the council three
and the
features checklist

infocouncil
Electronic Agendas & Minutes

three stories
from
one council

They all have a life outside of work
and they have all made their working day
more productive and less stressful.

They have the same objectives but varying
priorities. They don't always see eye to eye.

But one thing they all agree on is
that they made the right choice of software
provider for
Electronic Agendas and Minutes.

**He is the
Governance
Manager**

There is a company he uses who eases the
burden of managing agendas and minutes.
That company provides tools to his staff for
doing their jobs better.

Impressed by performance, he knows
that this Electronic Agenda Management
software enables him to lift performance.

**She is the Governance
Administrator**

She uses vastly superior software tools
for doing her job.

She knows the software support team
will do everything to ensure she makes
her deadlines and to make hitting those
deadlines a lot less stressful.

He is the CEO

He has gained efficiencies in the council office. He has better
informed staff, councillors and ratepayers.

He doesn't spend money lightly. Ever cost conscious he is impressed by the
reasonable cost of his new Electronic Agenda Management software.

Electronic Agendas and Minutes for Councils
the features

This document, along with the companion Overview, is a guide to how Infocouncil is the perfect tool for managing electronic agendas and minutes.

This Features Checklist has been prepared to help you appreciate what Infocouncil can do for you. We recently asked a number of councils that were not using Infocouncil to compare the draft version of this checklist with their current system. We asked them to place a cross in the margin every time they saw an Infocouncil feature not presently available to them. What we found confirmed our belief; Infocouncil is far more featured than all the other offerings, bar none.

Therefore, we present this exhaustive list of the features currently offered by our software so you can make your own comparison. If you are like our council three, you need better tools to help you lift performance and make more of your day!

Infocouncil, with its Microsoft Certified Partner accreditation, is the tried and tested solution for managing electronic agendas and minutes. It is being used by a significant number of councils across Australia and New Zealand, from small to large, in both metropolitan and regional areas.

The software covers all the business processes involved in reporting up to Council, recording decisions and putting them into action. It incorporates the latest internet technologies and offers valuable economies of scale to Local Government.

The next few pages list the features that can be used by you and your council team.

Contents

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reports

The Infocouncil toolbar and menu for report writers are located in the Word border giving easy access to Infocouncil functions.

Infocouncil has written its own function for copying and pasting to ensure that no formatting errors occur while copying and pasting.

A dialog box is provided for registering reports with Infocouncil. This distinguishes them from all your other Word documents.

The Report Dialog must be completed before a report can be started. This ensures that basic report information is filed with every report (e.g. name and date of meeting, name of author, title of report). Additionally, these basic report elements are protected within the document. Users are unable to accidentally alter them.

The Report Dialog is configurable to allow different requirements of different councils to be accommodated.

Report templates are configured separately for each council to provide the exact layout and content required. As many templates can be provided as are required by a council.

Infocouncil has invented a template generator, which reduces the amount of effort involved in creating new templates.

Councils can use the template generator themselves to set up or maintain templates, reducing their reliance on Infocouncil.

Reports are filed automatically by Infocouncil based on parameters established for each council.

Typing reports is simply a matter of using Word in the normal way. No new skills are required - training is kept to a minimum.

System administrators are given the ability to open a report and defer it to a later meeting or refer it to committee.

Reports can be numbered automatically by Infocouncil according to the numbering system used by council. Infocouncil can be configured to accommodate different numbering requirements.

A web form can be established on council's web site for users to enter reports remotely. On pressing the 'submit' button on the web form, the data is transferred to the network for importing into an Infocouncil report by an administrator.

A button is provided for printing a list of reports for a meeting.

Reports can be flagged as late causing them to be included in a late or supplementary agenda.

Reports can be flagged as 'For Action' and a due date set for the resulting action.

Reports can be integrated into a council's management plan or master program. A tab is provided in the Report Dialog, allowing the author to nominate where in the plan the report belongs.

Reports can be cross-referred to one or more reports submitted to earlier meetings. A sub-form is provided for searching the database to locate the reports. Once this is done they are listed in the header section of the report.

Reports can be cross-referenced to other reports submitted to the same meeting.

If a report is to be presented at a meeting, details of the presenter can be defined. This facility can also be used to trigger an email notice to the presenter in the style of an appointment.

An Open File button has been placed in the Infocouncil toolbar enabling users to retrieve Infocouncil documents easily. Reports, agendas and minutes can be located by meeting type and date. Searches can be done on the document titles defined in the Infocouncil Report Dialog.

An optional facility is provided for inserting council's standard conditions into reports. This is done by pressing the Standard Conditions button and selecting the conditions required in the active report from a pick list. This pick list is unique for each council.

A form is provided for flagging a report as confidential. Later, when the agenda is compiled, it is possible to produce a separate Closed Committee agenda.

An electronic facility is provided in Infocouncil for approving reports. One or more approvers can be defined in the Report Dialog for a report. A button is provided for emailing all authorisers asking them to come into the system to approve or reject the report.

Report approvers are given editing rights in the report. The status of a report's approval can be tracked in the system. An override button is available for system administrators to approve a report.

Infocouncil reports may be filed automatically in the Records Management system used by councils. This facility is already provided for some products. Others will be considered on request.

A sophisticated facility is provided for adding attachments to reports. Attachments can be any type of document or picture including PDF documents (extra plug-in provided for handling PDF documents).

A compression algorithm is used to keep the file size of attachments to a minimum.

Attachments can be included in the agenda or published in a separate attachments document. This can be set by default for all reports or dealt with individually for each report. This can result in some attachments being included in the agenda and others being excluded.

For attachments that are not suitable for scanning, e.g. printed booklets, information about the attachment is captured in the Attachments window. When the agenda is compiled a title page is produced describing the attachment and highlighting whereabouts in the agenda it is to be physically inserted.

"The users are very happy with Infocouncil. There was not a single user who complained when we went from manual to Infocouncil. The changeover was seamless. Compared to our other systems, it's perfect."

agendas

A Meetings menu is provided in the Infocouncil database for Governance Administrators to organise themselves before a meeting.

The list of reports currently queued for a meeting can be displayed.

The order in which the reports are to be presented in the agenda can be changed.

The approval status of the reports can be monitored.

A button is provided for emailing authorisers of reports not yet approved.

It is possible to define a list of people who will be addressing the meeting. The list can be included in the agenda. The presentations can be inserted as resolvable and actionable items in the minutes.

There is an electronic approval process for agendas like the system provided for approving reports.

A facility is provided for re-paginating the agenda taking account of hand-inserted attachments.

The layout of the agenda can be configured to suit a council's exact requirements. Often councils elect to retain the document layouts that they used before adopting Infocouncil.

Minor last minute changes can be made directly in the agenda if required.

Agenda preparation is an automatic process. No manual intervention is required. One mouse click is all that is required.

A flag is provided for compiling a separate Closed Committee agenda.

A flag is provided for compiling a separate Late or Supplementary agenda.

The Open File button in the Infocouncil toolbar may be used to retrieve agendas as well as reports.

The agenda can be compiled with those attachments not flagged for exclusion contained in the agenda. They follow the report they are attached to.

A separate attachments document can be produced in the form of an appendix. This will include all the attachments not compiled within the agenda.

A list of councillors who have submitted apologies for non-attendance can be maintained. The list can be included in the agenda.

HTML and PDF versions of agendas may be created from the final Word version. This is a simple matter of pressing the relevant button in the Infocouncil toolbar. The task is done in one mouse click.

The conversion to HTML and PDF produces a web page comprising 2 panels; on the right a reproduction of the Word agenda in HTML or PDF, on the left a customised menu built uniquely and automatically for navigating the document in question.

Hyperlinks are provided in the menu to the agenda for navigating directly to the related minute once the minutes for the meeting are published.

Attachments, which were included in the agenda, are incorporated in the web version and integrated into the customised menu.

A database function is provided for transferring HTML and PDF agendas to the webserver automatically.

Infocouncil establishes pages within council's web site for presentation of agendas. Care is taken to ensure that the look and feel of the web site is maintained within the new pages.

Agendas may also be published to mobile devices such as tablets and smart phones by means of our integration with third party provider Council Dashboard.

Lists of recipients can be established in the database for emailing agendas.

A function is provided for emailing selected agendas to some or all members of a list.

Search engine integration is provided. This is based on applying a search engine package that we have sourced. Councils may opt to use their existing search engine if preferred.

Agendas are filed automatically by Infocouncil based on parameters established for each council.

Infocouncil agendas may be filed automatically in the Records Management system used by councils. This facility is already provided for some products. Others will be considered on request.

minutes

The draft minutes document is built in Word by Infocouncil on the basis of the items that were included in the agenda for the meeting.

For users who wish to enter the minutes straight into the system there is a full set of features to help with this.

For users who prefer to capture the minutes by hand there is a pro-forma minutes document. This places a page break between each item in the minutes and is intended for printing and handwriting.

The layout of the minutes can be configured to suit a council's exact requirements. Infocouncil's template generator is used for this. Some councils bring all of the reports and attachments into the minutes, others leave out everything except the description of the item, the recommendation and subsequent resolution. Others do something else again. Infocouncil handles these differences.

Infocouncil provides an Outline tool to help users navigate through the minutes document as the minutes are being captured. It also assists with moving and copying items that are moved out of order during the meeting. An Outline form is laid over the top of the minutes document when invoked. This presents the minute items as a list. Double clicking on the highlighted item takes the cursor straight there. Pressing the 'move' or 'copy' button relocates the highlighted item to the cursor position.

The Report Resolution button performs a quick capture of a resolution, including the mover and seconder and auto-numbers the item.

The Block Resolve button allows selection of multiple items being resolved at once. On picking the mover and seconder from a pick list, the system records all the resolutions at once and numbers them all.

The Procedural Motion button enables the quick capture of a whole range of pre-defined motions.

The New Item button enters a new item quickly.

The Division button allows a division to be captured and recorded.

The Options menu in the minutes document provides numerous additional functions for the capture of minutes. Examples are: record councillor(s) leaving and returning to the meeting, insert pecuniary interest, insert code of conduct conflict, reset item number, display the division form, display the list of councillors, display the move item form.

All text inserted into the document is configurable, to accommodate different council requirements.

The electronic approval process that is made available in reports and agendas is also provided for minutes.

Publishing the minutes to the web and mobile devices and emailing minutes to distribution lists are done in exactly the same manner as the agenda

Hyperlinks are provided in the menu to the web-published minutes for navigating back to the related report in the agenda.

Search engine integration is also provided for minutes as it is for agendas.

Filing and retrieval are handled for minutes as they are for reports and agendas.

![infocouncil logo]

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actions

Infocouncil provides a module for issuing and monitoring Action Sheets on the basis of minute items created during meetings. Many minute items result in follow up work being required.

When the minutes document is complete, an import process can be run in the database to bring details of all minute items into the database.

There is a form for displaying all minute items for a nominated meeting. Each item has a Word icon for viewing the relevant section of the minutes and a 'sheet' icon for creating a notice in relation to the matter.

An Action sheet inherits the following information from the report that gave rise to it:

● whether the matter is For Action or For Information

● the due date of any action required

● the action officer (defaults to report author)

The administrator can add a note and amend any of the default information.

Notices can be sent to more than one person in relation to the same matter, if the work is to be divided up. 'For your information' notices can also be sent to one or more people.

Action sheets can be emailed or printed, individually or all at once.

A reply section is included in notices for action officers to inform the administrator when the action is complete. This triggers the administrator to update the Completion Date field in the Action sheet.

Alternatively, action officers can enter the database and maintain the status of their own actions themselves. A button is located in the main Infocouncil toolbar in Word to enable this.

A facility is provided for monitoring actions. This can be selected by meeting, by action officer, by date range and by action status (pending, overdue, completed or all).

If preferred, it is possible to forward Action sheets to Outlook tasks or to your EDRMS workflow system.
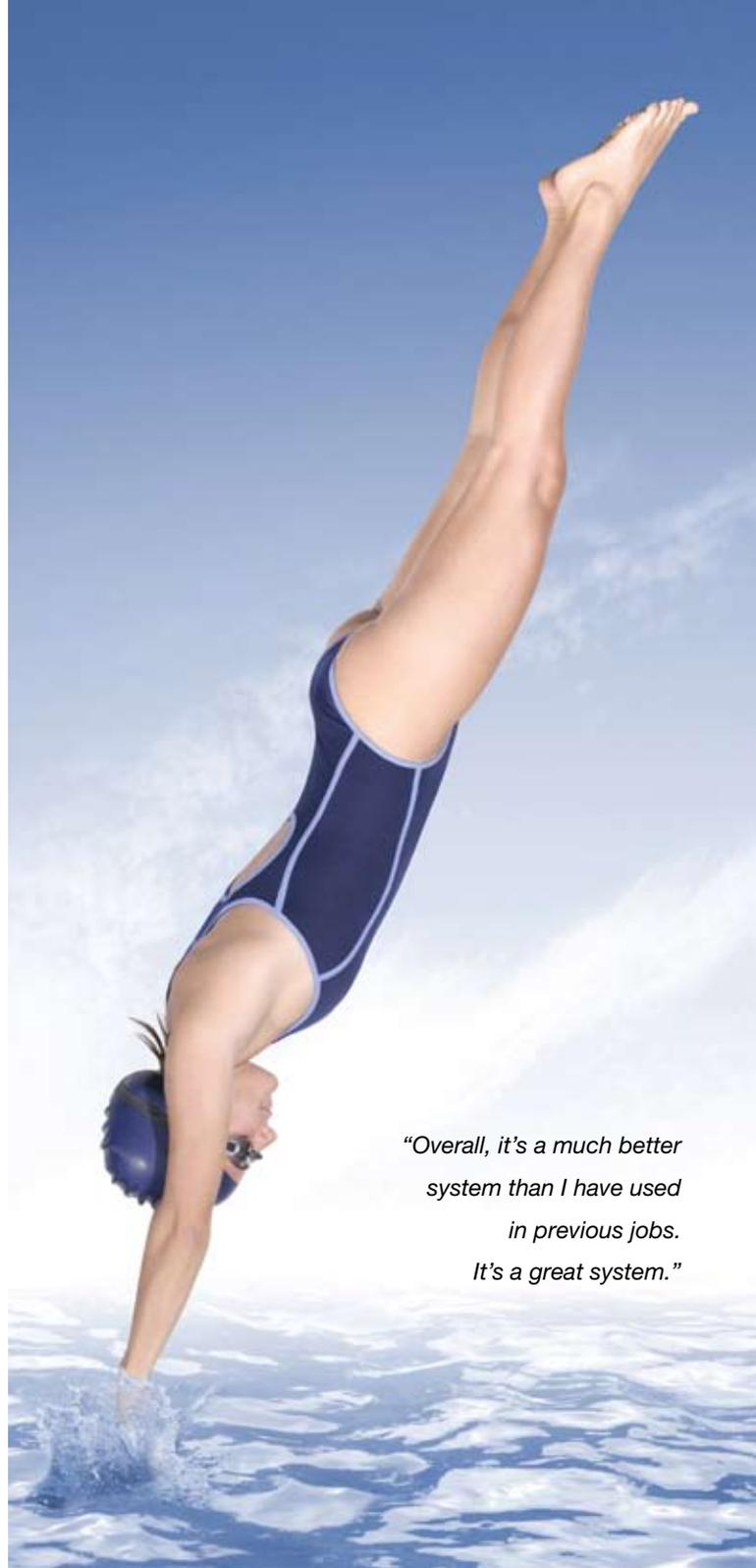
"Overall, it's a much better system than I have used in previous jobs. It's a great system."

for the technically minded

We have invented the Infocouncil Scripting Language to create Word documents (Reports, Agendas and Minutes) exactly to the specification of councils, no matter the complexity. Infocouncil does not use Styles to format documents. This means that councils never have to compromise on the appearance of their documents.

The process of creating documents for a new council is as follows:

- During initial set-up of the system for a council, new scripts are written and existing scripts are re-used for each element that needs to be incorporated in templates. For instance, several scripts may be needed to create an Agenda document depending on its complexity.

- When they are required, script commands are executed by an interpreter written in Visual Basic. For example, a script is called when a user adds attachments to a report, to format the attachment listing in the report.

- All scripts are stored in a standard library so that in many cases formatting documents for a new council consists of calling pre-existing scripts.

Infocouncil includes an ActiveX DLL which is dedicated to sending emails for the electronic authorisation of reports and for issuing Action Sheets. The appearance of the emails can be changed by councils, using HTML templates.

Infocouncil includes an ActiveX DLL which handles the integration of all types of attachments, including PDF's, into Agendas and Minutes.

PDF's are accurately converted, on the fly, to multi-page tiffs during creation of Agendas and Minutes.

Infocouncil uses object-oriented programming design techniques. These have been developed by a professional Microsoft Certified design team. Several ActiveX DLL's are installed with the product. For instance:

- Infocouncil Common.dll – encapsulates the data in classes for simple access by programmers.

- Infocouncil Toolbar.dll – the user-interface library.

- InfoCouncilReport.dll – builds the dialog for reports on the fly, so that it can be customised for each council.

- InfoCouncilWord.dll – this class contains the Infocouncil Scripting Language and all Word functions used by the language.

The Infocouncil Web Interface uses Active Server Pages (ASP) to present a list of the published Infocouncil-generated documents on the web. The appearance of the web front-end can match the look and feel of councils' web sites, using Cascading Style Sheet.

Infocouncil takes advantage of the speed and stability of Microsoft SQL Server to store data.
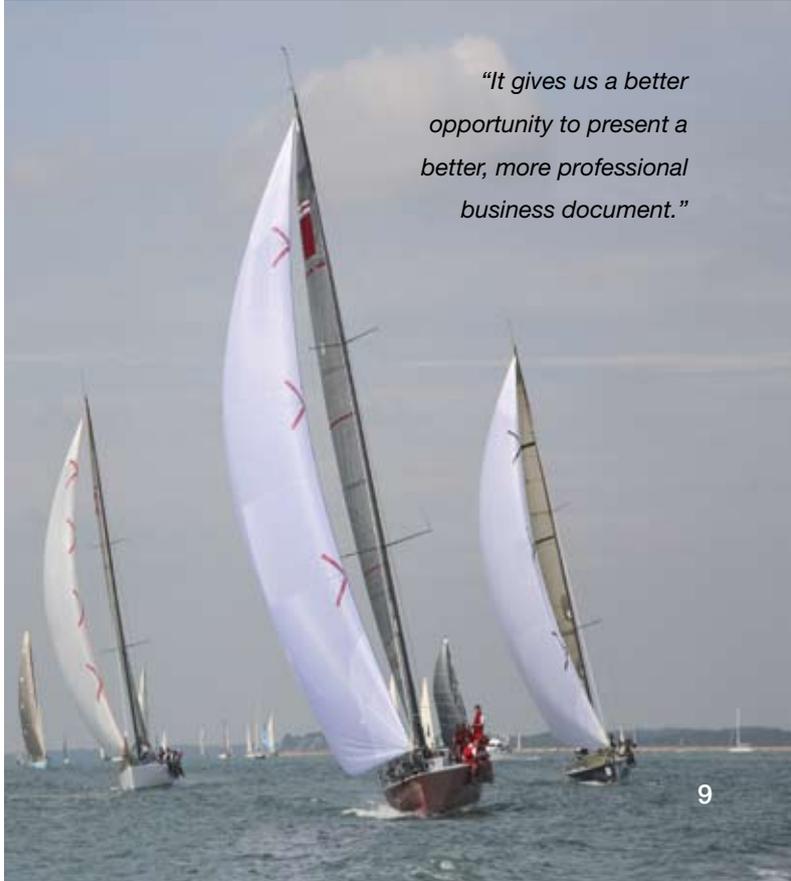
"It gives us a better opportunity to present a better, more professional business document."

9

System Requirements

Software

Administrators ●

Microsoft Word 2010 or later
Microsoft Access 2010 or later (optional)
Windows 7 or later

Report Writers ●

Microsoft Word 2010 or later
Windows 7 or later

Fileserver ●

Windows Server or Novell Netware
Microsoft SQL Server 2008 or later

Hardware

Workstations ●

Pentium 5 or above or equivalent
Disk space 100mb for Infocouncil software

Fileserver ●

Pentium 5 or above or equivalent
Disk space 100mb for Infocouncil software
Disk space 300mb for Infocouncil database and backup

Communications ●

Remote access for Infocouncil support via Windows Remote Desktop,
Windows Terminal Server, TeamViewer or equivalent

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so what's next

Hopefully this guide to Infocouncil and the companion Overview brochure have persuaded you that Infocouncil is the perfect tool for managing your agendas and minutes.

If your current system is a little heavy handed or out of date, contact us for a one-on-one demonstration of Infocouncil.

And if you continue to implementation and fail to be completely satisfied, you will get your money back! So sure are we of customer satisfaction, we have our money back guarantee embedded in every document we publish, including our Standard Terms and Conditions.

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Electronic Agendas & Minutes

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**"Infocouncil has made our life so much easier.
We champion it!"**