

Courts and law enforcement agencies alike are major paper-intensive institutions in which case backlogs and exceedingly slow processes have become commonplace. Some facilities, however, are moving to a paperless workflow to speed up the process and to save time and money.

Helping provide a solution, ImageSoft, Inc., a Southfield, Michigan-based technology company, has introduced three new technology tools to help improve the efficiency of court processes and to aid law enforcement in expediting justice. TrueCertify, TrueFiling and iJustice eArraignment are the latest additions to the company's ImageSoft iJustice suite of technology solutions aimed at courts, law enforcement, and attorneys.

## Coupling the Digital Arraignment with Electronic Documents

iJustice eArraignment allows for the entire arraignment proceeding, including the paperwork, to take place digitally with the judge or magistrate in a physically different location than the defendant. The solution, which is often coupled with video arraignment, enables all arraignment documents to be completed and signed electronically so that remote arraignment can be handled entirely digitally.

"ImageSoft's eArraignment technology not only handles the arraignment process, but also all the documents involved. That's not the case with video arraignment alone. Paper documents still need to be faxed and passed back and forth, which is a major hurdle to the process," says Ward Beauchamp, project manager of Information and Technology, at the Washtenaw County Government in Ann Arbor, Mich.

Beauchamp notes that they had been using video arraignment technology for a number of years but were looking for a document management system to go with it. "eArraignment was developed specifically for us and is now being wrapped into ImageSoft's iJustice Suite of software. We were the first Court in the country to be using this workflow system of routing of documents this way. We started working on the project with ImageSoft in December 2009 and began using it as a live system in April 2010. Since that time we have performed over 4,300 arraignments with it," he points out.

"Our goal was to have one original document (such as Advice of Rights) being handled by the judge and the accused and apply both signatures to the document live at the arraignment and then route the document to the community corrections facility. With this system the court can create other documents on the fly and send them over to the jail for them to sign. Documents can easily be routed back and forth between parties."

## How the System Works

Beauchamp says that the first step in implementing iJustice eArraignment is converting all arraignment forms to a PDF-fillable format. "ImageSoft coordinates this activity by taking an inventory of CMS, state and local court forms as well as inserting both signature and replacement tags. The replacement tags are then mapped to a smart eForm called the Arraignment Wizard. The Arraignment Wizard eForm drives the workflow process, providing the judicial officer a simple dialog for collecting arraignment information."

He points out the eArraignment session begins with the judicial officer reviewing related charging documents and criminal history. During the video arraignment, the judicial officer will enter information into the Arraignment Wizard. After arraigning the suspect, the judicial officer authorizes the arraignment packet using a single-click signing task. This signing process automatically merges Arraignment Wizard data and replaces each 'Sign Here' judicial officer tag in the arraignment packet with his/her actual signature via secured network credentials.

The arraignment packet is then immediately routed to the jail queue to be signed by the suspect via electronic signature pad. The officer facilitates this process by having the suspect review each document prior to collecting a signature. Fully executed documents are then printed for the suspect and distributed electronically to JMS and the courtroom clerk, he adds.

## Less Labor Intensive

Beauchamp points out that the benefits they saw right off the bat were the ability to cut a lot of the costs and delays associated with the transportation of inmates from the jail to the court and back. They also eliminated the labor-intensive manual steps involved in creating the arraignment packet and alleviated the faxing bottleneck that occurs in most video arraignment solutions.

"Moving forward this technology will be making its way into the judicial branches of statewide court systems across the country. It will ultimately change the way judges, attorneys and other parties interact with and access it. Our officials in Ann Arbor have really embraced it and are helping us moving to our goal of a paperless Court system. The end result can offer improved efficiencies in the courts and law enforcements agencies, reduced costs and increased safety for the public," he concludes.

—Bill Schiffner

For further information:

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