The Computerworld Honors Program

Honoring those who use Information Technology to benefit society

Final Copy of Case Study

YEAR:
2012

STATUS:
Laureate

Organization:
San Bernardino County Information Services Department

Organization URL:
http://sbcounty.gov

Project Name:
Document Storage Goes Green

What social/humanitarian issue was the project designed to address? What specific metrics did you use to measure the project's success?

The County produces up to 800,000 sheets of paper per month representing a wide range of county business documents. Many of these documents are boxed up and stored and accessed very infrequently. Meanwhile, the handling and building storage needed to maintain this mountain of paperwork cost the County money. In addition, when a document is needed, it takes staff time to research and find the specific hard copy and retrieve it from the collection of hard copy documents. The social issue was to make our government more efficient in retrieving documents to provide better service to our citizens. In addition, we would save valuable resources, trees, by eliminating the printing of millions of paper documents. The metrics used to measure the success of this program were based on several items, including reduction in the time it took to retrieve any given document from the system and savings in personnel costs used to box and store them and then to retrieve the hard-copy documents. In addition, the number of sheets of paper saved was a measurable and tangible benefit, helping the County go green. While still in the early stages, the reduction of just over a million sheets a year is saving the County an estimated $25,000/year and has increased the ability to rapidly locate and use the documents that have been processed, resulting in more efficiency in our business practices. This effort has the potential of saving over a $100,000/year once all potential customers come on board with this initiative. This resulted in a savings of paper, printer supplies, boxes to hold the reports, storage needed to hold the boxes, and the man hours needed to handle and distribute and retrieve these hard-copy documents.

Please describe the technologies used and how those technologies were deployed in an innovative way. Also, please include any technical or other challenges that were overcome for the successful implementation of the project.

This employee suggestion initiative recommended that many of these reports and documents could be created directly into searchable PDF documents and stored on inexpensive NAS storage. This is done by using .NET programming (C#), PostScript and Adobe API. When a document was needed, it could easily be searched and retrieved via a very efficient index, and then a hard copy could be made from the retrieved document if required. In Appendix 1, the Assessor Sales List Viewer provides a searchable way to initially choose a desired sales list. In Appendix 2, the PDF associated with the initial list is displayed and can be further queried in order to drill down to a specific document such as shown in Appendix 3, which lists Manufactured Homes on leased land. The information provides both specific parcel and address information related to each record. In this example, that information has been covered to preserve the privacy of these records.

Please list the specific humanitarian benefits the project has yielded so far.

This project has resulted in the savings of over a million sheets of paper per year. This effort supports the County's work on establishing a "green" environment by saving precious natural resources. We have cut back on the use of printer toner and other consumables, including the cardboard boxes needed to store the documents. The application has also provided a much more streamlined workflow for storing and retrieving documents resulting in a more efficient government and improved services provided to our citizens.

Please provide the best example of how the project has benefited a specific individual, enterprise or organization. Feel free to include personal quotes from individuals who have directly benefited from the work.

This application has benefitted the Assessor's Office. Savings of $25,000/year are being realized in association with savings in paper and printer consumables, more efficient use of Assessor staff by not having to store and retrieve documents from boxes and savings in storage costs. In addition, the Assessors staff can now bring up any document they are searching for in seconds and have it displayed on their monitors ready for review, e-mailing and/or printing if needed. This provides improved customer service and streamlined workflow. The saving of paper helps meet the County's green initiative.