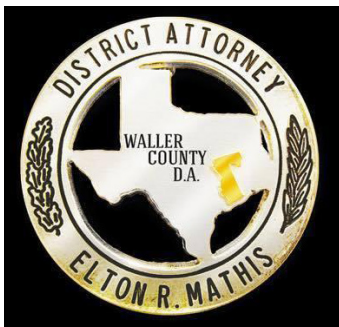




Case Study: Revolutionising the Way District Attorneys Work: Compliance and Productivity



Company: District Attorney's Office, Waller County, Texas

Country: USA

Industry: Legal

Profile: Progressive District Attorney's office

Key drivers: Legal matter transparency, admin efficiency and effectiveness

Waller County seize the document management transparency initiative

When former Texas Governor Rick Perry signed Senate Bill 1611, also known as the Michael Morton Act, into law in 2013, many predicted a new era in discovery for prosecutors.

Though legal commentators have suggested that purposeful non-disclosure of exculpatory evidence was and is rare, accidental or negligent non-disclosure can present a large problem to prosecutors and police agencies. The Act is designed to ensure a more transparent discovery process with an open file policy that removes barriers for accessing evidence.

However, when the legislature passed the Act, there was little guidance about how best to accommodate the new law in practice. Many counties resorted to using manual labour to count pages in files and list them to meet the transparency requirements of the law.

Elton Mathis, Waller County District Attorney, sought to increase efficiency by modernisation. His incumbent document management system did not have the required capability to provide a discovery compliance document.

Working with Document Logistix, Mathis was able to reduce wasteful manual labour procedures, introduce benefits to the legal system and meet both the spirit and word of the Michael Morton Act.

Automated file generation

Mathis' main objective was to implement a system that could transfer documents expediently from hard copy to electronic format. Documents vary widely in nature and profile, including police reports, supplements, statements and photos, as well as dynamic audio and video content.

The aim was to enable the prosecutors to have ready access to all their files and cases as soon as they came into the office. In addition, files would no longer need to be brought to court and the office would be truly electronic.

Waller County's new system has a built-in documentation program that compiles a list of all information uploaded. This compilation is then documented and hard copied into the discovery compliance document used in the county. When a case is disposed of, staff only have to print this document which is automatically generated and filed with the court. Staff no longer have to spend hours counting documents to ensure compliance with the Act and staff efficiency has improved significantly.



“With the help of Kim Kuykendall and her team at Document Logistix, the Waller County District Attorney’s office has become the leader in Texas, and possibly the US, in criminal case discovery compliance. Collaborating with Document Logistix and nationally known prosecutor Warren Diepraam, we have produced a product that not only ensures open and honest criminal prosecutions, but also helps protect prosecutors from Brady claims and streamlines the sharing of information.”

**Elton Mathis, Waller County
District Attorney**

An accurate history of all documents

The project required auto-logging capabilities to track what information is provided and when. Document Logistix implemented a program that accomplished this goal, either through electronic filing from police agencies to the prosecutor’s office, or by scanning and uploading hard copies provided by various law enforcement agencies.

The new system enables the District Attorney’s office to transfer information, omitting any mandated exceptions, to the defence to comply with the Michael Morton Act.

The office can track information from when it arrives and throughout its digital lifecycle, which overcomes the problem of anyone claiming that documents have not been sent or received.

All documents are tracked through the system from upload, to changes made, to viewing access dates and times, which reduces debate about disclosure times as the program automatically logs each step in the process.

Key benefits of a legal document management system

- Streamlines file counting and manual procedures
- Reduces arguments between prosecutors and police about what information was provided and when
- Eliminates the need to store papers for lengthy periods of time with concurrent losses of documents and physical space constraints
- Ensures defense attorneys view case information for fair representation
- Mitigates risk and liability for Michael Morton compliance regulation
- Allows defense attorneys to view case information remotely
- Provides security and increases office productivity

Document Logistix listens; it’s all about you

Document Logistix builds solutions around customer requirements rather than a feature set. Our first action was to listen to Waller County’s needs to understand their world and any underlying workflow process or technology requirements.

Based on the information received and the understanding of Waller County’s processes, the new document management system was designed to help Waller County achieve its compliance and efficiency goals. One of which was a specific request from District Attorney, Elton Mathis.

The challenge: Mr. Mathis requested that a defense attorney have remote access to specific case files to eliminate the need of paper copies and distribution. Normally this wouldn’t be a problem for Document Logistix, but Mr. Mathis inquired that the District Attorney have insight to the defense attorney file as well as their own internal file for the case, which the defense attorney could not have access to.

The result: A custom developed feature termed “dynamic permissions”. Document Logistix was able to develop the feature and implement it into its software before the final installation of the project. Document Logistix received a glowing acknowledgment of which we are very proud.