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NACRC 2009 Best Practices Submission

LAVitals System: Enhancing Customer Service While Saving Taxpayer Dollars

BACKGROUND OF THE BEST PRACTICE

The Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder /County Clerk fully implemented the new LAVitals System project in 2009 in order to enhance the Birth, Death and Marriage section by upgrading the existing system to the latest technologies to provide more efficient and effective service to our customers. Additionally, existing systems made available new methods of cost-effective service delivery to replace what had become cumbersome and inefficient document ordering, delivery and cash control.

Increased volume also presented the need for a new system. The Birth, Death and Marriage Section now receives approximately 265,000 Birth, Death and Marriage records per year for filing and issues 700,000 certified record copies.

THE PROBLEM/NEED OF THE BEST PRACTICE

Inefficiencies in cash control, document processing, auditing and staff time coupled with newly available systems and technological upgrades made the 20 year-old vitals system obsolete. The time and cost it took to process documents and maintain cash flow became unacceptable and inconsistent with Los Angeles County's goal of providing cost-effective services to the public.

Before LAVitals was implemented, the process of completing a customer copy request was manual, requiring extensive processing time at almost every step. For example, the customer might submit a request for a certified copy by means of mail or in person at the RR/CC Norwalk headquarters or any of the five branch office locations. The customer prepared paper applications for copy requests and the staff stored all paper applications. Birth, Death and

Marriage copies that were stored on film or paper format could take up to 3 weeks to return via mail to the requestor.

The Legacy Vital Records Indexing System located on a mainframe in Downey – 5 miles off site - was specifically designed for The Los Angeles County Registrar Recorder / County Clerk for storing the indexes of all Vital Records. Although the system was still functioning properly, it was highly outdated and provided very limited functionality.

DESCRIPTION OF THE SOLUTION/BEST PRACTICE

New automation and use of modern technology allows the Recorder to streamline the Vital Records ordering and delivery process for both the public and staff end users. Our customer module permits full Vital indexing with data entry, search, view, and print capabilities in addition to electronic application storage and tracking of mail applications, retrievals and reports. The system also includes a fully integrated Cashier Module used for reports and balancing funds. The LAVitals System provides an automated indexing and inquiry system for all Vital Records and an Administrator module that allows all Supervisors, Managers and Technical Staff to run a variety of reports on all system activity such as inquires printing, deleting, modifying, and system errors.

LAVitals allows the public to submit their application for a certified copy from the comfort of their home via an easy to use web site. The front lobby Kiosk center allows customers to submit a complete electronic application to the counter staff in order to fulfill their request, making our new system virtually paperless. The system also provides an electronic cashiering module (replacing outdated stand alone cash registers), and creates complete electronic workflow processes for routing requests and producing detailed auditing controls.

Another important enhancement gives customers the option of scanning their drivers licenses into the system to populate the relevant fields on the application.

OBJECTIVES OF THE SOLUTION/BEST PRACTICE

The primary motivation for pursuing internal construction of the system was to alleviate the prohibitive costs associated with building, maintaining and supporting a new system with a commercial vendor. Other objectives of the system enhancements were threefold; to migrate off an outdated and unsupportable mainframe system, to create a more accountable and accurate cashiering system to meet the complexity of the largest county in the nation, and to provide a more accessible and timely system for the public seeking vital records.

PLAN/TIMEFRAME FOR DEVELOPMENT

System development began in June, 2007. During the first phase, the RR/CC's IT team developed system specifications, wrote the code, developed and proofed user screens with Recorder Bureau staff, resolved issues and produced user manuals. During the second stage which began in August, 2008 Recorder and IT staff installed servers, new work stations, public kiosks, and computers to replace old cashiering stations. They also conducted further system reviews and undertook an extensive training program with testing procedures.

The system was fully implemented in January, 2009.

USE OF TECHNOLOGY

The use of new technology drove the design and implementation process. IT staff wrote SQL 2005 software codes to support windows versions of document ordering, cashiering, auditing and viewing. Hardware enhancements included touch screen monitors, electronic signature pads, receipt printers and check endorsers, magnetic drivers license swipers and bar code scanners for security paper tracking.

COST OF THE PROGRAM

There was no cost to the RR/CC other than the purchase of new equipment to support enhancements which is estimated at \$400,000. The cost would have been between \$14 and \$18 million based on Request for Proposal (RFP) submissions requested before deciding to develop the system in-house,

RESULTS/SUCCESS OF THE PROGRAM

LAVitals greatly improved all areas of the business area from providing customer copies via the web, counter or mail, storage and retrieval of the images and indexes through the online program, an electronic cashiering interface and detailed reporting.

Our new system provides a complete audit trail of each customer copy request which greatly aids in the effort to fight against identity theft. The LAVitals system was designed to provide more detailed tracking, and meet the needs of the public. The Birth, Death and Marriage Records section is responsible for receiving and reviewing Birth and Death Certificates from the Department of Health Services, reviewing and registering marriage certificates, and updating records including sealing notices and Affidavits from the State Registrar. The BDM section acts as the Public Guardian of the Birth, Death and Marriage Records and of the Indices, which are now securely stored in our own department within the new LAVitals system.

BENEFITS OF THE SOLUTION/BEST PRACTICE

The most noticeable benefit to the public and to Los Angeles County was the design and implementation of an efficient and effective vital records delivery and archival system that also saved millions in taxpayer dollars. In addition to the up-front cost savings, another tangible benefit to designing and implementing in-house systems is the ongoing savings realized through system maintenance and enhancements over time.

More benefits include:

- Greater control of money collected with database driven cashier interface, linked to Finance for easy reconciliation and collections;
- Detailed tracking of all requests and storage of customer data and signatures;
- Electronic routing of requests allowing for efficient use of staff time;
- Use of the Internet or Kiosk-based application request modules rather than having to fill out lengthy paper applications.

PLEASE TAKE YOUR RECEIPT AFTER YOU SUBMIT
NOTIFY STAFF IF YOU DON'T RECEIVE ONE

Home

Which type of Certificate would you like to purchase?

Birth Certificate

Death Certificate

Marriage Certificate

Confidential Marriage Certificate

Birth, Death, and Marriage Certificates are available ONLY for people
who were Born, Died, or Married in Los Angeles County

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