

E-Filing

Study of E-Filing in Colorado and Utah

Definition

E-Filing is a Web-based portal that captures a coversheet and attached electronic documents for court filings. Included are electronic payments, a document system for organizing and storage, electronic workflow for distribution of work processes, and an electronic method of providing service. The solution has virtually eliminated the need for paper.

Business Problem

In Colorado the county courthouses were running out of space to store court files. Clerks inefficiently spent their time locating and pulling cases or tracking down misfiled records. There was too much paper!

In Utah the vision became clear: to move court staff from a data-entry point to a data-quality and case-management strategy.

In both states, real business needs drove the move to electronic filing.

Solutions

Colorado: vendor solution

Utah: in-house solution

Current status

Colorado has a 97 percent adoption rate for E-Filing in civil courts. Utah implemented a pilot project six years ago on limited case types and has since implemented E-Filing in four out of eight judicial districts.

Observations

- Workflow is a key aspect for the judges.

- Integration with existing case management is critical.
- There was a noticeable reduction of file storage in the clerk's offices.
- Electronic rules are enabled in both courts.
- Each court has judges who have embraced E-Filing and provided support for other judges.
- In both states, courtroom and chambers were supplied with equipment for using electronic documents.
- Adams County, Colorado, has been using E-Filing for civil cases for three years. In 2008 they had over 34,000 civil cases filed electronically.

Key Findings

- Governance is critical to building a business plan and strategy.
- Identification of key stakeholders is necessary.
- Obstacles for using electronic documents must be removed.
- IT architecture planning and implementation is critical to E-Filing.
- E-Filing standards must support best practices.

"Use the principles of Paper on Demand as an opportunity to improve the Court processes."

**Colorado Judicial Branch CIO,
Dr. Robert Roper**

Lessons Learned

- Identify business unit stakeholders to determine new business processes that focus on efficiency.
- Develop a business plan that includes strategies for giving up paper.
- Develop an implementation plan with the stakeholder based on both business and technology resources.
- Do not make E-Filing mandatory in the beginning.
- Review existing rules and auditing procedures before developing an E-Filing solution.
- Develop a communication plan in support of E-Filing.
- Review the organization's information technology infrastructure.
- Develop a plan that uses as much of the existing case management system as possible.
- Develop standards for document size and security.
- Train lawyers and court staff to use E-Filing effectively.

Benefits

- Convenient and easy method for lawyers to file cases and documents with the court.
- More accurate and timely filing of cases for lawyers.
- More accurate court dockets.
- Savings in court staff personnel time.
- Better customer service for court users and job satisfaction of court staff.
- Real cost savings in terms of file storage units, files folders, and postage.
- Court files can be simultaneously accessed by several people at the same time.
- Judges can file orders and update the docket, so attorneys and clients can quickly learn the outcomes of their cases.

For more information, contact NCSC's Technology Division at technology@ncsc.org.



**Colorado Judge
SABINO E. ROMANO**

"I use electronic documents everyday in my court. I prepare and file my orders using electronic documents."



**Utah Judge
JOHN R. MORRIS**

"It is important to understand judicial workflow and obtain judges input into designing E-Filing."