



5 Keys to Effective Communication for Regulatory Agencies



Introduction

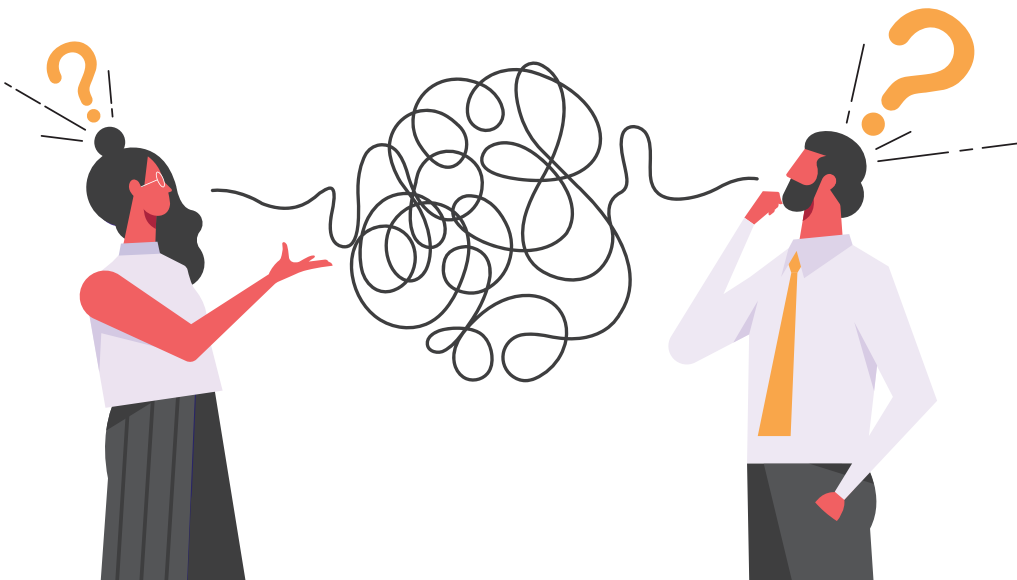
A Licensing System is a Communication System

No regulatory agency can operate effectively without communicating efficiently. That's because nearly everything a regulatory agency does involves communication of some kind. Licensees and applicants send documentation regularly to the agency, which responds with licenses, certifications, renewal notices and many other forms of communication. Much of this must follow a strict schedule.

Colleagues, including those in other agencies, ask for information, and they need it in a timely manner. Members of the public inquire about the status and disciplinary history of licensees. No matter how diligently your agency's staff respond to the licensees, citizens and colleagues who provide and demand information, miscommunication with manual processes inevitably happens. This results in more work for your staff and greater frustration for licensees and others.

Your agency needs to find the causes of miscommunication and correct them quickly. Remote work post-COVID for your staff adds another layer to the complexity of how your agency must function. To address these unique

needs, your regulatory agency's licensing system must transcend these demands, helping your agency manage communication – and workflow too. Keep your agency's communication needs in mind when searching for a software vendor who offers an enterprise licensing system.



Key 1:

Automate Letters and Emails



Regulatory agencies regularly generate thousands of notices, deficiency letters and other communications in the licensing process. Managing such a high volume manually can overwhelm staff and create backlogs that are difficult to overcome. Inevitably, deadlines are missed, constituents become angry and the overburdened agency's reputation suffers.

Agencies can prevent these problems, and more, by using a government software system, which automates the production, scheduling and distribution of correspondence in real time. Such automation allows government services to generate letters and emails on schedule and send them to applicants and licensees without overwhelming staff or missing deadlines.

Rules Govern Actions, Schedules

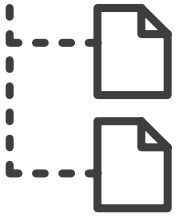
Your agency can set rules in licensing software that determine when emails and letters are created and sent. Notices can be sent automatically, for example, when a license status is updated or an agency receives a new or incomplete application. A complete system also can schedule escalating notices. Your agency can decide when to send out first, second and third notices before revoking a license or expiring a permit application. It is tedious and slow to handle this job manually and difficult to track notices that have been sent.

Features to Look For:

- Generates alerts singly or in batches.
- Sends alerts to internal and external stakeholders.
- Tracks the number of notifications sent.
- Alerts users about missed renewal dates.
- Contains direct link to payment website in emails about fees.
- Revokes licenses and closes cases automatically due to nonresponsiveness.

Key 2:

Satisfy Retention Requirements



Government agencies must satisfy strict retention requirements, but it's difficult to track and store thousands of communications per month. In agencies that rely upon paper records, staff can spend hours tracking down documentation to substantiate decisions that affect licensees. Even in agencies that store communications electronically, staff can spend hours searching individual computers and disconnected email folders for important records.

Meanwhile, the consequences for losing track of documents can be significant. Deadlines can be missed, licensees can be angered and disciplinary actions can be invalidated.

In-App Email Management Tracks Communication

A complete online permitting system tracks all communications with licensees and other regulated parties automatically and stores that information in the system in a logical manner. Not only does automated email management prevent your agency from losing important documents, but it makes piecing together an audit trail fast and easy. All incoming and outgoing emails are uploaded not only to their appropriate entity records — businesses or individuals — but also to specific data records — license applications and complaints, for instance. With a complete system, your agency will always be able to locate correspondence related to any person or business in the system and piece together the relevant communication string.

Features to Look For:

- Files emails, responses and attached files in the system under related records.
- Stores all communications in a conversation-style format, ensuring that they remain easy for your staff and your colleagues to locate.
- Automates process, alleviating the need to route and attach emails to records manually.

When Retention Doesn't Happen



A very busy board of accountancy issued a fine against an accounting firm for violating its state's "puffery" statute. The firm had a long history of advertising services it wasn't licensed to deliver. After a series of complaints by clients, an enforcement case was opened against the firm. It subsequently was fined \$5,000 and ordered to cease and desist.

Despite all of this work, gaps in documentation remained, undermining the board's case.

The firm appealed.

In the days leading up to the board meeting at which the appeal was to be adjudicated, the board's staff scrambled to compile a dossier containing communication with the firm substantiating its violation of state law. Unfortunately, several different agency staff had worked on the firm's violations in recent years, and some no longer worked for the agency.

The associate director needed three full days to piece together all available correspondence and notifications, which were stored in different cabinets and email folders. Despite all of this work, gaps in documentation remained, undermining the board's case. The firm was freed of the board order and fine and allowed to keep operating at risk to the public.

Key 3:

Save Time with Self-Service Websites



It's hard for regulatory agencies to communicate effectively when their staff are swamped by inquiries. Licensees and applicants call and email to ask about the status of their renewals and applications. Members of the public call and write with questions about licensees. The volume is so large at times that staff have trouble doing other work.

Volume-related problems can be frustrating for licensees and the public as well. Spending long periods making phone calls while overburdened staff track down information isn't fun. Neither is discovering that the information you've requested – and waited for – is incorrect, as sometimes happens when staff are trying to do too much.

The best way to reduce inquiries and frustration is to give licensees and the public direct access to information through an online portal. Not only will this reduce work for your staff, but it will provide access to information 24 hours per day for a better customer experience. With a website, your licensees and the public can get the information they want when they want it.

Features to Look For:

- Automated, secure access to all types of status information
- Online license verification web pages
- Online application status web pages
- Status websites for any agency process
- Ability to submit all documentation online
- Case management websites that track cases statuses and evidence/document uploads of any file type, including video, audio, picture and documents.

Key 4:

Share Information Quickly and Securely

It isn't just licensees and the public who flood your agency with inquiries. Your colleagues, including some from other agencies, do as well. They often need information stored in your system to do their jobs, after all. And they, like licensees and the public, become frustrated when they don't receive answers as quickly as they'd like.



A complete permit management system makes it easy for colleagues to retrieve information without involving your staff or compromising security—by using role-based security. Internal and external staff can log into your system and retrieve the information they need, update specific records and upload documents to which they have access. Your agency determines which roles have access to what information in the permitting process. Staff permissions can be changed or eliminated at any time.

Offering role-based security to colleagues also enhances public safety. Regulatory officials often need information about licensees and applicants quickly in order to make important decisions during application review.





Consider the following scenario:

Regulatory officials need information quickly to determine whether a license should be revoked due to negligence. However, information about a crucial enforcement case lives in a different system, and a decision is delayed for days while an information request is processed. The required information eventually is retrieved and the license revoked, but the delay has given the practitioner extra time to harm other people.



Features to Look For:

- Defines security for every data component.
- Maintains encrypted data in the database.
- Offers security for each data tier.
- Separates each data tier with a firewall.
- Uses token-based authentication for enhanced security.
- Complies with HIPPA standards
- Meets security standards
 - SOC 1 Audit
 - SOC 2 Audit
 - NIC Compliant

Key 5:

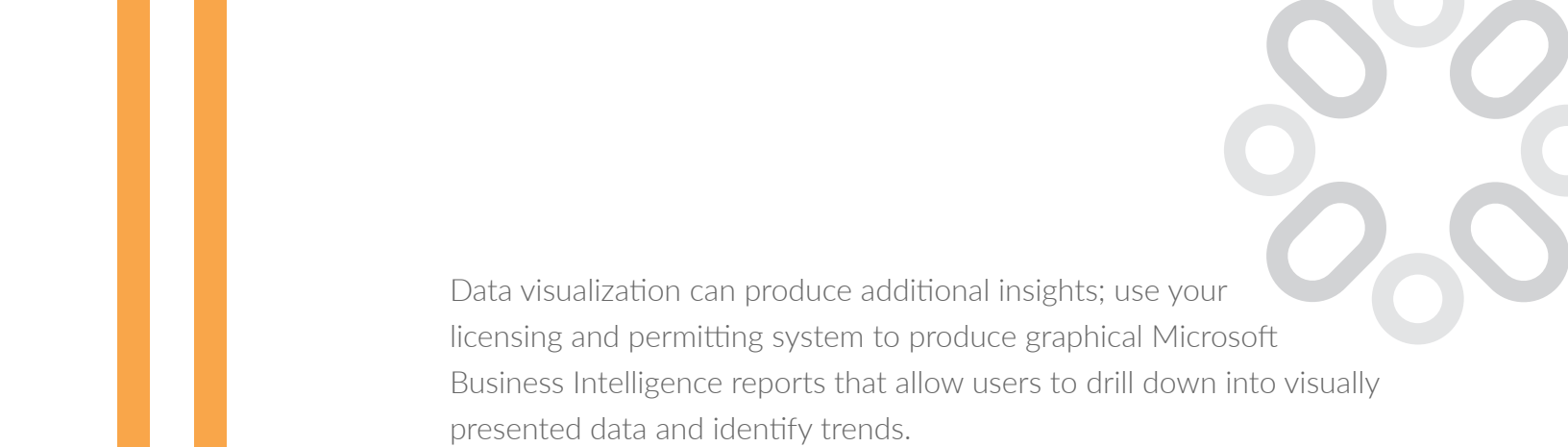
Use Data to Improve Communication



To communicate effectively, an agency must seek to eliminate miscommunication. Yet for regulatory agencies the potential for miscommunication is significant. Requirements for licensure, certification and renewal can be complex, and they evolve regularly in response to legislative changes. It's little wonder, then, that licensees and applicants make mistakes, sending incorrect payment amounts, form information and other material that requires agency staff to take corrective action.

The consequences of miscommunication are felt by everyone involved. Licensees become frustrated and may complain to your board. Your staff, meanwhile, may have to field complaints and sort forms manually even as they search for the underlying cause of the problem. Important deadlines may be missed.

It is easier to get to the bottom of such problems by using a regulatory permit software solution that can track data and present it in visual form. With data tracking, your staff log the reasons they return forms and payments. Patterns emerge and reveal underlying causes, allowing them to be addressed before they frustrate large numbers of licensees and consume additional staff time.



Data visualization can produce additional insights; use your licensing and permitting system to produce graphical Microsoft Business Intelligence reports that allow users to drill down into visually presented data and identify trends.



Features to Look For:

If you're considering permitting software that allows data tracking and visualization, look for the following key features:

- Maintains historical information for name changes, address changes and more.
- Stores individual and business information in one place.
- Allows for multiple current addresses, such as physical, mailing etc.
- Displays and tracks history and status changes in a clear manner.
- Ensures system performance remains unaffected by complex queries.
- Queries data, using industry standard Microsoft SQL Server Management Studio.
- Provides secure data access with multi-factor authentication and data encryption.
- Offers graphical reporting capabilities to analyze data.



How Data Tracking Can Save Time



A hypothetical regulatory agency discovers that over 40 percent of incoming payments are incorrect. For each such payment, staff must return the packet and payment along with a letter explaining the reason for the return. Staff also spend hours talking with applicants who don't understand how to calculate their fees correctly.

... taking less time for staff to issue permits, catch up on the backlog of agency work and deliver better customer service.

After spending a month logging the reasons for payment returns into the system, the agency uses regulatory software to produce a business intelligence report that displays the cause of 72 percent of incorrect payments: *interest calculations.*

The agency works with the finance department to produce a chart that shows clearly how to identify the interest owed. Incorrect payments subsequently drop from over 40 percent to only 8 percent, taking less time for staff to issue permits, catch up on the backlog of agency work and deliver better customer service.

Helping Government Agencies Run, Grow and Adapt.

GL Solutions delivers customized software solutions for government agencies, helping them modernize, digitize, and automate their regulatory software systems and increase their capacity to serve the public.

Montana-based GL Solutions, founded in 1997 by government regulatory experts, offers enterprise software for scores of licensing agencies.

Empowering Agencies from Alaska to Connecticut

State agencies from Alaska to Connecticut are already using GL Suite, GL Solutions' configurable licensing and permitting SaaS solution, to improve processes and outcomes. GL Suite helps agencies:

- Automate business processes
- Save time and money
- Increase efficiency
- Adapt to ever-changing legislative and regulatory requirements

Boards of medicine, accountancy, cosmetology and many other agencies use GL Suite to ensure compliance and protect the public.

Offering you Industry Expertise

For more information about our licensing solutions, please call 800-930-1193, email hello@glsolutions.com or visit glsolutions.com.

