

## 2012 IACA MERIT AWARD APPLICATION

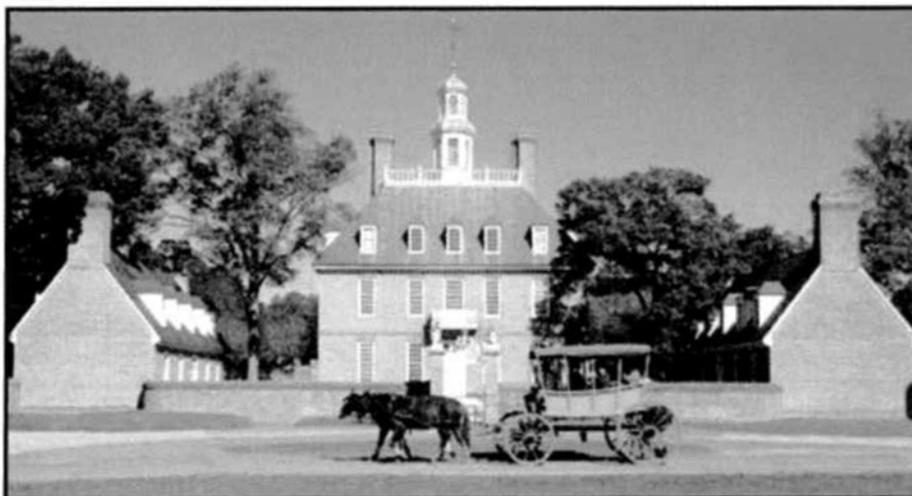


Photo: Joe Ross

### ***"Remembering the Past While Embracing the Future"***

**35th Annual IACA Conference, Williamsburg, VA  
May 20-24, 2012**

Jurisdiction: West Virginia

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#### **Description of the Innovation:**

##### ***"Live Chat " and "Text Alerts"***

In an effort to provide better communications and enhance our customer service offerings, the West Virginia Secretary of State's Office implemented the use of two new services, "Live Chat and Text Alerts." Because of these services, now a business owner doesn't even have to pick up the phone. Help is available with just the click of a mouse.

For personalized service, a business owner can now be connected with a one-on-one online help chat session with a business and licensing specialist in the Secretary of State's Office. The online help chat assists the general public and business owners with questions like, how they can start or register a business in West Virginia, how to file online, as well as hundreds of other questions related to the Secretary of State's Office. ([www.wvsos.com](http://www.wvsos.com))

This feature is designed to help business owners get the answers they need when they need them, and in a manner that is easiest for them so they can focus on their product and not a stack of paperwork, and this is helping them do just that.

**In addition**, citizens can sign-up to receive “test alerts.” We are able to directly contact people with the information they want. It’s a great way to stay connected. And the information they receive via text message is short and to the point. People are busy and this will help them stay informed without asking them to log on to a website or read a lengthy email.

Text alerts will be sent out whenever important information or updates make it necessary. The service is free and mobile phone numbers will remain confidential.

Our office isn’t going to bombard people with information. But what we will do is make sure they know what is going on in the Business and Licensing Division, as well as at the State Capitol. This will help the Secretary of State’s Office become even more transparent.

### **Results of Implementation:**

The value added for the customer is that they are able to talk with an expert within the office related to their questions.

The results of these services are many but, specifically it helps our staff meet several agency goals making our office more accessible, transparent, and business friendly.

### **Benefits of the Project (cost, production or customer service):**

These projects were a perfect example of a “win-win” initiative relating to customer service by:

1. Keeping customers up to date on issues that matter most to them regarding business and licensing issues, as well as other issues involving the Office of the Secretary of State
2. Reducing connection and response time for customers by using these service options as an alternative to contacting the office via telephone, letters, or emails.

### **Lessons Learned:**

Importance of even the smallest of initiative are appreciated, and work to provide enhanced services to our constituency.

Even more importantly, the need to press forward in implementing new technology efforts bearing in mind that the additional functionalities need to be marketed, so that not only the citizens of West Virginia, but also other states are aware and utilize the services.