

King County

# **Electronic Court Records Program Development: Lessons Learned**

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ESTABLISHING YOUR OWN ELECTRONIC COURT RECORDS PROGRAM

CONFERENCE AUGUST 4-6, 2009

PRESENTED BY THE KING COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT CLERK'S OFFICE, SEATTLE, WA





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# Lessons Learned

- Have a VISION – share with all who will listen
- Written Master Plan – all on the same page
- Involve, learn from stakeholders
- Segmented implementation – any one phase is a “win”
- Be creative when it comes to funding
  - Grants, technology funds, records funds

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# Lessons Learned

- Have a sponsor or leader in your toughest constituency
- Within any project segment, stair-step the implementation to get buy-in
- Agree to exceptions
- Plan for reviews so that exceptions can be removed and further steps can be taken

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# Lessons Learned

- Write good technology vendor contracts and stick to them
- Vendor has a project manager and YOU have a project manager
- Have good project management on your side
- Your business people and your tech people report to your project manager for this project

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# Lessons Learned

- Any single item you ignore on a contract will lead to problems enforcing any of your contract
- Everything must be in writing
- Bids on contracts are negotiable
- Check references for any contractor
- Very difficult to be a good project manager
- Hard to do it in addition to other job

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# Lessons Learned

- Describe your current process: write down exactly how documents flow through your paper system now
- Scope of work is the key to the contract: write a good one and keep to it
- Watch for scope creep on your side - “wouldn’t it be great if the system did....”
- Have incentives or disincentives for schedule issues on their side

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# Lessons Learned

- Consider contracting with an integrator
- Consider off-the-shelf products
- Integrator can combine the COTS products and likely develop the small extra pieces
- Vendor models work
  - State of Colorado
  - Vendor imaging systems in Washington state

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# Lessons Learned

- Staff and customers exhibit themselves as early adopters, sticks in the mud, etc.
- Recognize the Change Management component
- Allow for the transition time
- You may lose staff over it

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# Lessons Learned

- Listen to concerns of court and employees
- What's pressing the hot buttons?
- Bring down the anxiety by developing exceptions
- Judges/commissioners fears include “lack of control” “lack of appearance of competency” with the technology
- Give them tools to help

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# Lessons Learned

- There's no such thing as too much communication
- Involve the staff every step of the way
- Acknowledge and appreciate and capitalize on all that staff know
- Acknowledge that you may be in dual systems for a while – budget for it

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# Lessons Learned

- Electronic court records are an incredible efficiency!
  - Staff positions eliminated
  - Reduced, eliminated other costs (e.g., microfilm)
  - Saved space & time
- Faster processing
  - Previous 5+ days filing-to-file, now 2 days
- Hardly any lost, misfiled records
- Independent access by multiple users
- Better privileges management, security

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# Lessons Learned

- Less vulnerability to destruction, fraud, misuse
- Better disaster recovery
- Printing is much cheaper than maintaining paper files: print for anyone who asks
- The Bar is Raised: Plan for continuous change, improvements, challenges –

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# Lessons Learned

- Difference between developing a system for staff use and developing for customer use
- Customers like the electronic
- Expectations from your customers: they want to interact with you electronically
- Many advantages to them to access files electronically on-line
- Build you systems with the pro se in mind

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# Lessons Learned

- Involve customers in user groups, focus groups, surveys
- Don't assume you know what they want, when it comes to the specifics
- Federal courts have been all electronic for some time

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# Lessons Learned

- Electronic filing has not, to date, been the big star of our ECR program/It's not the biggest reason for the cost savings
- The working papers practice was challenging to translate into the electronic
- E-filing is another mechanism of access to the court/clerk
- E-filing is attractive if records are kept electronically/if paper record is not also kept
- E-filing is better when mandated

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# Lessons Learned

- Two versions of the ECR program was smart
  - CORE – software on each staff person's desktop
  - ECR Viewer – Web-based, needing only a browser
- Specialized features can be huge efficiency
- Do not underestimate how dependent you and your customers come to be on the system
- Invest in tech staff or a contract of maintenance/support

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# Lessons Learned

- Technology breaks – it's going to happen
- Have failover and standby systems
  - Test, test, test
  - Document, document, document
- Have a plan for continuous maintenance and keep to it
- System down time can very difficult to live through

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# Lessons Learned

- Trust, but verify information from your Technology staff
- Acknowledge there may be issues between Clerk technology staff and Court technology staff
- Acknowledge that what you are building is an Enterprise system – much bigger and brings much more responsibility than a system used by only your employees
- Staff up to make sure you have enough tech support for an Enterprise system

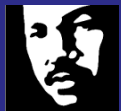
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# Lessons Learned

- Make sure your technology contracts pay money on DELIVERABLES that are ACCEPTED by you.
- If you decide to use a vendor's product that is available at no cost to you, keep in mind you still are likely obligated to run the RFP process to choose the vendor, because the vendor is making money off your business

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# Lessons Learned

- Good ideas or missed things come up during project development. Set them aside in a parking lot if they were not originally part of your scope.
- Controlling your scope allows you to call your project done and start a new project or new phase that is “enhancements” or “new components” from the parking lot.

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# Lessons Learned

- In developing an E-filing system, consider employing a 'shopping cart' mechanism, so that multiple filings can be submitted easily via one transaction.
- Learn about the federal E-filing model because your users will compare you to it.

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# Lessons Learned

- Once you get your constituency on board and using electronic records, plan for constant enhancements and upgrades. The bar is raised and users will expect the next best thing to be added.
- Make thoughtful decisions about your promised hours of support for the system.

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# Lessons Learned

- Have a Lessons Learned session after key accomplishments
- Document the lessons learned and learn from them: don't repeat the same mistakes
- Celebrate with your staff, recognize them and appreciate them throughout the project.

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# Lessons Learned

- Others...

# Questions?

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