IBM Information Management software

Court case management: Enterprise content management delivers operational efficiency and effectiveness

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Navigating today's legal systems

Court systems throughout the world have become complex judicial mazes that need a compass and roadmap for even the court staff to navigate. Increased immigration, growth in urban population density, internal migration patterns, crackdowns on criminal activity and the general litigious nature of modern society contribute to the increasing numbers of court cases that must be processed and adjudicated in a set period of time. With millions of new filings each year, court systems find it increasingly more difficult to maximize resources and manage the ever-expanding volume of dockets.

Similarly, law enforcement agencies face significant challenges to build cases and compile dockets for the district attorney to submit to the court. They must continuously coordinate activities and information with courts at the state, local and municipal levels as well as other departments and stakeholders such as traffic schools, land records, child support, grant or custodian grant issuers and social services. Combine this with a deluge of data – documents, e-mail, images, video, audio – raining down on systems already heavily burdened and the potential for inefficient operations becomes apparent, jeopardizing the court's ability to serve justice. These two factors make inefficient operations a virtual certainty and may jeopardize the court's ability to serve justice, potentially delaying due process to the point where cases must be thrown out.

Court systems need the ability to identify, access, manage and link relevant case data and court documents throughout the entire court process for each case – and the process must be timely and cost-effective. Electronic files need to replace traditional paper files to enable information access throughout the lifecycle of the court case – from initially building the case to archiving the final case documents upon completion.

E-filing helps reduce time and operational costs

Many courts have implemented electronic filing (e-filing) systems as a first step toward helping courts, attorneys and agencies streamline the process for filing court cases, paying fees and other court-related processes. E-filing systems should include:

- Public access for simplified document filing, fee payment and secure retrieval of controlled information

- Single, easy-to-use interface that combines multiple case management systems and applications to facilitate data exchange and improve efficiency

- Streamlined case processing that orchestrates operations and tasks within each office and provides case prioritization and special handling where appropriate

- Simplified case processing and secure document storage to help ensure compliance

- Information in electronic form that is accessible by the right person at the right time, whether the source of information is a scanned image or electronic document

E-filing offers increased clerk efficiency, immediate response to judges' requests, timely access to information and potential storage savings. However, it often does not integrate or automate processes across multiple or disconnected operational systems that are critical to the court system.

IBM Enterprise Content Management delivers efficiency in court case management

At the foundation of a successful court case management system is an enterprise content management (ECM) solution with fully integrated business process management (BPM) capabilities. Such an infrastructure produces actionable content, which enables the defense, prosecution, judge and other court staff to respond quickly to events and deliver targeted content to the court. This active content can have a significant impact for decision makers throughout the lifecycle of a court case.

Content and content-related tasks are proactively moved through a process automatically – it is not dependent on a person to initiate the task. The active file document, dossier or pleading is managed by underlying business processes that enable courts and law enforcement to gather complete, relevant information from many sources to build a case and manage that case efficiently through the entire court system. In addition, case workers across various agencies can securely access information on a timely basis, helping to increase overall responsiveness as well as to support compliance requirements.

The IBM FileNet Business Process Framework (BPF) leverages tested and proven, configuration to form the foundation of business process automation for all types of dossier management scenarios. As a result, court departments and law enforcement agencies can better control activities and events that enable

cases to be processed fairly and efficiently. Staff can readily locate and check status of active cases and prioritize existing cases. They also can add new data, documents, images and other information to support the case.

ECM in action: Court clerk's office realizes significant cost savings

For a busy court clerk's office in Florida handling hundreds of thousands of cases each year, a comprehensive ECM system has enabled a 30 percent increase in cases while dealing with a 15 percent reduction in staff. The office has also realized more than US$1 million a year in cost savings and enabled staff to reclaim 3,500 square feet of storage space. The system handles all core business processes related to traffic cases, with a single point of capture for all incoming traffic case documents, helping to eliminate the risk of lost information.

The system electronically routes documents and images to the proper work areas, which facilitates faster document processing while providing the judiciary with the ability to rapidly make well-informed decisions. Content is accessible for simultaneous viewing and processing on networked PC workstations throughout the clerk's office and the district courts. Judges can access their calendars, view all case files, dispose of cases and immediately access case histories. Prosecutors and defense attorneys also can retrieve case information instantly, helping to streamline the judicial process and improve efficiency.

Business Process Framework accelerates development of custom capabilities

Every judicial department has its own set of unique policy rules and workflow processes. No single out-of-the-box solution can satisfy all court and law enforcement agency requirements. To accelerate the development of applications for court case management, BPF provides best practices and templates to help courts and law enforcement agencies rapidly build a case management system to address their unique requirements without the need to build a solution from the ground up. Agencies can create automated business processes with broad functionality to provide enhanced capabilities throughout the delivery process:

- **Design** – BPF understands business requirements and can determine how to best automate processes for a high level of efficiency. While BPF provides an excellent foundation, an efficient ECM system also recognizes that success requires in-depth analysis of current processes, recognition of how processes should operate at the end of the project, awareness of integration and data exchange levels with existing systems, and the overall benefits to the court system.

- **Development** – The configuration-based approach results in a significantly reduced overall development effort. Less coding is required to create custom applications, yet it establishes a backbone for integrating additional custom code requirements.

- **User acceptance** – The BPF approach has less unproven, new code to test, so users accept it more readily and become productive quickly. With BPF, many changes are handled through configuration, making it easy and fast to implement.

- **Production rollout** – An ECM system must incorporate a production rollout plan into its BPF deployment to ensure a smooth transition to a full-load production environment. Since BPF is highly configurable, it can quickly fine-tune the solution to closely match the department's needs and its consistent interface helps simplify user training.

ECM in action: Integrated system brings efficiency and increases productivity

With more than 6,000 juveniles being processed each year, one California county probation department desperately needed new processes to address juvenile crime. Information on juvenile offenders was fragmented—sometimes nonexistent—with databases scattered throughout departments. In addition, paper files could be viewed only by one person at a time, and misplaced and incomplete files were commonplace.

The department chose to move all record keeping onto an intranet, providing up-to-date information and links to data about each juvenile, including booking, activity logs, court dates and case changes. Even information such as aliases, gang affiliations, charges, warrants and scars, marks and tattoos captured digitally was tracked, along with links to school schedules, grades and disciplinary actions.

By consolidating this information into one database, multiple agencies such as the district attorney, public defender and even health workers can access files. Information is readily accessible to those who need it, helping probation officers and judges make the best possible decision for each case.

Business Process Framework helps boost return on investment

The Business Process Framework can help courts quickly build, customize and deploy a fully integrated court case system that aligns program policy, case workers and government processes. It addresses interoperability between structured and unstructured data, automation of paper documents and streamlining processes to transform how they provide services.

**Evaluating ECM for court case management**

An ECM system for court case management can have a significant impact on operational costs and demographics. Here are some techniques to help evaluate:
- *Budget—Examine annual operating budgets and compare the costs and percentages of activities to be accomplished within budget to assess the amount of budget tied up in file management tasks.*
- *Productivity—Perform a comprehensive analysis of transaction times, customer response times and administrative times to provide a breakdown of labor hours spent on file management tasks and a comparison point for productivity optimization estimates.*
- *Cost containment—Assess current costs, such as percentage of square footage dedicated to file storage and overtime attributed to paper-intensive and time-consuming manual tasks, to determine the cost containment impact of automated processes.*
- *Revenues—Collect a breakdown of hour revenues and the percentage of revenues lost due to human error or time lapses to help improve the timely collection and processing of revenues.*

Combine these factors into a comprehensive operational impact analysis for a detailed insight into how ECM can help streamline operations and improve productivity.

An ECM system offers extensive benefits to courts setting up a case management system:

- **Transparency**: Court officials need to know only that information is complete and accurate, not where it is located.

- **Security**: Court officials and other staff have access to information based on preset policies with access controls to help ensure privacy and compliance.

- **Simplified storage**: Electronic documents require less physical storage and enable easy access on demand. By automating document and records management, organizations can reduce the number of data silos – allowing workers to access a broader base of information – but still enforce security policies to keep sensitive or department-specific documents cloistered.

- **Reduced costs**: Case file information is entered once and shared as needed, eliminating the potential for duplicate data entry.

- **Communication**: Data can be transmitted between systems using a common interchange format.
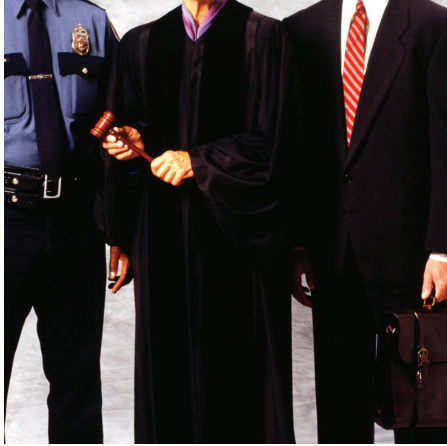
- **Metrics**: Because processes are automated, the entire case lifecycle and work effort can be analyzed and reported for optimization, long-range planning and policy decision making.

- **Process modeling**: Advanced analytic features enable courts to model complex systems and their underlying processes to improve case management programs and policies, and to optimize spending of taxpayer money.

ECM and BPF: Align people, process and policy

By adopting ECM that integrates a BPF approach, business process automation and collaboration capabilities, courts and law enforcement agencies are better positioned to align people, process and policy – helping to eliminate bottlenecks and policy violations.

- **Active case management**: Using ECM technology to integrate case files with other systems, such as enterprise resource planning (ERP), makes more information available; workflow automation can streamline the court case management process, helping to reduce the number of cases that are thrown out of court due to expired time limits.

- Policy enforcement: The ability to enforce and apply rules, timing exceptions, tolerance and other processes help ensure that court cases are managed more effectively and each case receives due process and fair treatment.

- Collaboration: By using open standards, case worker collaboration can be automated across multiple government agencies. Faster content discovery helps increase worker productivity and improve response time.

IBM Enterprise Content Management: Better decisions, faster

As the clear market leader in enterprise content management, IBM solutions help courts and legal departments make better decisions faster by managing content, optimizing business processes and enabling compliance through an integrated information infrastructure. The IBM ECM portfolio delivers a broad set of capabilities and solutions that integrate with existing information systems to help the courts derive greater value from their content and deliver operational efficiency throughout the department.

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For more information

For more information on the IBM ECM portfolio, please contact your IBM marketing representative or visit ibm.com/software/ecm