

Court Case Study: 16th Judicial Circuit Court Macomb County, MI

“ImageSoft is a trusted partner
with a solid product offering.”

– **Jennifer Phillips**
Court Administrator
16th Judicial Circuit Court
Macomb County, MI

The Customer

Located just north of the City of Detroit, Macomb is the third largest county in Michigan with a population of more than 840,000 residents. Between 2000 and 2010, Macomb County experienced more population growth than any other county. The 16th Judicial Circuit Court is located in the County seat of Mt. Clemens and includes 13 judges. During the past four years, the Court has made progressive changes in caseflow management practices with the goal of achieving an end-to-end electronic court.

Background

In June 2010, Macomb County released an RFP to purchase an eFiling system that complemented its CourtView Case Management System(CMS) and VistaSG NetDMS document management platform. Macomb sought to develop an electronic court where judges and court staff processed case documents using electronic case files rather than paper files. After evaluating several responses, the County selected VistaSG for its eUniversa eFiling platform, which also included a Clerk Review and an eDocket module for processing dockets from the bench.

Shortly after Macomb signed a contract to implement eFiling, VistaSG sold eUniversa eFiling to AMCAD. Macomb continued to work with VistaSG for document management and AMCAD for eFiling. In August 2011, the 16th Judicial Circuit Court mandated eFiling for Civil and Negligence case-types for two judges.

Key Issues

Following the eFiling mandate, the Court experienced problems that prevented expansion beyond the initial two judges and case-types. The issues included:

Clerk Review / Docketing

The Clerk Review and Docketing process modules for AMCAD eUniversa were time consuming and cumbersome. For example:

- Document markup - Though marking up documents is a common task of judges and court staff, the markup process was not native to the solution. Documents requiring markup were exported to local file storage on the end user's computer and modified using an external application called Adobe Acrobat Professional. The updated documents were then manually imported and indexed back into the document management system.
- Payment Processing – AMCAD's eUniversa solution did not include a payment processor, so the Court had to select one for processing eFiling transactions. Google Checkout was chosen, but this required filers to create a Google account to manage their payment methods and receipts. Clerk office staff had to manually log into Google Checkout to clear payments and print receipts for each eFiling transaction. Paper receipts were then sent to the cashier clerk, who would manually type payment data into the Court's CMS.

- CMS Integration – AMCAD’s eUniversa was not completely integrated with the CourtView CMS. For example, during the docketing process, eUniversa did not support CourtView ticklers (electronic reminders) and cost dockets, which created additional manual work for clerical staff.

Judicial Interface

The VistaSG eDocket judicial interface lacked usability in the following areas:

- Integrated Interface - Judges struggled to view docket information and electronic case files simultaneously. This made it difficult to update electronic case notes while viewing an electronic document.
- Signatures – Electronic signatures required manual typing. This practice was not secure.

Filer Experience

While AmCAD’s eUniversa is ECF 4.0 compliant, the platform lacked basic end-user functionality resulting in filer frustration. For example, eFilers were unable to:

- Provide secured log-in credentials for law firm staff
- Receive Clerk filed-stamped documents and proof of service documents
- Save email addresses for service recipients between filings
- Save and use multiple payment methods for every law firm

Decision to Replace

After carefully evaluating the options, in November 2013, Macomb chose to replace its eUniversa/NetDMS platforms with ImageSoft’s eFiling solution, TrueFiling. TrueFiling is a leading, ECF 4.0-conformant eFiling platform bolstered by OnBase®, which is widely regarded as one of the top ECM platforms. OnBase’s workflow templates and taxonomy further complement the TrueFiling experience and help reduce overall effort and risk for Macomb County.

Today, Macomb County continues to expand law enforcement agencies and prosecutor’s offices to further improve process efficiencies.

Lessons Learned

To fully implement an eFiling system that scales well to all judges and case types requires a robust ECM workflow solution that is tightly integrated with the Court’s CMS. The ECM workflow platform augments the CMS with process automation and electronic case file management. Moreover, selecting a robust workflow platform creates opportunities to integrate both horizontally and vertically across multiple justice enterprise systems by sharing electronic data and documents.

The judicial interface is equally important. It must create a better-than-paper experience for judges, as judicial support is needed to achieve all the benefits and ROI of a fully-implemented eFiling system.

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Issues

- The Clerk Review and Docketing process modules of AMCAD eUniversa were time-consuming and cumbersome.
- Marking up documents is a common task of judges and court staff, but the document markup process was not native to eUniversa.
- eUniversa did not include a payment processor, so the Court had to find one to process payments for eFiling transactions.
- eUniversa was not completely integrated with Macomb’s CourtView CMS.

The Results

- Macomb chose to replace its eUniversa/NetDMS platforms with TrueFiling from ImageSoft.
- Macomb County continues to expand and further integrate the Court with Law Enforcement and the Prosecuting Attorney’s office to improve process efficiency.