

Oakland County transforms judicial system, saves taxpayers millions of dollars and increases police efficiency.

Overview

■ Challenge

Oakland County, Michigan, needed to alleviate the logistical problems of transporting offenders in its judicial system and ease the burden on its overcrowded courts through improved efficiencies.

■ Why Become an

On Demand Business?

The county decided it needed to completely transform its business processes in the justice system in order to increase safety, save money and increase productivity.

■ Solution

Oakland County developed a solution to integrate multipoint videoconferencing, court recording, data workflow and document management into a unified platform.

■ Key Benefits

Decreased total expenditures of judicial and law enforcement system by US\$5.8 million annually.

» On Demand Business defined

An enterprise whose business processes – integrated end-to-end across the company and with key partners, suppliers and customers – can respond with speed to any customer demand, market opportunity or external threat.



Oakland County, Michigan, and its cities, villages and townships are facing the same business issues that other governments are currently experiencing with their judicial and law enforcement systems: overcrowded courts and jails were creating dangerous, costly logistical problems for transporting offenders, and inefficient systems were preventing police from being on the street protecting its citizens.

The county decided it needed to change its business processes in the justice and law enforcement system completely. This would enable it to: increase safety at courts, jails and

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– Bob Daddow, Deputy County Executive for Special Projects, Oakland County

On Demand Business Benefits

- Decreased total expenditures of judicial and law enforcement system by US\$5.8 million annually, including annual cost of offender transport by US\$3.9 million and cost of warrants served by US\$1.6 million
- Decreased court time for police officers, saving Oakland County 35,800 man-hours annually
- Created a potential revenue stream by marketing this solution to other municipalities

holding cells by minimizing offender transport; save money by re-deploying officers to other duties and by reducing the length of incarceration; and increase productivity by enabling law enforcement agencies to prepare booking documents online and create digital case files on a central server.

Beginning the process

“We have a 480-mile fiber optic network that connects all the cities’, villages’, townships’ and counties’ facilities in Oakland County,” explains Bob Daddow, Deputy County Executive for Special Projects, Oakland County. “We began installing it in 1997, and we knew that we would eventually be transmitting data, voice and video over it.” With that network installed by 2001, the county had some fitful starts and stops before being able to fully realize the potential of the connectivity through the videoconferencing and data management system. “We hired a phone company to provide an off-the-shelf product, and it took about six months before the agreement was terminated, as they couldn’t deliver what we wanted,” Daddow explains. In the spring of 2003, the county decided to build the system internally, drawing on the strengths of its 160-person IT staff.

Setting the parameters

“We brought in Oakland County law enforcement agencies, judges, court administrators and prosecutors, and we locked them in a big auditorium for about four days,” Daddow remembers. “We put together all the concerns and requirements from the time the officer turns on the red lights in the patrol car, until the arraignment is complete. We identified several hundred pieces of paper used in the overall process and put together the parameters to make this whole business process electronic. We selected IBM WebSphere® Application Server as the only product in the market that really met our requirements.”

“We’ve demonstrated the solution to other governments, and we’re beginning to market this system. There are at least four states interested – we hope to take the revenues and turn that into additional functionality within the system.”

– Bob Daddow

The OakVideo project

The resulting project was named OakVideo, and it enables law enforcement agencies to prepare booking documents and create case files on a central server. When an agency transfers files to the folder and it believes a warrant request is ready, the case is immediately “queued” to the county prosecutor. The prosecutor initiates a videoconference with the police to discuss the case, view and remotely photograph evidence, and issue a warrant or a request for additional information. Once the warrants are created, the detective is notified that the warrants are ready to be served; and the court of jurisdiction is queued that a “Warrant Swear To” is requested.

The judge is notified that the offender and detective (and sometimes the prosecutor) are ready for a videoconference through a queuing function in OakVideo. During the resulting videoconference, the judge can digitally sign the warrants and any other forms required of the court. With the OakVideo solution, the booking and arraignment process can now be completed in hours rather than days, substantially reducing redundant offender transport. Unlike traditional “point-to-point” videoconferencing systems, any holding cell can communicate remotely with any courtroom—avoiding the pick-up of offenders not available with a “point-to-point” system.

The courtroom utilizes IBM Business Partner Polycom’s Polycom Viewstation VS4000 and a server which contains a custom service that enables it to act as a network listener, allowing for remote control of individual local cameras and audio systems. Custom FTP services on the server transmit the recorded files to the central server for storage in the case folder.

Individual courtroom computers are equipped with digital signature pads, enabling officers and judges to digitally sign documents in real time. Digital signatures are encrypted and date stamped. Judges can review case documents during the arraignment, sign, and add additional documents to case files in written or digital format. Video and audio are captured on local courtroom VCRs for archival purposes.

Key Components

Software

- IBM WebSphere Application Server, Version 10

Hardware

- OakNet, a 480-mile fiber optic network interconnecting all local courts
- Polycom Viewstation VS4000
- Polycom Viewstation H323
- Polycom Via Video
- Polycom Powercams
- Polycom Path Navigator Server
- Polycom MGC 100
- Polycom MGC 25
- Polycom Global Management System

Business Partner

- Polycom
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Why it matters

Oakland County teamed with IBM and IBM Business Partner Polycom to create a revolutionary booking and arraignment system that unites the judge, prosecutor, police, holding cell detainee and others in a virtual courtroom. The solution resulted in proven savings of US\$5.8 million annually, increased time on the streets for its police officers, and a potentially lucrative revenue source from marketing the videoconferencing solution to other governments.

“IBM WebSphere provided the platform the whole solution is built on, and made the whole project feasible for us; in fact, at one meeting we had with Polycom, they told us we couldn’t do what we were planning with their products, and we told them we already had,” Daddow remembers. “IBM’s open standards philosophy helped us build the entire solution in-house, and the internal diagnostic tools assisted us in the creation of the system and kept us on track. The one or two times we got stuck, we’d make a phone call to IBM and they’d get us patched up and running in no time.”

Opening up new revenue streams for Oakland County

Oakland County has received queries ranging from four different states to the South Korean Supreme Court, about possibly purchasing the OakVideo solution. With police officers spending more time on the streets, reduction in offender transport resulting in safer courtrooms—and quantifiable annual savings of US\$5.8 million for taxpayers—it’s obvious why other government agencies would be interested in this solution. Beyond justice and law enforcement system applications, the solution could prove equally useful in the medical and educational fields or in any situation where the need to share audio, video and documents in real time across a geographically dispersed constituency would improve efficiency.

For more information

Please contact your IBM representative or IBM Business Partner.

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