

San Bernardino County

San Bernardino County eliminates traffic-ticket congestion with Micro Focus® Verastream® Host Integrator



Overview

California's San Bernardino County is the biggest county in the continental U.S. and supports an economy ranked among the top 50 in the world. One of the fastest-growing metropolitan areas in the country, the county has more than two million residents and employs more than 18,000 people.

When the county court needed a short-term fix to an overloaded, underperforming traffic-ticket system, Verastream Host Integrator was the natural first choice.

Challenge

County employees and IT resources were getting bogged down processing the court's 200,000 to 300,000 traffic tickets a year. Each time local law enforcement delivered citations to the courthouse, a clerk would manually key them into a case-management system running on a Sun platform.

When drivers came to pay their fines, a clerk would retrieve the data from a green screen

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Chief Technology Officer
Superior Court

and process the payment. The problem was that the clerks were too busy doing data entry to properly staff the payment windows.

Alan Crouse, chief technology officer for the Superior Court, said that this labor-intensive, time-consuming process was unacceptable. “Our clerks can handle a large variety of tasks across the courthouse,” he said. “They are very capable and we wanted to free up their time for handling phone calls, staffing the counters, and working with the public.” Outsourcing data entry was not an option because communication between an external source and the courthouse mainframe was impossible.

Although California is building a new court case-management system projected to roll out in four years, the court needed an interim solution that could take advantage of existing data and functions. Unfortunately, the existing systems had no interface capabilities.

Solution

As a satisfied Extra!® user since 2003, the court decided to see if Verastream Host Integrator could automate some key processes. Verastream Host Integrator encapsulates mainframe data and logic as web services, XML, Java, or .NET components that can be integrated with other business applications. This process also enables participation in today's service-oriented architectures.

COUNTY OF
SAN BERNARDINO



At a Glance

■ Industry

State and Local Government

■ Location

United States

■ Challenge

Clerks were spending too much time on data entry for traffic-ticket violations.

■ Solution

Use Verastream Host Integrator to streamline ticket processing by reading the XML stream and automating data entry into the master green-screen application.

■ Results

- + Increased throughput by a factor of four.
- + Gave clerks time to interact with the public and do higher-level work.
- + Improved customer service and leveraged IT investments.
- + Established a rapid application development platform for ongoing projects

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After working with our consultants, Crouse knew he was on the right path. “They brought the right resources to bear, they knew what they were doing, and they came up with a great interface design,” said Crouse. “The Attachmate (now part of Micro Focus) development team was experienced enough to know the kinds of things we were looking for. We didn’t have to review all the nuances in our products with them.”

Six months later, San Bernardino County had a new solution. Now an application called AutoCite, built upon Verastream’s multi-threaded architecture, receives scanned citation and XML files from an external agency or directly from police handheld devices. The citation files are processed on demand as they arrive into the system. The Verastream solution validates the XML data, parses it, and sends it to the court’s Sun-based green-screen application.

By harnessing the power of XML, the court has options for interpreting performance and transaction histories processed through the new system. In addition, the solution includes custom XSLT style sheets to present a standard report view. Automated email notifications for alerts, as well as a graphical interface for managing the system, are also provided.

For invalid or failed transactions, a browser-based application provides easy multi-user access for data correction. This capability gives staff an easier way to fix invalid citation files without working in XML natively.

“The solution was delivered on time and worked right off the bat,” Crouse reported. Clerks are

freed from heads-down tasks, so they can keep more payment windows open and do higher-level work.

Results

Now ticket-payers have a better courthouse experience because they don’t have to stand in long lines. “Of course they’re not happy to be here in the first place,” said Crouse. “But they appreciate the fact that we can serve them professionally.”

Among Verastream’s strengths is its ability to “watch” the screen with no imposed timeouts. “With its full programming environment, it lets the host be event-driven, and that’s made all the difference,” Crouse said. “In fact, Verastream has increased our throughput by a factor of four.”

The Verastream approach caught on. San Bernardino County went on to reuse the same Verastream-generated services to web-enable their child support processes. San Bernardino is installing self-service courthouse kiosks, with a custom Verastream application as the back end. And a sister country, Riverside, is using the same Verastream model to implement a traffic-citation system of their own.

For local governments trying to satisfy consumer and business requirements while getting the most out of existing investments, Verastream provides clear, ongoing benefits. As testimony to that fact, Crouse concluded by saying, “We’ve been very happy with the work that’s been done here.”



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