Sumter County, Florida Case Study

Electronic Document Management Increases Sumter County Efficiency Across County Offices

Executive Summary

In 2001, with the state of Florida pushing an initiative to reduce paper records, the Sumter County Clerk of Court's office waded into digital imaging for the first time with a project to digitize its subdivision plat records. They turned to Image One and the ApplicationXtender electronic document management system.

Since then, the system has grown to include 35 county licenses and 25 public licenses as Sumter County continues its effort, department by department, reclaiming office space from dusty boxes and filing cabinets scattered in warehouses across the county, and streamlining a broad range of government processes, from building permits to tax records to county commission meetings going back to the 1930s.

By the end of summer 2018, the Clerk of Courts expects to finish archiving its historical docket books. These enormous, handwritten ledgers are a treasure trove of government and genealogical history, comprised of marriage records, probate and court documents dating back to the county's founding in January 1853.

When the entire project is complete, it will cover every function of county government.

Savings & Other Highlights

- The work previously done by three workers in the historical records department is now a part-time job for one; all three workers were able to take on additional responsibilities, saving the county from hiring extra workers – an estimated savings of more than $62,000
- Additional office space for the sheriff's department maintenance division and for the building services division was created in the building previously occupied by paper files
- The county is saving on costs for paper, ink, toner, files and storage space for an estimated savings of over $10,000 per year.
- The county saved between $5,000 and $15,000 by adding the Workflow Manager extension to ApplicationXtender to automate payables in the Office of Management and Budget when compared with other, more expensive technology options

Solutions Used

- OpenText ApplicationXtender 8.1
- OpenText ApplicationXtender Capture Package
- OpenText ApplicationXtender Workflow Manager
- OpenText ApplicationXtender Full Text Search

The Transformation

When you work for the Sumter County Clerk of Court, a top priority is accessing documents as quickly as possible. That's why the office started with ApplicationXtender 17 years ago. The system allowed the county to digitize the 24 by 36 inch subdivision plat records. Now, the county can copy the records onto electronic media or send via email with the push of a button. This method is much more efficient than the previous way of searching for the documents in storage and then making a hard copy of the oversized plat records.

Based on the success of that project, more divisions were added. Building permits, property tax receipts and county commission records dating back to the 1930s were all scanned into the system. Now, when a County employee wants to find a building permit, he or she can enter the property owner's name or the permit number and the information comes right up. The data is cross-referenced and easy to search.

This did not happen overnight. With records going back more than a century, tucked away in storage sites across the county, the work is careful, steady and ongoing – as a forest of paper is scanned, indexed and hauled away by the truckload for shredding and recycling.

Millions of Documents Are Scanned as Reams of Paper Eliminated

Some projects for smaller documents were scanned in the course of a few days, while others have taken years on a part-time basis. Eight years of property tax receipts were converted from a previous outdated system over one weekend. A project to digitize Board of County Commission minutes involved scanning roughly 3 million pages over several months.

Meanwhile, the Building Services Division, in cooperation with the Clerk of Court Records Management Division, took three years to scan over 1.5 million documents in sizes ranging from standard letter to 22 by 34 inch D-size pages.This was done as a side project, with a finish line that kept moving as workers who thought they were nearing the end would uncover yet another pile of boxes in a warehouse, or a storage room somewhere, sometimes as many as 50 at a time.

When it was finally finished, the county found itself with a lot of room to put to more productive use. The south end of one building now houses the sheriff's office maintenance staff. The north end was remodeled into offices for the building services department. This project was a huge time saver that, among other efficiencies, left building permits reorganized, easy to find and a breeze to manage.

The county commission project includes a wide variety of records, including audio files, meeting minutes and piles of backup documents organized for each meeting. When completed, optical character recognition (OCR) software will make the repository fully searchable by meeting, saving uncountable hours of manual search time and creating records that will be easily accessible to the public with a minimum of instruction.

The historical records project allowed the county to redeploy two full-time employees and convert a third full-time job into a part-time position, a rough savings of $62,000 based on Sumter County per capita income.

The paperless office will bring in additional savings when the cost of paper and ink is factored in. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, the average office worker uses 10,000 sheets of copy paper per year. With 65 county office workers and 64 in the clerk of courts office, that could yield savings of more than $10,000 a year.

Workflow Automation for Accounts Payable

The County's most recent project in the Office of Management and Budget, now in its final stages, will eliminate paper invoices, allowing the county to manage payables electronically. This is the county's first use of the Workflow Automation software. With this process, invoices are directed to supervisors for approval and then submitted to the finance department where they are paid. The entire process from invoice submission to reaching the finance department can be completed in less than five minutes. It's a streamlined system that will allow the county to take advantage of discount offers for early payments and avoid manual errors like duplicate invoices.

"We saved quite a bit in startup costs," said the records manager and director of technical services for the Sumter County Clerk of Court, which is overseeing the effort. "Our deployment for AX (ApplicationXtender) is under $15,000 with the Workflow Manager as an extension of AX. Other vendors would have cost $20,000 to $30,000 for the same service, he said.

When the accounts payable department is fully automated later this year, plans are to implement the workflow automation software in multiple divisions for better organization and increased security of employee document storage.

In June 2016, the county went live with version 8.1 of ApplicationXtender, following six months of testing. This version has smoothed out browser-specific glitches from previous versions and provides for more flexibility. Migration to the newest AX Version, 16.3, is currently being scheduled for testing with a tentative schedule to upgrade in or before August.

"No matter what you want to do with it, it can probably be accomplished," the manager said of the flexibility of the ApplicationXtender software. "The system is very intuitive and is designed to be as simple or as complex as you want it to be."

Working with Image One, he said, has allowed the county to fine-tune and customize the system for the unique needs of a county government.

"They have a knowledgable sales staff that has been able to assist us in identifying and recommending solutions and tailoring them to our specific needs. Their support staff is highly qualified and able to communicate easily with the basic user to advanced IT staff to help resolve issues," he said. "Over the last 15-plus years we have created an excellent working relationship with Image One and we look forward to this continuing for years to come."

About Image One

Image One specializes in solving critical business problems by automating your business office through the use of Enterprise Content Management (ECM) and Workflow Process Automation Software, Document Imaging Hardware and Professional Services. Image One's core services maximize and streamline your business production, providing you with the ability to easily capture, create, manage, audit and control retention of all data, forms, files and documents within your organization. We provide clients with an enlightened approach to information management systems, structure and strategy – no matter how difficult the job. More: www.image-1.com