

Court Case Study: Genesee County, MI

“*Genesee County earned ROI of more than \$1.1 million in annual labor savings by implementing JusticeTech. In addition, we significantly improved our caseflow throughout despite a 15 percent staff reduction.*”

— **John Battles**
Director,
Genesee County Courts

The Customer

Located in southeast lower Michigan, Genesee County is comprised of approximately 436,000 residents and encompasses 649 square miles, including the City of Flint, the county seat and the seventh largest city in Michigan. With the automotive industry once one of its chief employers, the area was also among the hardest hit by the national economic recession.

Genesee County was in the perfect storm of an economic shortfall where property taxes had fallen drastically, reducing County revenue nearly 20 percent, thousands of manufacturing jobs had been lost and unemployment was at record levels.

The Challenge

Genesee County faced a great number of challenges that prompted it to investigate an electronic document management solution. Chief among them was the physical movement, flow and processing of documents.

Many departments, including the County Friend of the Court (Family Court), were operating in a time warp without the inherent efficiencies of a paperless system. Departments comprising the County’s criminal justice system were mired in mountains of paper documents—each maintaining redundant individual files—and were further bogged down by outdated work processes and outmoded manual systems. The County experienced lagging productivity and increasing costs as individual departments struggled to maintain services to constituents. Its two massive file rooms were jammed with over 60,000 active files with no efficient way to manage the daily flow of paperwork.

Like many counties, the Genesee County courts, which serve 23 communities, were housed in multiple physical locations. This made sharing documents and information even more challenging. Their system for doing so was manual and time-consuming: three times per week, a runner would load a file cart full of documents and trek from building to building to distribute information to judges, clerks, caseworkers and others.

The County also used the runner to shuttle the court’s bench warrants. The laborious bench warrant process typically took two weeks and included:

- The judge ordering a bench warrant in court
- A caseworker drafting the paperwork
- The runner returning the warrant for the judge’s signature
- The runner returning three times per week to retrieve the signed paperwork for delivery to the clerk
- The warrant being returned to the Family Court to be entered onto MiCSES and placed on LEIN

Not only was the process painfully slow, but often the paperwork would go missing during the trips to and from the courthouse.

The Process

The Genesee County Board of Commissioners had long recognized the need for a comprehensive document management solution in all county-wide departments. In 2008, following its response to a competitive Request For Proposal issued by the County, ImageSoft was selected to implement JusticeTech™, powered by OnBase®, in the Family Court, the Family Support Division of the Prosecutor's Office, the County Clerk's office and the Probate Court. ImageSoft was chosen for its extensive court experience and JusticeTech's ability to integrate with the county's existing case management system. In spring 2009, following an infusion of technology to automate their processes, the four justice offices began to vastly streamline and improve operations.

With the new solution in place, Genesee County's Family Court was able to weather the economic storm by quickly transforming its operations from a paper-intensive workplace to a nearly paperless environment. Paper documents were scanned and digitized to allow them to be shared electronically, quickly and efficiently by all authorized users. Moreover, the busy runner and the bulging file cart are now relics of the past.

Their Success

The technology solution and workflow provided by ImageSoft have made a marked difference in the Genesee County court system, eliminating paper shuffling throughout the court by replacing paper files with digital files, automating and expediting processes in multiple departments and increasing operational efficiencies and employee productivity. Judges now sign documents electronically, swiftly and easily with TrueSign®, and documents are electronically stamped and filed by the Clerk. With its state-of-the-art OnBase document management technology, every function at the Family Court has been enhanced, and archaic, redundant functions have even been eliminated.

During the first year, the court saved roughly \$1.1 million in labor costs alone by implementing JusticeTech. The court's ability to collect child support arrearages was improved by expediting the bench warrant process from two weeks to just one day. Court costs were cut by streamlining the show-cause process from a two-day process to a single mouse click. Moreover, despite a 15% reduction in staffing, service to constituents was expedited and dramatically improved through reduced response time to inquiries. The court system realized substantial annual savings from eliminating printing, copying and file storage of paper documents. The solution provided instant and simultaneous access to court documents for authorized parties resulting in better-informed court decisions.

In the Prosecuting Attorney's office, the P.A. was able to eliminate a four-month backlog of cases to be filed and has enjoyed the benefit of being able to reprioritize the use of its staff. Most of all, the solution upgraded nearly every process in the court creating efficiencies throughout the enterprise. The result was increased productivity, reduced costs and, at the same time, enhanced services to constituents.

Genesee County, MI

The Challenges

- 60,000 active paper case files and no efficient way to manage them
- Lagging productivity and increasing costs from outdated, manual paper processes
- Managing the physical movement of court documents between two court locations

The Results

- Realized annual labor savings of \$1.1 million
- No impact or disruption in the ability to provide mandated services to customers despite a 15% staff reduction
- Drastically cut the bench warrant process from two weeks to one day
- Reduced a six-month backlog in judgment modifications to 45 days and increased the number of modifications the County processes from 25 to 125 per week
- Reduced the time it takes for constituents to see a caseworker from six weeks to two weeks