

## E-Payments for Court Fines and Fees

### Study of E-Payments in Missouri, Colorado, Utah, and Iowa

#### Synopsis

The purpose of this case study is to highlight the successful use of Electronic Payments in Courts. Courts reviewed for this case study had a case management system and Internet public access in place.

The courts developed a system that provides the public with a convenient online method of paying court fines and fees.

#### Definition

Provide citizens with the ability to pay court fines and fees with a credit or debit card, using existing case management systems and the Internet.

#### Challenge

The challenge for these projects was to develop a payment engine for accepting credit cards. In all of these courts, strategies were put in place to integrate the payment process with the case management system.

#### Solution

Missouri developed the solution in house.  
Colorado developed the solution in house.  
Utah developed the solution in house.  
Iowa developed the solution in house.

#### Executive Summary

##### Challenge

- Formation of uniform practices and procedures for court payments.
- Re-engine accounting, auditing and business processes to reflect more efficient delivery methods of court services to citizens.
- Additional credit card processing fees. All of the states developed strategies to cover fee costs and did not pass them on to citizens.

##### Solution

- Business strategies and technology solutions that delivery.
- Deciding if system requirements are available from a vendor or if a system must be built in house.
- Providing extensive training to court staff and judges.

##### Results

- Results of this project include creation of a payment process for citizens to pay court fines and fees using the Internet.
- The result is increased collection and more immediate payments of fines, fees and court costs.

**“The online payment system is convenient, and will save court users time in coming to the courthouse, and will help alleviate traffic at the courthouse front counters.”**

**Utah State Court Administrator  
Dan Becker**

## Observations

- Clerk of Court staff used developed software system to assist in daily reconciliation of transactions.
- Court staff interviewed pointed to the benefit of time savings for citizens and staff.
- Clerks did not have to deal with as much cash or checks. Fewer bank deposits and less reconciliation.
- In Colorado, January 2008 records indicate that the Judicial Branch collected 61 credit card payments totaling \$8,156. In May 2009 the number of credit card receipts had grown to 5,577 and totaled \$803,074.
- In Iowa, the Judicial Branch collects about \$1,200,000 per month.
- In October 2009, the Utah courts collected \$84,530.

## Key Findings

- Identify stakeholder for business practice changes and policy formation.
- Clerks and judges were cautious and reluctant to change practices and processes.
- Various courts experienced statewide implementation and adoption took between three and six months.

## Lessons Learned

- Develop standard methods of handling secure electronic financial transactions.
- Review existing rules and audit procedures before developing of a system.
- Integrate electronic banking services in reconciliation process.
- Form a communication and training plan for deployment.
- Market system to both citizens and law enforcement.

## Benefits

- Increased collections and revenue.
- More efficient processing of payment receipts in clerk's offices
- A savings of clerk's time in daily reconciliation of accounts and deposits.
- Reduced physical file storage of financial records.
- Better customer service for citizens, which lead to better court services satisfaction.

## Conclusion

Electronic payments have been a large success for citizens, judges and court clerks. This is one of the low hanging, high success technology applications that enhance services of the court and the public. Costs for development and implementation in the states reviewed show a good return on their investment. In discussions with court users, they are pleased with the overall service that electronic payments afford the court.

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