



Ramsey County Revamps Case Management

Laserfiche provides a standard systems architecture and methodology for county-wide content management

Ramsey County, the second most populous county in Minnesota, has always worked hard to provide the best service at the lowest possible cost to its taxpayers. But as the nation reeled from the recession that began in 2008, it became clear to the county that it needed to better leverage technology if it wanted to continue providing high-quality services without exceeding its budget.

According to Rochelle Waldoch, Compliance and Records Manager at Ramsey County, the need for more efficient paper-based business processes drove the county to investigate enterprise content management (ECM). “The Human Services Department had always been a paper-heavy department, but as caseloads grew, we started having difficulty sharing paper files. In addition, client information was siloed, so employees had to collect the same data over and over again. It wasn’t an efficient process, and it needed to change.”

She notes, however, that the county wasn’t interested in deploying a departmental ECM solution. “If the Information Services Department was going to invest the time and resources in implementing ECM, the solution we chose needed to provide a standard systems architecture and methodology for managing all types of documents across the county—not just in one department.”

Needs Analysis and Selection Process

To that end, Waldoch and Toyia Arvin, EDMS Business Analyst, worked with county staff to analyze business processes and document needs in every department. This analysis included:

- Interviews with more than 500 county employees.
- Departmental document inventories.
- A review of each department’s network shared folder directory structures.
- An inventory of departmental software applications.

Armed with the results of the needs analysis, Waldoch and Arvin authored the county’s RFP. “Prior to implementing Laserfiche, we were using the DocuWare system to store a variety of document types, but it didn’t have the advanced workflow or capture functionality necessary to streamline business processes enterprise-wide,” explains Waldoch.

In terms of the selection process, Arvin says, “Laserfiche was beyond impressive when we were doing our RFP. Laserfiche Rio offered a familiar, Windows-like interface for our users; included all of the components we needed, including Workflow, Records Management and unlimited servers; and received excellent recommendations when we did our reference checks.”

Central Control, Departmental Flexibility

Ramsey County implemented a 2,000-user Laserfiche Rio system in the summer of 2010. It is supported centrally by a four-person team within the IS Department. To date, the team has transferred more than eight million documents stored in the old DocuWare system to Laserfiche and brought a variety of departments onboard, including:

- **Boards and Committees.** Documents such as agendas, ordinances and proclamations are OCR'd and stored in Laserfiche, streamlining search.
- **Budgeting and Accounting.** Using DataNOW Affinity, Laserfiche is integrated with ASPEN (PeopleSoft) accounting software. Users can locate transactions in ASPEN and then automatically index, store and/or retrieve associated documents.
- **Human Resources.** Personnel files are managed in Laserfiche. Laserfiche security restricts file access to authorized users.
- **Elections.** Laserfiche allows the department to save staff time and money on tasks such as making copies, redacting private information and responding to public data requests.
- **Human Services.** Laserfiche streamlines case management for divisions such as Child Care, Financial Assistance Services and Workforce Solutions.

Waldoch and Arvin note that the Elections implementation went particularly smoothly. "Because there was an election recount coming up, Elections employees did their homework before their initial meeting with us. They brought a lot of document samples and mapped out what kind of folder structure they wanted," says Arvin.

"As a result, we were able to get them up and running in a week," she adds. "Working with Crabtree, we'd do a build, show it to them that day, and then tweak it based on their feedback. They'd been thorough with their planning, so there weren't a lot of changes that needed to be made."

Efficient Case Management Commences

Implementation in Human Services, which started out with a 75-user pilot project (including 28 case managers), has taken a little more time. "Human Services is a huge department with hundreds of

users and hundreds of forms—and a heavy need for Workflow," explains Waldoch.

To determine how to configure the Client repository that Human Services uses, Arvin sat down with key Human Services employees to better understand their processes. "Subject matter experts in each of the three areas of the pilot analyzed their current folder structure by reviewing case files. Together, we analyzed the tabs contained in the paper files and came up with a nine-sided file structure that could meet the needs of all the various Human Services divisions," she says.

"The goal of implementing Laserfiche within Human Services is to allow case workers to collect information from clients once and share it electronically throughout all program areas," explains Waldoch. "Electronic client files decrease delays in processing benefits since case workers have, via Workflow, near-immediate knowledge of document receipt.

Also adding to the department's increased efficiency is an integration using LincWare's LincDoc to create a Case Creation Form for the Client repository. "LincDoc makes two calls—one to a State system (SMI) and one to a County system (CAFÉ)—to pull the information needed to create a new case in Laserfiche," Arvin says. "Automating this process saves staff time."

After a case is created, it goes through the following steps:

- The case receives "Appointment Pending" status in Laserfiche. When the client arrives for the appointment, CAFÉ alerts the worker to the arrival. An intake worker assigns the case to him- or herself by changing a template field, and Workflow routes the file to that person's New Cases Queue.
- The intake worker meets with the client to collect additional information. Once the information has been captured into Laserfiche, Workflow routes the case to Case Assignment, where a clerk assigns the case to the ongoing case worker.
- Workflow sends a New Case Notification to the ongoing worker, who "acknowledges" the case by changing a template field. The case is then visible in the worker's Active Cases queue. The worker then manages the case for ongoing benefits.
- Once a case is closed, its status is changed from "Active" to "Closed," and the case is routed to the Records Department for long-term retention.

Arvin notes that creating workflows for Human Services wasn't as simple as she'd first imagined. "The biggest lesson I learned is that you shouldn't try to replicate paper processes in an electronic workflow. We built a workflow this way only to find out that a chunk of it was unnecessary, so we had to ask the Laserfiche engineers to go back and build it again."

In terms of additional functionality, the IS team is currently in the process of enabling electronic signatures, electronic forms and barcoding, all of which will simplify working with Human Services clients.

In terms of additional Human Services divisions, the team is working to:

- Transition 340 Financial Assistance Services employees from read-only to full-client users, allowing them to expand their use of the system beyond search and retrieval.
- Integrate Laserfiche (via DataNOW Affinity) with MAXIS, the state-based case management system.
- Integrate Laserfiche with vxVista, the Mental Health Center's electronic health system, so that users can automatically retrieve information from Laserfiche while looking at patient cases in vxVista.

"Although we have a long way to go before we'd consider Human Services a mature Laserfiche implementation, we're definitely on the right track," Waldoch says.

Change Management Methodology

"A lot of counties have to force content management into their departments, but we don't have that problem here, due in large part to our extensive training program," Arvin explains.

For the Human Services Department, the Laserfiche team involved all pilot participants in the project from early on. "The more involved people are in designing their own solutions, the more bought-in they'll be when it comes time to use it," she says. "We also had some strong advocates who'd previously worked in other counties that use Laserfiche, so that was certainly a stroke in our favor."

Once the Laserfiche pilot had been implemented, non-pilot employees started receiving information from Laserfiche on disk so that they'd become familiar with the way information was organized and presented. The team also created a lot of training documentation (available online), including videos of how to perform tasks in Laserfiche featuring the cast of *The Flintstones*. "Just because something is technical doesn't mean you can't have fun with it," Waldoch says. "If people are laughing, they're paying attention."

In-person training classes are conducted by unit, so that employees see the information and steps that are relevant to them. When needed, the county's Laserfiche team conducts individual training sessions as well. The Laserfiche team also plans to create a county-wide Laserfiche User Group to facilitate knowledge sharing between departments.

Future Plans

Although Laserfiche is currently being used by several departments to enhance internal productivity, in the future, Ramsey County wants to use Laserfiche to directly help its citizens as well. It plans to do this by making information available to its constituents via a public portal, increasing transparency, and also by giving constituents the ability to complete and submit forms online. "We're here to serve the public," Waldoch explains. "We want them to get as much benefit from Laserfiche as our staff does."

In conclusion, Waldoch says, "Laserfiche is a powerful enterprise system that's already having a great impact in a number of departments."

About Laserfiche

Since 1987, Laserfiche® has used its Run Smarter® philosophy to create simple and elegant enterprise content management (ECM) solutions. More than 30,000 organizations worldwide—including federal, state and local government agencies—use Laserfiche software to streamline document, records and business process management.

Your Next Step

Please call (800) 985-8533 or e-mail info@laserfiche.com for more information.

©2011 Laserfiche. Laserfiche is a registered trademark of Computlink Management Center, Inc. All rights reserved.