County Court of Victoria Goes Electronic to Boost Efficiency

iManage Work Makes Paper Files a Thing of the Past

Industry:

- Government Legal

Challenges:

- The County Court of Victoria has jurisdiction over six million people across a territory of nearly 92,000 square miles
- Its Judges are located in Melbourne and their 13 Circuit Courts are located across the territory
- Case files are physically housed in the Circuit Courts and are physically couriered to Judges before a case is heard
- Physically couriering files caused security issues if files got mislaid or lost

Solutions:

- Implement iManage Work to provide electronic case files
- Enable Melbourne-based Judges to view case files prior to hearings
- iManage Work manages all documents within a single workspace that's securely accessible from any device

The County Court of Victoria was established in 1852 and has jurisdiction over a population of nearly six million people. It deals with both criminal and civil cases from its Courthouse in Melbourne and 13 Circuit (regional) Courts located across a territory of nearly 92,000 square miles (238,000 square kilometers).

Challenge

Logistical Headache

The Judges chambers are all located in the Melbourne Courthouse and the case paper files are held at the respective Circuit Court within the territory. The Judges attend the Circuit Courts to hear cases on a pre-planned roster but given the case paper files are held at the Circuit Courts, they were not easily accessible to judges prior to leaving for Circuit hearings. This often times made for uncertainty as to whether the case file was ready for trial.

"The much anticipated system will help drive efficiencies both in and outside the Court. Manual paper handling is a key contributor to delay and cost throughout the legal sector, but in particular for courts. Misplaced documents, duplicate documents and manual paper filing consume enormous resources for relatively little gain. It is therefore highly satisfying to be able to introduce a new system that will generate greater efficiencies and allow for better use and direction of our resources in the future."

— **Chief Judge Rozenes**

The file was physically transported to them to ensure they had all the necessary documents to hear cases. However, using couriers caused security issues and there was the danger of physical files being mislaid or lost. Cases had to be adjourned if files were found to be incomplete, resulting in wasted time and money and delaying the judicial process.

With hundreds of paper case files held in the circuit registries, the County Court needed to address these problems by introducing better work product management; one obvious solution was to go paperless.

Solution

Electronic Files

iManage partner Interform is the IT operator for the Melbourne County Court, which was built under a Public Private Partnership (PPP) agreement, and houses 54 court rooms. Interform has held this position since the Court facility began operations in May 2002 and its duties involve managing the network and servers, and providing an internal Service Desk. They also include responsibility for the IT refresh programs. Following discussions with the County Court, Interform recommended using iManage Work, an intelligent work product management system to provide an electronic case file at the circuit registries viewable by Melbourne-based judges.

"Our view was that the iManage Work would offer a professional and secure content management solution for electronic case files," explains Interform Director, Bruce Fallaver.

iManage Work enables organizations to easily manage all documents and email digitally, making information available from any access point including desktops, laptops, the Internet and mobile devices. Because it solves the problem of sharing documents across large and widespread organisations, iManage Work is especially useful to document-intensive enterprises such as law firms, corporate legal departments, government legal entities, and professional services firms such as accounting, insurance, financial services organisations, and in this case, the courts.

A pilot project was successful and the court subsequently deployed iManage Work to the 13 circuit registries. Interform had the skillset, experience and capability to do the implementation, as well as provide ongoing support for the infrastructure.

Benefit

Improved Efficiency and Security

Soon, for the first time in Australia, the courts' case files will be electronic. The Circuit Courts and Melbourne case files will be visible to judges and their support staff wherever they are located. Time and money are saved and information is more secure because paper files no longer have to be transported to and from the Circuit Courts. Electronic documents are inserted into files instantly saving staff time and increasing productivity. The electronic case file means that all documents can be viewed immediately when the document is logged. Another logistical benefit is that files can now be viewed by more than one person.

Using comprehensive electronic files, all documents are brought together under a single case workspace and indexed with a unique number. Changes to documents can be tracked over time and security is ensured with a comprehensive audit trail that records all document access. iManage Work also keeps track of many iterations of a document so users can be sure that they are using the latest version – a particularly important feature for the courts service.

iManage