



Court Labor Savings Resulting From Installation of Paperless Case Management Technology

State, County and Municipal Courts are challenged to manage increased caseloads while being faced with reduced budgets and antiquated systems. The following details efficiency gains in Montgomery AL resulting from installation of the Benchmark court case management system developed by Pioneer Technology Group.

Overview:

Montgomery Alabama is a U.S. city with a population of 202,124. The city has approximately 2,900 employees, and is managed by a nine member city council and Mayor, all elected to four year terms. The Montgomery Municipal Court has 46 employees and is managed by Court Administrator Kenneth Nixon. Mr. Nixon has served as Court Administrator for three years; his background includes extensive experience as an attorney, prosecutor, accountant, and division director for a Fortune 500 company.

Prior to installing Benchmark, the Montgomery Court relied on a legacy AS400 system provided by another private court case vendor. That system could no longer efficiently manage the caseload of Montgomery, and was restricting the court and related departments from making needed system and technology upgrades. Due to the extensive manual processes and the multiple inefficiencies and limitations of both paper files and obsolete technology, the city evaluated numerous case management systems and selected Benchmark from Pioneer Technology Group after receiving proposals from five national case management providers.

Court Specifics:

The Montgomery Court employs a staff of 46 full time employees. 2011 activity by case type was:

Criminal / Misdemeanor Cases:	5,520	*	Parking Cases:	35,653
Criminal Summons Cases:	1,076	*	Traffic Cases:	79,953

Installing the Benchmark case management system in February of 2012 produced immediate and significant efficiency gains across the entire court system and all related departments. Montgomery now utilizes completely paperless processing and electronic case creations throughout all proceedings. The resulting efficiencies are exponential; reduced processing and labor time is realized in all clerical functions and every aspect of court case processing. The projected time and labor savings are so significant that reduced labor expense is anticipated to meet or exceed the product and license fees for Benchmark within the first eighteen months of implementation.

The immediate impact of the system is described by Montgomery Court Administrator Kenneth Nixon:

“I’d like to thank the entire PTG team and staff that worked so diligently on our conversion and implementation. The process was far more seamless than I could have imagined. Moreover, the gains in efficiencies were immediate, resulting in real time decreases in manpower costs. Again, thank you”.

Pre-Trial Preparation:

Montgomery, Alabama conducts court 5 days per week, and the average daily docket consists of 237 cases. Under the old system, pre-trial preparations included the one-by-one review of paper files to manually ensure any associated cases, charges and files were being presented. Court staff pulled multiple paper files from multiple locations for manual updating. All warrants were manually created, scheduled, calculated and signed. Clerks manually pulled numerous pre-trial file requests, which were then reviewed one-at-a-time by attorneys, judges, prosecutors, public defenders, and others.

This manual process was virtually eliminated with Benchmark. The system now provides online pre-trial access to all parties for all files, including imaged case documents, and automatically includes related cases. Pre-trial communications and agreements to pleadings, continuances, and dispositions prior to court are done almost exclusively online, with universal real-time file access. These efficiencies produced the following processing and labor savings:

Reduced Labor and Expense Resulting From Conversion: 47%

In Court Processing

Previously, in court processing was labor intensive and entirely paper dependent. Warrants were manually created and entered, fees calculated manually, and duplicate forms provided to all parties for signature. Scheduling required coordination of multiple physical calendars. Now all forms are electronically rendered and signed by the magistrate via electronic signature pad. Fines are automatically calculated and noted throughout for all parties, and court dates are automatically scheduled by the system. Defendants are now processed on a first-come, first-served basis. Clerks add cases and schedule continuances immediately in the system without creating multiple paper documents. While in-court hours remain relatively constant, multiple efficiencies are gained and related labor and post-court processing is greatly reduced.

In Court Processing Labor and Expense Savings: no net difference

Post-Court Processing:

After installing Benchmark, post-court processing was almost entirely eliminated. Previously, post-court processing required a staff of 6 to work full time generating forms, updating failure to appear notices, and the manual processing of fines, court results, etc. Now, with rare exception, almost every case is updated and processed real-time in the courtroom.

Post Court Processing Labor and Expense Savings: 67%

Payment Processing: Payment options have been expanded to include kiosk payments, web payments via credit card, and e-check payments. These expanded options resulted in revenue being credited immediately, and electronic processing reduced citizen transaction times at payment windows to 2 to 3 minutes, reducing lines, delays, and processing times

Electronic Citations: Citations now fully interface with the state portal, automating 100% of citation case creation, court scheduling, and fee and fine assessments. Previously, all citations were in paper form and manually entered into the CMS application.

JCS Payment and Processing: Probation payments are now imported systematically and automatically posted and reconciled, *reducing a labor and staff intensive process to one employee and one hour*. The old system required manual entry and posting of probation collection payments in CMS application, taking 3 employees an average of 16 hours each to process monthly batch JCS payments.

JCS Probation Processing – Labor and Expense Reduction: 70%

These results reflect only the departments and processes above. Not included were additional efficiencies and savings gained by online and paperless processing, including those from integration with the state's e-citation portal, EZtag parking ticket system, and NCourt credit card and kiosk payment processing. Additional integrations are also being evaluated with jail systems provider New World and other third party platforms.

In summation, the cost and labor savings from installing the system will allow the Montgomery Municipal Court to realize savings that exceed the product and license fees within the first eighteen months of operation. The savings in subsequent years of operation will be even more substantial. Beyond the immediate and direct benefit to the court itself, upgrading technology has also provided numerous benefits to Judges, attorneys, prosecutors, public defenders, and related departments, and perhaps most importantly of all, to the tens of thousands of citizens who interact with the Montgomery Municipal Court system each year.

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