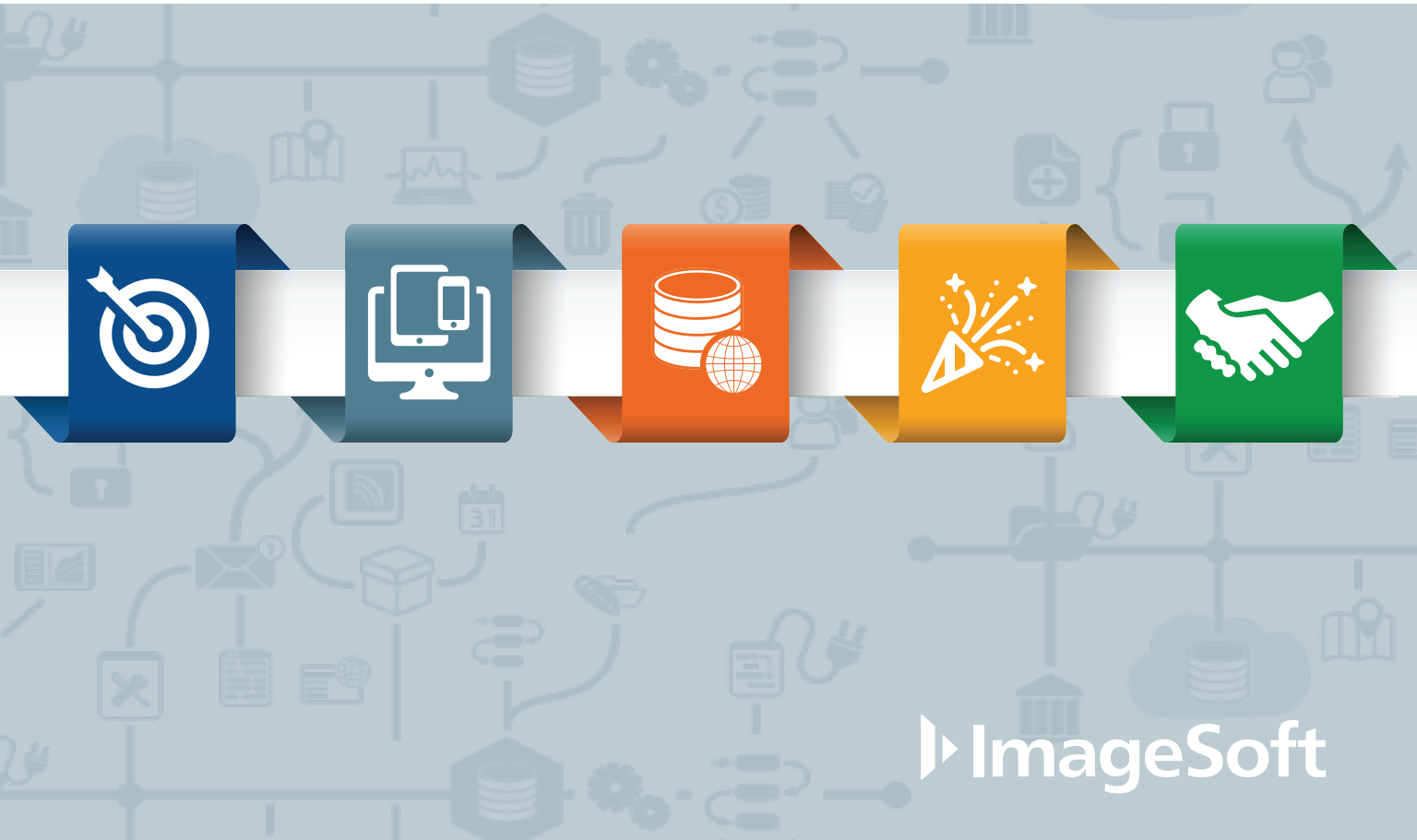


TAKING STRIDES TO STOMP OUT INEFFICIENCY: THE FIRST 5 STEPS TO GOING PAPERLESS





**THIS HAS SINGLEHANDEDLY
CHANGED HOW OUR DEPARTMENT
WORKS. IT'S A 70% TIME SAVINGS
TO PROCESS THE SAME NUMBER
OF CASES.**

**- THERESE MURPHY
DISTRICT COURT MANAGER
YAKIMA DISTRICT COURT**

If only starting a new lifestyle were as easy as speaking it into the world and making the change. But think about when you make a serious dietary shift or move to a new city – it's not a split decision. These types of commitments demand an entirely new mindset, a lot of research and a continuous outpour of support from those around you. So when everything you know about your work does a complete 180°, the preparation phase shouldn't be any different.

For many clerks, “going paperless” is a digital transformation to their working environment and a revolutionary shift to their every-day life. Instead of snail-mailing (or even e-mailing) documents, he only needs to press a button. To locate a file, she only needs to key a search.

Going paperless really does change everything. And while the destination sounds like a dream, the path to get there doesn't immediately come into sight. Fortunately, we're here to light the way with first five steps to going paperless.

But first, what does “going paperless” really mean?

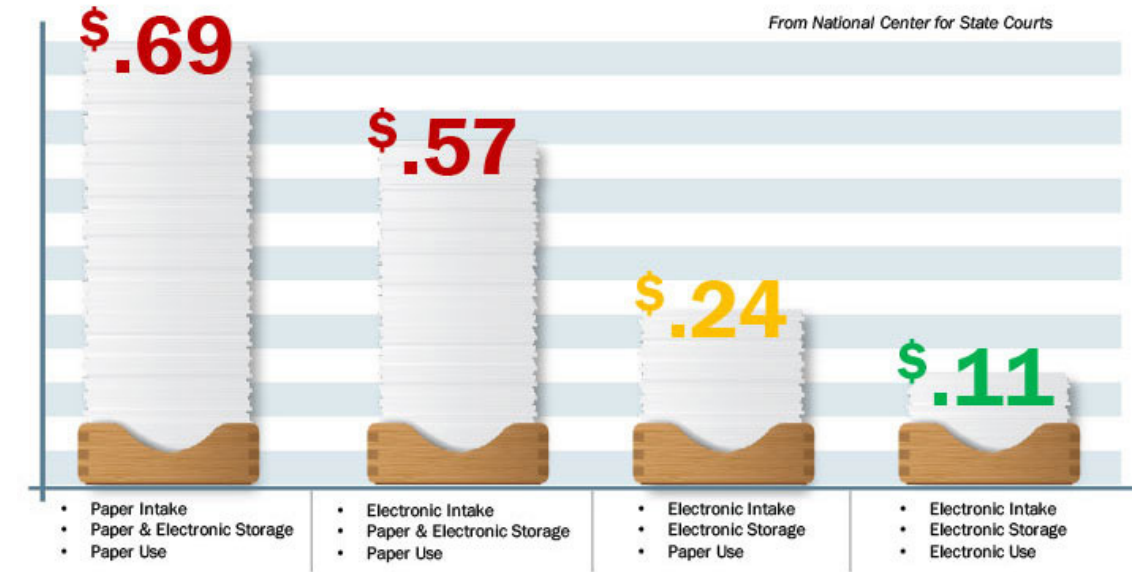
DEFINE “PAPERLESS”

The phrase “going paperless” carries so much weight, it’s probably heavier than the stacks of paper currently piled in your office. Okay... maybe not *that* heavy!

To be completely paperless feels like a confident grip on budget cuts, easy management of peak flows, reduced over-time hours and more time given back to staff.

On paper (pun intended), a completely paperless process looks like this: from the moment a case is filed until the verdict is reached, all documents stay digital. It does start by eFiling your case, but it’s only continued by leveraging the power of an electronic workflow to circulate efficiency throughout the rest of the judicial process. This is especially critical once a case reaches the judge. Whether on the bench or the beach, Your Honor should be able to access, review, and even edit and sign orders.

Already eFiling but still printing files for review? Or perhaps you’re emailing most documents?



While that’s a great start to saving some trees, it’s not exactly a paperless environment (nor is it secure). You see, “going paperless” represents the entire lifecycle of a case. It accounts for electronic solutions at every step – not just a digital substitution here or there. As a matter of fact, the National Center for State Courts has already challenged several clerk’s offices to go beyond the first steps of eFiling or a document management system (DMS) by finishing strong with a complete electronic workflow.

Now that we know what it means to truly go paperless, let’s take the first steps.



STEP 1: ESTABLISH GOALS AND CORRAL STAKEHOLDERS

Whether you're taking out a loan or just going paperless, you should first have a general idea about why you're doing what you're about to do. So before you tell everyone about this new venture, establish clearly-stated goals for the paperless environment you're building: how will it work well with your IT governance? Which data needs what type of security? Will each of your paperless processes satisfy all your organization's compliance mandates?

Perhaps the biggest question you will ask: Who will be affected by your paperless office? For clerk's offices, it's usually the sheriff, jails and prisons, attorneys, courts and judges. And because many of them won't fully understand what to expect from such a transformation, you should expect to be met with some resistance. See this as a golden opportunity for you to listen to your stakeholders' needs and pain points, and show them how operating on a paperless process will actually solve, or at least alleviate, many of their challenges.

“THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR STATE
COURTS RECOMMENDS A STATEWIDE
E-FILING SYSTEM AND INTEGRATED
EDMS”



Luckily for them, you're now proposing a completely electronic solution, which means solving for those annoying extra steps.

Once you've outlined your goals and your affected parties, hold a stakeholders' meeting to not only announce your new venture, but to show your stakeholders how going completely paperless will benefit each of them. Hearing the judge's feelings is especially important, because you now have the opportunity to introduce him or her to the eBench tools that will elevate their courtroom.

This meeting also presents itself as the rare opportunity to hear what's important to your partners and ensure that everyone's needs are accounted for moving forward. Even if a few stakeholders are not completely supportive of your decision, they will at least continue to respect you and your choices, and you can be prepared to accommodate a continued relationship with them despite different working styles.

Actually, this scenario is common – a judge, clerk or other stakeholder rejects the paperless proposal, and everyone else feels stuck. Is it possible to go paperless even if the entire team isn't on board? Yes! Significant gains can still be made for you, them and your overall communication.

STEP 2: PREPARE FOR A DIGITAL WORLD

As we mentioned before, digitizing your work day requires a shift in thought for going about daily processes and what will be required for end-to-end digitalization. Because of the versatile functionality that comes with going paperless, many of the routine steps you typically take to process a case might now be impractical.

For example, many hard-copy documents rely on officiating stamps. But once you go paperless, the electronic stamp certifies the receipt, so there's no longer a need to print documents solely for the sake of applying a stamp. And for extra security, electronic certifications also equip you with a full audit trail that tracks who opens and edits every document at what date and time.



You could continue to print documents just to get that classic raised seal, or you could research an eCertify feature, like [TrueCertify®](#). While not an actual seal, electronic certifications uphold the integrity of every document just the same (if not better!). For example, TrueCertify offers fast and secure delivery through an encrypted, digital portal and allows you to attach relevant content like photos and video. Comparing a paper certification to an electronic one, the end result is truly the same – you're just going from raised seals to raised standards.

Once you understand all the aspects of going paperless, try combing through the steps of a normal day and abstractly thinking about what will be outmoded by your digital revamp. This can be difficult, especially if you don't know which questions to ask of each process.

At this point in your digital transformation, it would be extremely helpful to partner with an expert who specializes in taking processes paperless.

SO YOU HAVE TO ASK YOURSELF:

**HOW DO YOU CERTIFIABLY STAMP
DOCUMENTS IN A PAPERLESS WORLD?**



STEP 3: CHECK YOUR INFRASTRUCTURE

We said you would need a lot of support to go paperless, and we meant it both emotionally and technologically.

Once you've established foundational guidelines, it's time to turn to your existing inventory. After all, before you can rely on your equipment to support your endeavors, you should make sure your technology has the bandwidth for the job ahead.

For example, if anyone in your office is still clinging to their 12-inch monitor from the cassette-tape era, your efficiency, any type of electronic workflow, and your organization's overall productivity are all probably hurting. And you definitely need to think about how you'll receive wireless and/or network access while in the courtroom. Bring these concerns to your technical support person and work with them to equip your office with the infrastructure needed to sustain your paperless momentum.

“ WE NEEDED TO PRIORITIZE THE NEEDS OF OUR VARIOUS USERS, WHETHER IT’S IN THE CLERK’S OFFICE OR IN CHAMBERS, BUT ALSO MAKE SURE OUR SOLUTION INTEGRATED WITH THE COUNTY’S PLANS AND THE TECHNOLOGY...”

**- CHRISTINA DIETRICH
BUSINESS SYSTEMS ANALYST
ARLINGTON COUNTY CIRCUIT COURT**



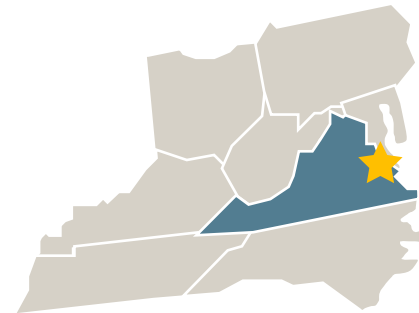
Our client's biggest concern is usually their existing case management system (CMS). With a backlog of requested functionality, many courts struggle along without the numerous accessible abilities that would revitalize their efficiency, such as creating and modifying document templates in Microsoft Word, clicking a button, and pulling data from the CMS. Why? Many of these "wish-list" functionalities require expensive custom coding, and that's only if their vendor is willing to support the request. Unfortunately, these changes usually never happen, leaving the court with two options: (1) replace their CMS and gain only a few new features at a high cost, or (2) have a partner integrate an enterprise content management system (ECM) with their existing CMS.

Ultimately, the choice is yours. But, we'd pick option number two. A highly configurable ECM solution provides you with many, if not all, of those coveted features within your CMS interface, and often without any changes to it. In other words, save your organization from the expense, time and overall headache of replacing your CMS simply by shopping for an ECM that integrates with your existing CMS.

Work with your consultative partner to conduct a Needs Analysis to determine your technology requirements and help you build a business case to obtain funding.

STEP 4: CELEBRATE!

When you're ready to introduce this new way of work to your staff and public, frame it as something to celebrate. Employees tend to associate efficiency measures with losing their jobs, so do your best to reassure them this isn't the case. Instead, rally their morale around learning something new and making better use of their time and talents. Make sure to mention that this project will better support the entire organization by streamlining the daily data exchanges between filers, sheriffs, courts, clerks, attorneys, state agencies, secretary of state, and more.



This was really a celebration for Arlington, Virginia's County Clerk Office, who made t-shirts, ordered sheet cakes, and had fully-fledged parties not only for the implementation of [Project Paperless](#), but also to celebrate each anniversary. When this type of excitement trickles down from managers and executives, the entire team is energized and supportive (even the few who tend to be apprehensive to change at first!).



STEP 5: PICK YOUR PARTNER

Remember that “going paperless” isn’t just your investment – you’ve asked stakeholders, staff and community to also support it. To safeguard everyone’s interests, establish partnership criteria, such as: choosing a software vendor who sees the entire picture, has experience with and will account for the court process and is conscious of the trickle-down effects your implementation will have on the entire justice community. Choose a vendor who won’t see your project as just another customer or recommend a cookie-cutter solution. Genuine prospects will ask for and make the time to get to know your court’s individual pain points, budget, existing technology, etc.

Finally, partner with an integrator. We see it all the time: courts go through the hassle of replacing their existing CMS only to end up with just a partial gain in functionality. Paper is still alive and well in these courts because, despite its hefty price tag, the solution didn’t account for a complete digital transformation. Again, think component model – integrating your existing CMS with eFiling functionality, an ECM and an eBench – and elevate your court’s status quo to continuously adapt to all future endeavors.

**THE COMPONENT MODEL SAYS YOU CAN
HAVE YOUR CAKE AND EAT IT TOO:**

**MAINTAIN YOUR CMS AND INTEGRATE THE
MODERN FUNCTIONALITY YOU DESIRE
WITH YOUR CURRENT SYSTEMS.**

“ USING THE COMPONENT MODEL AS A REFERENCE, COURT LEADERS CAN IDENTIFY THE GAPS IN THEIR TECHNOLOGY ENVIRONMENT AND PRIORITIZE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TECHNOLOGIES NEEDED TO FILL THOSE GAPS.

REFERENCE: JTC RESOURCE BULLETIN, INTRODUCTION TO THE NEXT-GENERATION COURT TECHNOLOGY STANDARDS, APPLICATION COMPONENT MODEL

TIME TO TYPE THE SCRIPT FOR A PAPERLESS FUTURE?

As you can see, “going paperless” means so much more than eFiling or merely digitalizing any one component. It’s a transformation of every step of each process - your documents and records, notifications, certifications, workflow processes, absorbed systems and everything in between are elevated to a higher level of security, synchronicity, and efficiency.

Keep in mind that choosing to go paperless will demand time from you, your staff and your stakeholders. It’s a commitment to learning a new way of doing things and optimizing your solution to benefit all involved.

If you’re considering your first steps on a paperless journey, request more information today. We’ll provide you with honest and informative answers – no questions asked!



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