

OCR for Forms™ Eases Traffic Ticket Congestion Woes

Last May, the Traffic Division of the Collier County Clerk of Court in Naples, FL, had a reason to celebrate: OCR for Forms™, information capture software designed by Microsystems Technology in Tampa, FL, was installed in the Traffic Division. Soon, the traffic-ticket congestion that had plagued the office was a thing of the past.

The Traffic Division in the Clerk of Court's office processes traffic citations from the city police, the sheriff and the highway patrol — all in all, more than 40,000 tickets a year (or between 120 and 200 tickets a day). In the past, a team of clerks devoted nearly the entire day to the work of entering each citation manually into a mainframe. Redundant screens made the job especially tedious and prone to error. Moreover, because local population growth indicated a 30% annual increase in citations for the office to process, Collier County was looking to hire two more staffers.

While staff members attended a conference where vendors were showcasing their wares, the attendees came upon Robert Porter, president of R&S Integrated Products & Services, Inc. in Lakeland, FL. They mentioned the difficulties they were having keeping pace with the citations. Porter began talking about OCR for Forms, and the staff returned to the office with a possible solution for their troubles.

"OCR for Forms sailed through all the tests," remarks Porter. Soon afterward, Joanne Azar, systems analyst with the Collier County Clerk of Court, went for a week of hands-on training at Microsystems' headquarters. R&S Integrated's staff also applied the output parameters in OCR for Forms to provide the data in a format that enabled Collier County's mainframe to upload from the Windows® NT server — a challenging task

that met with perfect success.

Reduced Spending, Happier Staff, More Efficient Work Flow

OCR for Forms has reduced government spending: First, Collier County didn't have to hire those new clerks to input citation data; second, the software's annual return on investment (ROI) is 69%, according to Leahy Associates' Needs Analysis and Cost Justification worksheet. And if the state didn't require archives to be kept until a decision and period of settling is accomplished, the Traffic Division of Collier County Clerk of Court might not keep hard copies at all. Before implementing

OCR for Forms, the office had to keep thousands upon thousands of pieces of paper accessible to staff; now, of course, those hard copies are merely archives as mandated by the state. Files are now accessed via the networked LaserFiche document imaging system.

"OCR for Forms is unique, and we can customize it to fit our specific needs," exclaims Azar. In fact, she can't find anything not to like about this software that captures 32 fields of data for her co-workers in a variety of formats: machine print, hand

print, bar code and mark sense. OCR for Forms' high-speed verification process has brought a substantial increase in accuracy — with no modifications to the state-issued traffic citation forms that are scanned in. The MIS staff counts the implementation and operation of OCR for Forms as a huge accomplishment.

The courtroom clerks used to pull roughly 1,200 case jackets from filing cabinets every day; all that pulling required a great deal of legwork as well as a lot of time. In addition, tickets occasionally got lost. Every time the shuffle among desks

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we run
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and filing cabinets resulted in a missing jacket, three or four people would have to drop what they'd been doing to look for it. Now imaged data is available on a PC in the courtroom — where it's been wholly integrated with the information in the department's legacy system. And since OCR for Forms has come along, no documents have been misfiled.

OCR for Forms has also resulted in more technologically savvy office clerks. Instead of pounding information into dumb terminals, clerks now wield powerful, state-of-the-art software on PCs and Fujitsu scanners. Because data flows into appropriate multiple screens automatically, the clerks are finished processing forms in the middle of the morning rather than late into the afternoon. As a result, they're free to concentrate on other duties that have long needed their undivided attention, and it's clear they take pride in the amount and quality of the work they're accomplishing.

Public Also Benefits

When asked about the most important impact of OCR for Forms, Azar is quick to respond: "The office is able to serve the public better and more efficiently." To be sure, the guy who gets caught speeding in Collier County might not appreciate the software's benefits, but data is accessible on the mainframe and in the imaging system the same day that it's been input. Whether citizens are calling in on the telephone or walking up to the counter in the office, they can get service from staff who not only have current information at their fingertips but also have time to assist with the situation at hand.

"People think of imaging as being just for archival purposes," Azar protests. "But we use OCR for Forms in real time. It's how we run our business." In fact, the Traffic Division was a pilot program for the software. Pleased with its success there, Collier County has plans to develop imaging throughout its offices.



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