



Florida County Enhances Service to Citizens

Pinellas County replaces paper with automation and online access managed through OpenText Case360

Founded in 1912, Pinellas County is the most densely populated county in the state of Florida and currently boasts a population of nearly one million residents. Known for its sandy white beaches, charming shopping districts, and cities such as Clearwater, Tarpon Springs, and St. Petersburg, Pinellas County is consistently recognized for its recreational opportunities, family attractions, and high quality of life. The Pinellas County government is made up of a unique mix of 25 governmental bodies that manage the county's 24 municipalities and unincorporated areas.

Manual entry caused information bottlenecks

The Pinellas County Clerk of the Circuit Court office is responsible for maintaining court records and pleadings, securing court evidence, collecting and disbursing court fines, and a variety of other functions within the County's judicial system. By serving as the primary information collection department for the County's judicial system, the Clerk's office is instrumental in ensuring that the County courts efficiently serve its citizens. However, like many counties experiencing rapid growth, Pinellas County experienced process inefficiencies that hampered its ability to achieve its "Excellence in Customer Satisfaction" mission.

For instance, after a traffic citation was written, paper tickets were submitted to the Clerk's office for data entry into the County's central repository. However, manual data entry was slow and difficult to manage, leading to process bottlenecks. In an effort to more efficiently process information, the Clerk's office completed an initiative to improve its traffic imaging solution and, shortly thereafter, the County Sheriff's department implemented a new, in-car ticketing system that could be capable of integrating with the County's citation repository. "At first, we weren't sure if we were going to be able to integrate directly with the Sheriff's new in-car ticketing system," says Ken Burke, Clerk of the Circuit Court for Pinellas County. "However, we did know that if we could integrate with

INDUSTRY

Government

CUSTOMER

Clerk of the Circuit Court,
Pinellas County, Florida

CHALLENGES

- Millions of documents
- Paper-based management
- Legislated mandates

SOLUTION

- OpenText Case360

BENEFITS

- Paperless system
- Automated entry and online access
- Regulation compliance
- Improved service



the new system, there would be a real opportunity to streamline the data entry process.” As well as experiencing bottlenecks in the citation entry and verification processes, traffic judges were still relying on manila folders with citation documentation to make their rulings.

The County needed a solution that would enable judges to access information from the Clerk’s central repository, where citation information and driving records were held. With access to the central repository, judges could more efficiently view related documents during courtroom proceedings, which could have an impact on their rulings. In addition to meeting their own goals, pending information-sharing mandates from the state government prompted Pinellas County officials to begin looking for the technologies that would enable them to meet the growing needs of their citizens while positioning themselves for the future.

Paper replaced with automation and accessibility

Pinellas County selected OpenText Case360 to better manage the interdependent processes found within the Clerk’s office. First, the OpenText solution was integrated directly with the Sheriff’s new in-car ticketing system. As traffic citations are written, information is transmitted to the Sheriff’s office and then to the Clerk’s office where it is processed and digitally stored in the County’s mainframe. As traffic officers submit their paper tickets to the Clerk’s office, their barcodes are scanned and a simple information verification process takes place to ensure that the transmitted information matches the paper ticket.

“In the past, thousands of hours each year were spent manually inputting traffic citation information into our repository,” says Burke. “The integration of the Sheriff department’s in-car ticketing technology with the OpenText solution has enabled Pinellas County to reallocate our resources to other areas within our organization. Additionally, despite the fact that the Clerk’s office and Sheriff’s department were making significant improvements to their systems at the same time, the inherent flexibility of the OpenText solution and in-car ticketing system made the integration economically feasible and did not require a large time investment.”

By removing the paper-based processes within the Clerk’s office, Pinellas County has also improved the efficiency of its traffic courtrooms. The County has developed a courtroom automation system that enables judges to access the history of an individual, including their recent traffic violations. The system also provides judges with access to driving records, past citations, and Florida’s centralized traffic systems. “In the past, Pinellas County traffic judges were given folders with documentation outlining a resident’s citations and traffic history,” explains Burke. “As the number of cases has grown, so has the need for a more efficient way of handling court documents.”

Proactive productivity serves citizens

Since the implementation of the OpenText case management system, the County has experienced a number of benefits. First, the integration of OpenText solution with Pinellas County’s information repository and in-car traffic ticketing system has enabled County officials to automate the entire information collecting process, saving hundreds of hours of cumbersome data entry processing. Employees are now only required to quickly verify that ticket information is correct, enabling County officials to reallocate resources to other divisions where help might be needed. In addition to streamlining the information entry process, the ticket notification and data entry system has also given the County the ability to proactively address any disconnects between the Clerk’s and Sheriff’s offices. Should an officer or division fail to submit their paper-based tickets to the Clerk’s office, officials now have the ability to request missing documentation, thereby closing the loop on a traffic case.

To date, the County has now outfitted two traffic courts with a completely paperless system, allowing the Clerk’s office to store paper documents only for backup purposes. According to Burke, “At first, county judges were a little hesitant about learning how to use the new system. However, once we showed them how easy the system is to use and the amount of information that can be presented to them at one time, they quickly realized how valuable this type of technology would be to the courts.”



“We will continue to exceed expectations by delivering the systems needed to more efficiently serve our citizens.”

KEN BURKE,
CLERK OF THE CIRCUIT COURT
AND COMPTROLLER,
PINELLAS COUNTY, FLORIDA

Finally, the new process management system also supports the County’s goals for the future. State information-sharing programs will soon be in place and, with the OpenText technology, the County is well-positioned to meet future state mandates. The inherent flexibility of the system will support the County as it continues to grow and as other court systems take on their own paperless initiatives. “Pinellas County is committed to meeting the needs of its residents and, through our partnership with OpenText, we will continue to exceed expectations by delivering the systems needed to more efficiently serve our citizens,” concludes Burke. ■