

Government Case Study: Ottawa County, MI

“After ImageSoft, I can tell you 100%, my people would never want to go back to the old way... never, never, never.”

– **Steve Kraai**, Director of Records, Sheriffs Department, Ottawa County, MI

The Customer

Ottawa County is located in the southwestern section of Michigan's Lower Peninsula with Lake Michigan as its western boundary. The county is comprised of 17 townships, six cities and one village in an area of 565 square miles. Serving a population of 262,000 residents, Ottawa County is the 8th most populous county in the state.

A leader in using advanced information technology, The Center for Digital Government ranked Ottawa County 4th in 2010 Digital County survey for 250,000-499,999 population category.

The Challenge

Ottawa County was drowning in volumes of paperwork. The county's manual business practices created a backlog of document processing throughout the county government and in its courts, which were housed in four physical locations. In the shuffle from court to court, documents would frequently become misplaced or lost. The process of manually retrieving and signing documents was inefficient. File storage consumed valuable office space, and offsite storage was costly. No disaster recovery mechanism existed, which put the county at great risk. Workflow was manual and labor intensive, and employee stress levels were rising and turnover was becoming a problem. With document volumes and inefficiencies increasing, Ottawa County needed to find a successful cost-saving automated solution.

The Process

After evaluating their processes, Ottawa County concluded that their solution should encompass workflow automation, electronic transfer of documents, shared access to files and documents, multiple user capabilities, a disaster recovery program and an electronic repository for an ever-evolving mountain of paperwork. The county evaluated multiple vendors and chose ImageSoft to implement a county-wide OnBase[®] Enterprise Content Management (ECM) solution. After developing workflows, preparing staff for the change and acquiring necessary equipment, in 2007 Ottawa County began deployment of one of the most comprehensive, enterprise-wide, court-based ECM systems in the nation. Used by more than 450 employees, the system connected 13 disparate government offices, including:

- Circuit Court Records
- Clerk
- Circuit Court (Trial and Family Divisions)
- Juvenile Services
- Friend of the Court (Family Court)
- District Court (3 locations)
- Sheriff's Office
- Prosecuting Attorney's Office (3 locations)
- District Court Probation
- Probate Court
- Community Mental Health
- Human Resources

The Success:

Following the implementation of their OnBase solution, Ottawa County saw almost immediate improvements in many facets of their operations. A complete end-to-end electronic court solution was established, which provided instant access to legal documents throughout the courts and all county departments, integrated five different line of business applications, and eliminated the need to physically transport records from court to court. The result was improved and expedited communication between the courts and law enforcement agencies, and greatly improved employee morale. The solution also automated processes and standardized operations between departments and locations using rules-based workflows. Errors were reduced via Eforms, which automatically captures data at the point of creation.

In the District Court, a six-month backlog of civil cases was eliminated shortly after deployment. Today the court is processing greater volume with fewer resources. The District Court's Criminal Arraignment process has also been significantly improved. Defendant check-out wait time has been reduced from one hour to just 15 minutes, and post-arraignment paperwork, which once took up to three days to process, is now accomplished in just over an hour.

Across the courts, judges now enjoy the convenience and time savings of TrueSign® electronic signature solution to digitally sign orders swiftly and easily from a laptop or desktop computer, and signatures from outside parties are now collected digitally through a signature pad.

Other efficiencies were realized in the Circuit Court and Prosecutor's Office. The Prosecutor's Office significantly reduced prosecution request screening time for in-custody requests from one day to one hour and normal requests from more than two days to less than eight hours. With the establishment of a new web portal, police no longer had to drive to the Prosecutor's Office to submit prosecution requests, saving time and reducing transportation costs. The agency portal also provided the ability to retrieve documents and manage breathalyzer calibration and other form data.

Ottawa County citizenry reaped many of the benefits of the improvements at the county, including a public-facing Website that enables them to take a self-serve approach to submitting domestic case requests or obtaining copies of accident reports online. With these and other enhancements provided by the ImageSoft solution, the county was able to provide significantly faster and better service to all its constituents.

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The Challenges

- Eliminate document silos and data duplication across 13 offices
- Decrease time wasted manually retrieving and signing documents
- Expedite overall document processing to better meet vital deadlines
- Streamline document processing
- Eliminate large volumes of backlogged paperwork
- Free up file storage space

The Results

- 12,492 regular staff hours saved annually
- 452 overtime hours saved annually
- 549,067 fewer pages copied annually
- 7,257 fewer documents mailed annually
- 2,935 fewer file folders purchased annually
- 7 Lotus Notes licenses saved annually as a result of staff reductions
- 35 computers saved over 25-years as a result of staff reductions
- Automated processes and standardized operations between departments and locations using rules-based workflow
- Created 24/7 instant access to legal documents throughout all county departments
- Enhanced and expedited service to constituents
- Improved accountability with comprehensive audit tracking
- Achieved significant savings in data entry time and increased accuracy from interface between OnBase and the court's case management system