



An Australian Government Initiative
business.gov.au

Making Lookup Less Taxing

Redefining the Intersection of Business and Government

In an increasingly competitive world, the relationship between business and government is complex and constantly evolving. On the one hand, government has a compelling interest to regulate business for the public good and to ensure taxes are collected fairly and on time.

On the other hand, it is also very much in the public interest for government to simplify the rules of doing business, increasing prosperity for all citizens by encouraging competitive and sustainable enterprises.

In Australia, this is the mission of the Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources (DITR). In addition to a variety of programs aimed to make it easier for organisations of all sizes to do business with the government, the Department also manages the business.gov.au website.

Putting business online

business.gov.au is a portal that provides access to essential information on all stages of the business cycle. It includes access to more than 10,000 links to government information and provides more than 6,000 online forms. It also incorporates the ABN Lookup website, which is used to search the publicly available information about Australian Business Numbers (ABNs).

On the ABN Lookup website you will find a number of tools that are useful when searching for multiple names and ABNs. For the technically minded, these tools were developed using the ABN Lookup web services, which allow users to develop their own applications for incorporating ABN search facilities and data.

“By law, every business in Australia with revenues of more than A\$50,000 must have an ABN,” explains Paul Griffin, General Manager, business.gov.au. “Smaller businesses often get an ABN as well.”

The ABN Lookup website allows businesses and individuals to verify and check the effective date of an organisation’s ABN, Goods & Services Tax (GST) registration and Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) registration. ABN Lookup helps businesses check ABN status before paying an invoice.

But, more than that, ABN Lookup has become a valuable business-to-business tool. The ABN has become the ubiquitous way by which businesses identify themselves.

When the system first went online in 1999, it used the built-in text search capabilities of the database used to store the records. It soon became apparent that there were three shortcomings to this approach: results were not returned in order of relevance; it was not forgiving of nicknames, typing errors or the like, and it couldn’t handle the size of the database. Obviously a different approach was needed to deliver a system that permitted quicker, more accurate searches.

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Paul Griffin,
General Manager,
business.gov.au



Recommended by peers

After assessing several other government agencies that had similar databases and search requirements, DITR found many had selected a solution from Identity Systems.

“We thought that was a good indication of useful, reliable search that should be investigated further,” Griffin says.

Identity Systems products are specifically designed to search, find, match and group identity data. The software emulates an intelligent business user’s ability to determine a match based on a variety of factors, overcoming spelling, phonetic and other errors and omissions in the data. And it offers the speed and scale to perform high volume searches quickly against very large databases.

DITR selected Identity Search Server, Identity Systems’ flagship product. Integrating it into the existing system took only a few days. Over the next few weeks, the system was customised to manage searches where the user entered too little information to permit optimum performance.

Today, ABN Lookup is handling around 5 million searches a month against a database of over 6 million ABNs and 14 million current, historical, legal and trading names.

“Users can search by number or search by name,” Griffin explains. “But we’ve seen the number of name searches increase, which we attribute to the improvement in the system.”

Some agencies and businesses use a direct, machine-to-machine interface that lets them automate searches from within their application. This permits them to quickly and accurately correct and eliminate duplicates from their own databases.

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About the Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources

The Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources plays a key role in increasing prosperity for all Australians through internationally competitive and sustainable business. The Department’s programs assist the growth of key industry sectors and small business through advice, encouragement, statistics, innovation and investment.

business.gov.au, managed by DITR’s eBusiness Division, provides essential information on all stages of the business cycle, including planning, starting and running a business. This website makes it simpler and more convenient for businesses to comply with government requirements.

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About Identity Systems



Identity Systems is the pioneer in enabling organizations to build and maintain high-quality identity data search and matching software solutions.

The company has been in this area of specialization since 1986, and has over 500 clients worldwide who rely on its robust, enterprise-wide software. For more information please visit our website.