Government Case Study:
Washtenaw County, MI

The Customer

Washtenaw County is located in southeastern Michigan approximately 30 miles west of Detroit and serves about 347,000 residents. Covering an area of 720 square miles. Ann Arbor is the County Seat, home to the top-ranked University of Michigan and the sixth largest city in Michigan. The county employs nearly 1,300 workers in 22 departments.

Washtenaw County is also a leader in using advanced information technology. The Center for Digital Government ranked the County ninth in its 2010 Digital County survey for the 250,000-499,999 population category.

The Challenge

Washtenaw County was experiencing several problems that caused them to pursue an electronic document management and workflow solution. Manual processes were slow, inefficient and did not serve constituents well. Their challenges included:

FileNet ECM system needed upgrading. Washtenaw's document management system was outdated, costly and complicated. The county sought to upgrade or replace its FileNet enterprise content management (ECM) system due to complications on at least three levels:

1. As an ECM development platform, FileNet required custom coding and integrator consultant services for just about any change, from day-to-day administration, to expanding the system, to growing it to meet changing needs. This translated into a lack of control by the IT staff over their ECM system, long wait times for simple changes and a high total cost of ownership.

2. The ECM hardware was at the end of its life and the county faced an added cost of $100,000 just to replace the legacy Unix-based servers.

3. Many departments needed process improvement workflows, but the County was only utilizing ECM for scanning, storing and retrieving documents. Technical complexities and cost hurdles to deploy workflow in FileNet prohibited them from leveraging their investment any deeper.

Vital record document capture was inefficient. The capture and scanning of vital records in Washtenaw was difficult to use and to configure. Adding additional support for new document types and capability was cost prohibitive.

Child support enforcement was overloaded with paper. Processing child support case files was paper-intensive and inefficient, and physical files were easy to misplace or lose. Tickler files had to be manually monitored for incoming documents. Incoming case documents from mail and counter needed to be manually sorted and routed to case workers.

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Warrant processing was slow and redundant. Washtenaw was facing jail overcrowding, and its warrant request process was inefficient. The warrant officer would fill out a paper form, print out the evidence, place it into a paper folder and drive downtown to the Prosecuting Attorney's office. Once there it was routed from desk to desk. If additional information was required, it was routed back to the warrant officer. Not only did this process require the physical movement of paper from place to place, but the ability to track the status of a warrant request in progress was difficult and time-consuming.

In-custody arraignment logistics were difficult to manage. With the construction of a new jail, Washtenaw decided to implement an electronic arraignment solution. The process would reduce transport coordination and cost, but would require a solution to allow both the judicial officer and the accused to sign the same document from different locations.

The Process

With its FileNet ECM system in need of an upgrade to meet expanding business requirements, the County sought a more technologically advanced, but less costly ECM solution that could be maintained in house and easily expanded. Washtenaw wanted a system that could be quickly configured for an electronic solution for its arraignment, warrant, child support and vital records processes. After evaluating 11 ECM vendors, the County chose ImageSoft, Inc., to implement an OnBase® solution.

The Success

By replacing its outdated legacy system with a modern, industry-leading OnBase solution, Washtenaw instantly saved taxpayers $400,000 in service fees, server and solution costs. With OnBase came an immediate return on investment. At half the price it would have cost to fully expand the FileNet solution, Washtenaw got far more user licenses and functionality and an ECM system that its internal staff could expand and maintain.

The system also enabled the county to streamline capture and management of vital records using barcodes and provided instant and shared access to documents, and in doing so, greatly enhanced service to constituents.

With its OnBase solution in place, Washtenaw County next partnered with ImageSoft to implement a/an:

Child Support Enforcement and Court Services Workflow that enabled judges to electronically sign orders which are then eFiled with Court Services, significantly reducing processing time for orders from approximately five days to one day and increasing the number of hearings held per week.

Electronic Warrant Workflow Solution for Sheriff and Prosecutor that dramatically decreased the time to process a warrant request. The solution eliminated drive time, improved transparency and enabled prosecutors to prosecute cases from a laptop computer.

Electronic Arraignment Workflow Solution, an electronic workflow that streamlined preparation, creation and execution of criminal court documents in two distinct locations. The solution enabled the judge to conduct arraignments "as needed" and to more quickly move defendants through the arraignment process. It also provided added savings and enhanced security by eliminating the need to physically transport prisoners from the jail to the court house.

Washtenaw County, MI

The Challenges

- Needed to convert a costly, complex legacy ECM system
- Inefficient vital records process
- Child support enforcement was overloaded with paper
- Slow and redundant warrant processing
- Difficult to manage remote arraignments

The Results

- Successfully deployed a large enterprise solution, interconnecting multiple county departments and offices
- Tripled its ECM solution, workflow included, for the price of upgrading its legacy system
- Saved $50,000 in yearly consultant fees
- Reduced processing time for orders from five days to one day
- Increased number of child support hearings held each week
- Dramatically reduced time for an arrest warrant to be issued
- Cut costs for travel expenses, office supplies, copying, storage and document retention
- Standardized processes, reduced errors, improved employee morale and productivity

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