

Court Case Study: Ingham County, MI Prosecutor's Office

“The JusticeTech system has surpassed my expectations. I cannot imagine where we would be today had we not gotten involved with ImageSoft.”

– **Stuart J. Dunnings III**
Prosecutor,
Ingham County, MI

The Customer

Ingham County Michigan, with a population of about 281,000, is home to Lansing, the state capital, as well as the largest of Michigan's top colleges and universities, Michigan State University. It's also home to the County Prosecuting Attorney's office which, in 2007, was suffering with troublesome, slow paper processes.

The Challenge

Challenging economic conditions across the state and county meant staff cuts in the Prosecuting Attorney's (PA's) office were imminent. Faced with this looming scenario, Ingham County Prosecutor Stuart Dunnings wanted a way to improve efficiencies in the PA's office to ensure that staff would be able to keep pace with the mounting workload once cuts were imposed.

The Process

After determining that technology – specifically, a document management system to convert paper processes to digital processes – would yield the best results, Mr. Dunnings looked to his peers from the Prosecuting Attorney Association of Michigan (PAAM) for input on which vendors and solutions they had used and what outcomes they had achieved. He quickly learned that, while there were multiple options for tackling business process bottlenecks, one company, ImageSoft, was most often cited for its success in resolving such problems.

Ingham chose ImageSoft to achieve Mr. Dunning's vision of “having prosecutors arrive in court with a laptop to prosecute their cases,” and ultimately, enabling all criminal justice agencies within the county – including the PA office, Law Enforcement and the Courts – to share information digitally. The ImageSoft JusticeTech solution, powered by OnBase®, provided document management and automated workflow to achieve these paperless initiatives.

The Success

The JusticeTech solution provided by ImageSoft allowed the Prosecutor's office to significantly increase efficiencies to readily adapt to the loss of personnel without reducing service levels or straining existing staff.

Prior to the JusticeTech solution, locating case files when needed was a time-consuming task. The sheer volume of files and the fact that multiple parties needed access to them – often simultaneously – made it hard to track and manage them. Callers with case inquiries had to wait – hours, days even – for a file to be located before having their call returned and their questions answered.

Case notes were another point of contention. Notes were scribbled all over the file and in no apparent order. Case dispositions were noted on a separate page in the file making it difficult to discern the progression of the case from start to finish. Plus, handwritten notes were often hard to decipher or undated and unsigned leaving the source of the note unknown.

Today, with the ImageSoft JusticeTech system in place, the PA's office has much-improved, more efficient processes for files, notes and multiple other workplace tasks. All file documents, whether paper, digital images, electronic documents or video files, are now scanned and imported directly into the system. With electronic records saved in one central location, all parties – attorneys, supervisors, judges, court clerks – have instant and simultaneous access to case information. Files are never lost or misplaced, and because the system tracks all who view or touch a case file, it's easy to identify who has performed what task in a document.

Caller inquiries are quickly and easily addressed because electronic files are accessible at the touch of a computer keystroke, and notes can be posted to update the case file while the call is underway.

Haphazardly scribbled case notes are history. Now, case notes are automatically posted to the file chronologically alongside case dispositions. The date and name of the employee posting the note are automatically captured by the system. As a result, internal communication among the parties involved in a case has dramatically improved.

Today, rather than lugging a briefcase stuffed with paper files to court, attorneys use a laptop to prepare for trial and work exclusively with electronic files in court. This process offers the added advantage of being able to update their case notes from the court room, further streamlining their workload.

Outside the court, remote access makes documents and files accessible anywhere and at any time. With an Internet connection and 24/7 remote access, staff from the PA's office can retrieve and work documents after hours and on weekends, as needed, to avoid case delays and backlogs.

Back at the office, despite the staff reductions, streamlined processes and increased efficiency have meant no new staff additions were needed to keep pace. This resulted in labor savings to the Prosecutor's office of over \$450,000 per year.

With their success to date, the Ingham PA office is now adding additional features to further extend the benefits of their JusticeTech system. These additions will enable electronic access to incoming incident reports from Law Enforcement, which will further cut costs by reducing travel time and expense for local agencies and State Police. The added capabilities will allow for an additional 5% reduction in staff, representing an added labor savings of \$200,000 annually.

Beyond these significant saving, the county's ImageSoft solution has provided a simpler, swifter and more transparent process to expedite justice and better meet the needs of the public.

Ingham County, MI

The Challenges

- Impending staff cuts would leave fewer people to handle the workload in the busy PA's office
- Sharing and managing case files was difficult and often led to process delays
- Cases files were hard to locate resulting in delayed responses to callers with inquiries about a case

The Results

- Workplace efficiencies have enabled a smaller staff to manage the workload resulting in labor savings of over \$450,000 annually
- All parties in a case have immediate access to case files via computer
- Simpler, faster and more transparent processes allow for better service to the public and swift response to case inquiries
- Electronic files enable Prosecutors to access files remotely and to prosecute a case from a laptop in court