

CUSTOMER SPOTLIGHT

ALLEGAN COUNTY, MICHIGAN

WITH AUMENTUM RECORDER, ALLEGAN COUNTY INCREASES PRODUCTIVITY AND ACCURACY WHILE PROVIDING FOCUSED CONSTITUENT SERVICES IN SPITE OF STAFF CUTS

Fast evolving from a rural to a suburban environment, Allegan County's population of 111,000 has dramatically increased and continues to grow.



THE CHALLENGE



Shifts in population, moving south from Grand Rapids and Holland and north from Kalamazoo, have made Allegan the 11th fastest growing County in the State of Michigan. Faced with this increase in constituents, while at the same time experiencing a 20 percent decrease in her staff, prompted County Clerk-Register, Joyce A. Watts to seek a replacement of the County's old recorder software system. "We had a records system that had met our needs for more than 10 years. However, it was fast becoming obsolete and could not keep up with our present and future needs," said Watts. "We needed a new system with features that would allow us to provide better and new services to our constituents, but yet with the flexibility to continue to do some things based on the way people use information in this area. And we also needed a system that would allow us to do more with less."

THE SOLUTION



Watts and her team looked at a number of systems. According to her, five companies responded to the RFP. "Of all the companies that gave presentations, it became evident to all of us that Aumentum Recorder had the best combination of features and services. Including their ability to work with us to ensure a perfect fit between their system and our processes; plus the training and support that we needed to run the system now and in the future," said Watts. "The system is also very user friendly and has a great degree of expandability, allowing us to gradually make meaningful changes as needed. In the end, because of the flexibility that Aumentum Recorder provided with its workflow user-configured set-up, we were able to implement many of those changes a lot quicker than we anticipated." Beyond Aumentum Recorder's workflow management system, with easy and flexible end-user configuration

DID YOU KNOW?

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Don't Take Our Word For It

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that helps optimize the records management process, Allegan's Aumentum Recorder provides the County with many other features including: a full and integrated cashing system, automated redaction and indexing for increased productivity and accuracy, and increased user productivity through the ability to run multiple processes at the same.

THE DEPLOYMENT



"The development and deployment process promised to be quite intimidating because we were basically going to re-engineer our entire workflow," said Watts. Knowing

this to be the case, and to help the County achieve its objectives, the Aumentum implementation team set out to learn everything they could about the process the County was using and the process they needed and wanted to use. "Basically, Thomson Reuters walked with us every step of the way," added Watts. "They spent a lot of time with us learning how we did things, and then based on what they found, and our needs, likes and dislikes, they developed a system with workflows based on the attributes of the program that precisely met our needs. It was a very impressive, thorough and highly cooperative effort using the features of the program to enhance what we used to do and to allow us to do the new things we wanted to do."

And even though it was difficult, Watts also said that Thomson Reuters team worked well with the staff and allayed their fears during the development, training, deployment and post-deployment period. "'Oh Joyce, what are you getting us into?' was a phrase often heard around the office during the deployment time," said Watts. "And, yet, when it was all done, through very personalized training, the staff gained the comfort and confidence of working with a system that allows them to do a lot more than what they could do with the old one."

BENEFITS



According to Watts the County has grown so accustomed to the benefits of Aumentum Recorder that they cannot imagine how they were able to get along with their old system.

In the very early days Watts said she heard comments from her staff such as: "What in the world are we doing this for?" But, she added, that very soon, they realized how the system made their lives so much easier.

"They were able to focus on tasks that were the most productive, that improved accuracy," she said. "It freed up their time to personally tend to the needs of the public—our constituents—the most beneficial service we can provide. We're no longer sitting and mindlessly doing data entry," she continued. "Even though we've had staff reductions of about 20 percent, we can now get the basic work done in a very fast, accurate and efficient manner, so when constituents walk in, we can spend the time assisting them. Our staff finds that very rewarding."

In terms of the accuracy of data, Watts reports that her staff confidence level has increased because some of the features of the system allow for the population of fields and the redaction and indexing of data with a single stroke, "so they don't have to deal with the errors associated with double entry." Other benefits of the systems include a subscription system that allows "power users" such as title and mortgage companies, banks, attorneys and others to access and download County records online. In addition, Watts is in the early planning stages to integrate Aumentum Recorder with other County systems, as well as adding eRecording—a Recorder module—to Allegan's system.

THOMSON REUTERS SERVICE AND PEOPLE

Watts said that Thomson Reuters has been very proactive in letting the County know things that they can do to improve their processes. "They will call and tell us: 'We made a change and are wondering if you may be able to benefit from this?' Having someone who is proactive, that is always, on an ongoing basis, looking out for us so that we can apply the very best we can in our office, is something that the people of Thomson Reuters do regularly." Watts added that when they encounter problems, their support team helps her "put our problems into words" so that they can quickly identify who at Thomson Reuters is best suited to get it fixed immediately. "We can tell there's a concerted effort at Thomson Reuters to address our concerns as promptly as possible."

"One of the reasons we chose the Aumentum Recorder system was because of the caliber of the people in the organization," said Watts. "They are professional, people you would want to know if they were your neighbors—they're people of integrity. Not all companies hire for the qualities that I've observed—that gives me confidence, because I have a lot of respect for their commitment and their abilities."

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JOYCE WATTS
County Clerk Register
Allegan County, MI



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