

MITRATECH

# Getting the Most from Your Immigration Management Software



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# 01 The big picture

## The five phases



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## Key system capabilities: The big picture

If your immigration law firm is like most, you've already embraced immigration management software (IMS) as essential in one or more areas of your practice. In the ever-changing immigration environment, immigration law firms strive to automate process-oriented tasks so that highly-skilled legal staff can utilize their valuable time in legal analysis and decision making.

Unfortunately, either because their software does not have the required functionality or because they are not aware of the capabilities that do exist, many law firms are only capitalizing on a small fraction of the efficiencies that can be gained through IMS technologies.

This ebook outlines the five phases of the immigration process and illustrates how technology can be leveraged to achieve higher efficiencies across the end-to-end process.



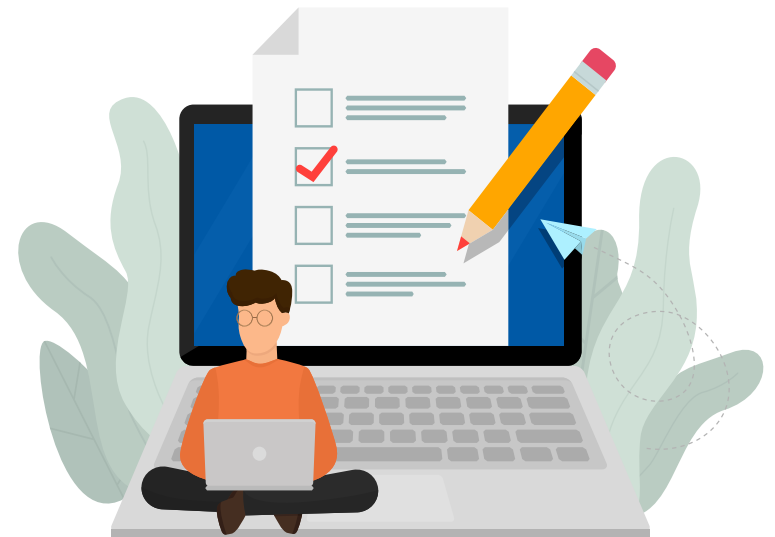
# 02 The five phases

## 1. Initiation:

### Your client needs an immigration service

How does your client kick off their immigration service request?

If you are already using a standardized service initiator form or questionnaire, you are well on your way in the right direction. If clients are phoning or emailing in their requests, there is a good chance you'll need to spend time tracking down the important information and ensuring that the request is auditable and can be acted on. A good IMS program will make the form available to your clients in an easy-to-use online format.\*



A configurable online service initiator will:

- Ensure that all the information required to start and invoice a case is gathered at the very beginning, with no back and forth.
- Empower your caseworkers to create new case records or update existing ones with virtually no manual data entry.
- Record and make available exact and verifiable date and time stamps for reporting and service level agreement documentation.
- Pass all data, including data from a service initiator, in a way that is much more secure than traditional initiation methods like phone calls, emails or faxes.

*\*An alternative to the online service initiator form is an initiation data feed. Some clients prefer to create a direct initiation data feed from their HRIS system to initiate services. The IMS provider you choose should be able to work with you and your client to accommodate this type of integration.*



# 02 The five phases

## 2. Fact gathering:

### You need the information

You have a service request, you know who the players are, and you have the information you need to invoice. Regardless of how the case was initiated you most likely need more information before you can start assembling a filing. In the employment immigration arena, you may need additional information from the employer, and you most likely always need more biographical information from the employee.

In the past, you may have given the individual a call to gather the information, or better yet, invited him or her to the office for an interview. In today's fast-paced world, no one has that kind of time. Just as an electronic service initiator enables more effective case intake, online electronic



questionnaires save all parties significant time, improve data accuracy, and increase security of personal identifiable information (PII).

While the service initiator should be available at all times to designated client personnel, the online questionnaires should be available only when you or your caseworkers have sent a questionnaire invitation.

Once casework has been initiated and all necessary records have been created or updated, the IMS program should allow your caseworkers to invite specific client personnel and/or foreign national employees to complete a questionnaire that you have designed specifically for the client and matter. Your IMS program should provide a full set of ready-to-use questionnaires for common case types as a starting point. The invitee should receive an electronic invitation with a link to the questionnaire, which is posted on the secure client web portal.

What ensures the online questionnaire is efficient and effective?

- Any information that already exists in the records should be pre-filled on the questionnaire for the employee or employer to confirm or modify.





- The questionnaire should be easy for the invitee to complete with dropdown selections where appropriate and opportunities to attach documentation as needed.
- Upon receipt of the questionnaire, the IMS application should clearly designate information that will change existing data.
- Once the review is done, you or your caseworker should be able to automatically update or create records with the new data much like the service initiator process.

The information update questionnaire is an exception. This type of questionnaire is a mechanism that should be persistently available to specific client portal users. The update questionnaire will allow employees to update information as qualifying events occur. Examples of information updates include a new I-94 card, or a change in dependent information or a work location.

The questionnaire needs to be available at all times since you or your caseworker would not know to ask for this information. The completion of one of these questionnaires should trigger an electronic notification just as the previous two types of electronic forms do; and the caseworker should be able to automatically update the information as appropriate.

Gathering the facts for an immigration case is often the most time-consuming active phase of the entire process.



## 02 The five phases

### 3. Case preparation:

#### You pull it all together

You have everything you need to assemble a case filing but you and your staff still must transfer all the data that you (so efficiently!) gathered onto the unique collection of government forms, word documents, and instructional emails that comprise each type of case. The best way to remove the pain and exhaustion of endless forms? Templates, templates, and more templates.

You should not have to start from scratch. Your IMS program should allow you to easily convert documents you are already using to automated merge templates. The very earliest adopters of IMS programs enjoyed the benefits of completing government forms by automatically pulling data elements from the database and populating them into pre-mapped fields.

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The best IMS programs have taken that concept beyond government forms and have applied it to the many documents and email communications that one needs throughout an immigration case, including external communications such as instructional letters and internal communication such as requests for filing fee checks.

An effective IMS program will come with a multitude of out-of-the-box document templates and, more importantly, will allow you to configure your own templates and automated merge documents to suit your individual needs. Your IMS provider should have a support staff that you can rely upon to understand your business needs and assist you with your specific configurations if needed.



## 02 The five phases

### 4. Filing:

#### You push it forward

Often, your process will require a client review or signature just prior to filing. The outbound copy for review can nearly always be posted on the client portal, eliminating expensive and time-consuming overnight or messenger services. For e-filing, the approval can be as simple as an email acknowledgement so no messenger services are needed in either direction.

While the United States government has made some strides in the area of electronic filing, many immigration matters still require a printed paper form. IMS providers have a responsibility to keep close watch on advances in government filing technology. As new e-filing capabilities become available, your IMS provider should embrace them and provide mechanisms to e-file directly from within their applications while ensuring compliance and data accuracy.



Regardless of how the filing was done, clients should be notified once their case has been filed. You should be able to configure your IMS program to automatically display a personalized ready-to-send email upon filing. The appearance of the email will eliminate the need for the caseworker to compose the email and will also serve as a reminder so that the email is always sent. Lastly, the program should allow you to configure reminder triggers to follow up if a receipt notice or decision has not been received within a designated period of time.



## 02 The five phases

### 5. Post-filing:

You tie it all up

While often overlooked, some of the greatest efficiencies and revenue generation opportunities can be gained in the post-filing phase. Often this is the phase where an invoice is issued.

An efficient process for post-filing will leverage the IMS system:

- Your IMS program should automatically log billable items as they occur so that no items are missed when you invoice.
- A sound IMS portal will have a mechanism for posting government documents that clients (both employer and employee) can view securely and download.



- When one matter ends, it is usually appropriate to record reminders for upcoming matters such as final NIV dates and green card eligibility. These important task reminders should be built into the process to ensure that timely actions are taken.
- Your IMS program should identify reminders to guide you to potential business opportunities, such as the naturalization process, through reminders.

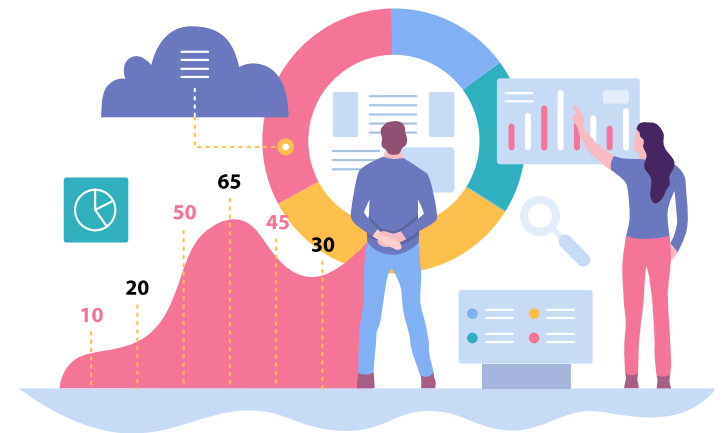


# 03 Key system capabilities

While there are ways of thinking about each phase that lead to greater efficiency gains and faster ROI, there are some IMS system capabilities that undergird the end-to-end process.

## The 4 key system capabilities?

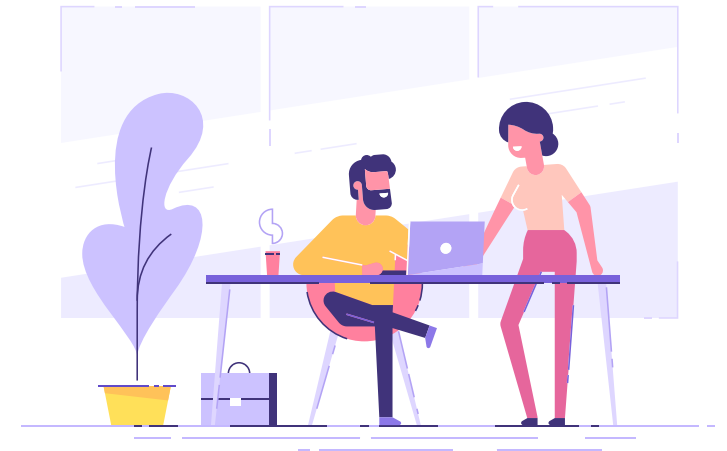
1. **Accurate and timely reporting** is needed both internally for you and your caseworkers to manage and monitor casework as well as externally to communicate status and performance levels to clients. You need reports that show up-to-the-minute data, and that you can interact with and change on the fly.
2. Reports should be scheduled for **automatic distribution** and not rely on manpower.





3. Clients increasingly demand the ability to check status at will, run their own reports, and stay independently up to date on their employment immigration programs. **Dashboards should be provided to clients** that are easy to navigate, easy to customize, and most of all, ensure that they access the information they need.
4. The client portals need to serve both the client immigration contacts and the individual beneficiaries, securely providing each with the data, updates, and reports they need. These **easy-to-use web portals** provide access to information considered important to keep clients satisfied, and at the same time lower your costs.

Whether you're a sole practitioner or a law firm with hundreds of attorneys, hopefully this ebook has helped you understand how to get the most from an immigration management system, and whether your current IMS is the best program for you.



# About Mitratesch

Mitratesch is a proven global technology partner for corporate legal, risk & compliance, and HR professionals seeking to maximize productivity, control expense, and mitigate risk by deepening operational alignment, increasing visibility, and spurring collaboration across their organization.

With Mitratesch's proven portfolio of end-to-end solutions, organizations worldwide are able to implement best practices and standardize processes across all lines of business to manage risk and ensure business continuity.

Mitratesch serves over 1,400 organizations worldwide, including 30% of the Fortune 500 and over 500,000 users in 160 countries.

For more info, visit: [www.mitratesch.com](http://www.mitratesch.com)

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