nationwide associates, responsible for processing these files, received the PDF form and entered the data into a suitability system. Suitability Principals then reviewed the case to ensure fixed supervision requirements were in good order. When a new business application was submitted in the morning, it could potentially be hours before the case was batched, received and reviewed, resulting in delays to the overall process.

"Nationwide is a top carrier with respect to Fixed Indexed Annuities, many of which come through the FireLight platform," said Steve Bianchi, Senior Consultant, Business Program Management at Nationwide. "While we were already getting all the new business data and order entry automatically through FireLight, the suitability data transmission and review process still required data input."

The process challenges Nationwide wanted to address were:

- Receiving suitability data in a PDF form

- Lack of digitalization and back-end integration

- 100% of new business suitability data was entered into their suitability application

- The average handling time for data entry was 10 minutes

- Data entry was driving an increase in staff overtime

- The integrity of the data entry resulted in potential errors

- Suitability PDF forms were received via batched files and not received in real-time

- The current industry data framework did not support Nationwide's customized suitability data and supporting rules

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Integration through APIs
Changing What Has Always Been Done for Enhanced Digital Processes

Nationwide was in the process of implementing optical character recognition (OCR) solutions when they realized that FireLight might be able to pass suitability data in real-time, directly to Nationwide leveraging an API (Automated Programming Interface). Many of Nationwide's distribution partners were already using FireLight for the majority of their fixed annuity business, so FireLight presented a great option with capabilities to stand up an API quickly and efficiently.

DIGITALIZED, REAL-TIME SUITABILITY
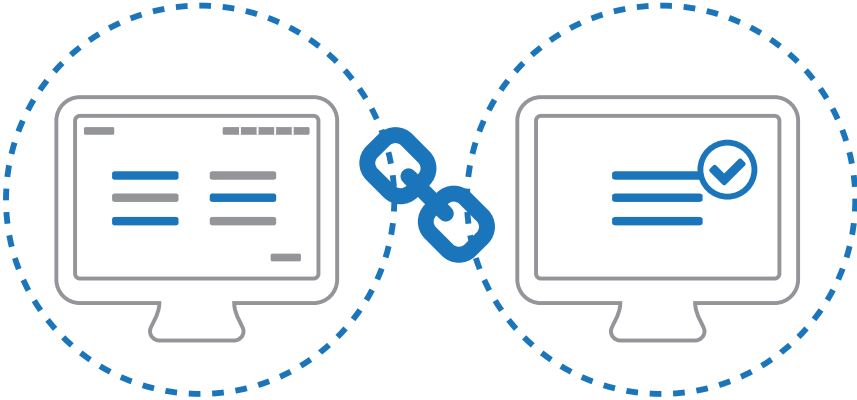
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"APIs are still fairly new in the industry since most data comes through traditional batch feeds. But there is a huge opportunity to significantly speed up some key processes by using real-time, direct integration, and Insurance Technologies is really the ideal partner for this kind of work," said Bianchi.

Once Nationwide dedicated resources to the project and mapped out their needs, the API was active within just a few months.

"Our partnership with Insurance Technologies was already strong, so when we were ready, they were ready," noted Bianchi.

Now, when annuity business is submitted through the FireLight platform, suitability data is transmitted to Nationwide through the API. In real time, the data flows directly into the suitability application and rules engine where the contracts get an immediate review for in-good-order criteria, reducing time associated with manual data entry and review time.

"Before, it would take a whole day to receive a batch, enter the data, send it to review, and run it through the review process. With the FireLight API, the process integrates data instantaneously."

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Nationwide has been able to digitize 95% of their suitability data intake while removing data entry steps—as well as the large quality control samples that used to be required to keep that process in check. They have reduced handoffs, decreased the amount of time it takes to conduct suitability review for new business, and achieved a new level of data integrity. Associates can now focus on more complex cases.

REAL-TIME
Data flows directly into the suitability application

DATA INTEGRITY
Automated data between business processes

RULES
Immediate review for in-good-order criteria

SPEED
Enhanced speed and productivity

API - THE DIGITAL DATA KEY

Connecting data and maintaining data integrity between multiple business processes

Flexible, Customized, Digitalized Data

The Key to Unlocking New Efficiencies

From a broad standpoint, Nationwide is on track to meet its 2021 benefit goal to reduce review time with accelerated new business contract issuance time in large part due to the API project with Insurance Technologies. This foundational work also sets the stage for adopting additional NIGO-reducing capabilities with future implementations and rule integration.

"From an operational perspective, we couldn't have even gotten to 1% automation without getting the API data in the door with FireLight. Once we were able to do that, it unlocked our ability to streamline our processes and eliminate other simple, repetitive tasks," said Bianchi.

Nationwide was also impressed with Insurance Technologies' willingness to be a flexible partner. Although FireLight has a suitability module, Nationwide wanted to ensure quick results and avoid any adoption concerns, and felt the API was the best path for success.

"We basically came to Insurance Technologies and said, we know you have a suitability module, but we want something very specific that aligns with our processes," recalled Bianchi. "They said, no problem, let's figure out another way. That kind of flexibility and professionalism is hard to come by."

Now that Nationwide can access the suitability data quickly, easily, and automatically, the company has set its sights on expanding the reach of the FireLight platform. They're beginning to focus on connecting FireLight to Nationwide's online process so the handful of advisors and firms that don't currently have access can use the tools. The vision is to give financial professionals near-instant access to new business and suitability submissions.

"Every time we work with Insurance Technologies, we are impressed with the ease of their process and their commitment to delivering high-quality results," said Bianchi. "They've been tremendous influencers in helping us unlock everything we envisioned, and we are looking forward to seeing what the rest of the partnership unlocks for us."