

Laserfiche ECM Blogs

The Ticket to Public Safety

Written by Meghann Wooster



With its motto, “One Team, One Mission,” it’s clear that unity is important to the Long Beach Police Department (LBPD). However, without consistent access to the PD’s law enforcement records and administrative files, officers and employees had a difficult time staying on the same page.

Organization Profile

- The Long Beach Police Department’s 1,450 employees provide law enforcement for the nearly 500,000 residents of the City of Long Beach, CA, the sixth-largest city in the state.

Situation

- A legacy imaging system built on Kofax and ApplicationXtender took too much time to manage, administer and troubleshoot. Plus the department’s optical jukebox was expensive, prone to breakdown and offered limited archiving capabilities.

Solution

- In August 2009, the City of Long Beach standardized on Laserfiche ECM to create consistency, efficiency and transparency – and save thousands of dollars in maintenance fees.

Benefits

- The LBPD manages a variety of content in Laserfiche, from 20 years’ worth of arrest records and 10 years’ worth of crime reports to tickets and restraining orders.
- A tight, three-way integration between Laserfiche, Tiburon and Business Objects enables officers to instantly access gang injunction-related documents right from their patrol cars.
- Next, the LBPD plans to use Laserfiche Workflow to automate the uniform ordering process and the police report request process.

When Jonathan Stafford took over as Administrator of LBPD’s Records Division in 2004, he inherited a legacy imaging system built with Kofax and ApplicationXtender. “Even back in 2004, I knew the system was outdated,” says Stafford, whose area of

responsibility grew to include LBPD's Technology Division in 2008. "We were in desperate need of a flexible, easy-to-use content management solution that would grant our officers and employees access to mission-critical information from wherever they happened to be."

Ed Ivora, Assistant Administrator of LBPD's Records and Technology Division, notes that the old system "took too much time to manage, administer and troubleshoot. We wanted an easily customizable ECM solution that we could use without advanced engineering degrees."

In the past, the LBPD had made use of an optical jukebox for digital document storage. "We'd take files off the server and burn them to optical disks," explains Ivora. "The jukebox was a big piece of hardware that stored 256 disks, but like anything mechanical, it was prone to breaking down."

Stafford notes that it wasn't just the unreliability of the jukebox that concerned him, it was also the expense and limited archiving capabilities. "We had a half-a-million dollar archiving solution that didn't give us a way to dispose of records that had outlived their retention schedules. From an efficiency standpoint, it just didn't make sense."

In August 2009, the City of Long Beach chose Laserfiche as its enterprise content management (ECM) standard, which was something Stafford had been pushing for quite some time. "We were delighted when the City decided to standardize on Laserfiche, because it was our first choice for the PD. We knew that the simplicity and flexibility of the system would enable us to be more efficient."

Curtis Tani, Director of Technology Services for the City of Long Beach, adds, "We selected Laserfiche to create more consistency, efficiency, and transparency, while saving the city thousands of dollars in equipment and maintenance fees."

In the PD, the transition to Laserfiche—including the migration of three million documents and nearly ten million images from the department's legacy system—went smoothly. "We were done with the conversion process way before I expected to be," says Stafford.

All in all, Ivora estimates that installation, including file conversion, was 100% complete within two months.

Adaptability Is Key

Through the migration process, the LBPD was able to add 20 years' worth of arrest records to the Laserfiche repository, along with 10 years' worth of crime reports. "What had never been digitized in the past," says Stafford, "were the field interview cards and

case files. So the first new thing we did with Laserfiche was to bring in field interview cards.” According to Stafford, detectives had been pushing him to digitize the FI cards for quite some time, since instant access to them enables them to more easily solve crimes.

When capturing files, the LBPd uses Laserfiche Import Agent, a tool that automatically brings files into Laserfiche from network directories, fax servers and local folders. “Import Agent lets us use the fax servers, MFPs and other Xerox machines we already had in place,” Ivora explains.

Just as the Records & Technology Division didn’t have to invest in new hardware, it also didn’t have to invest in creating all-new folder structures. “Everyone was happy with the way general information—like maps, procedural documents, assault weapon information and so on—was structured and organized in our legacy system,” says Ivora. “Laserfiche is flexible and adaptable enough that we could mirror the old structure in a Laserfiche folder called PD Docs, allowing people to access and view this information in a familiar format.”

He adds, “Laserfiche is great because it’s easy to customize it to our needs.”

Expanding Access to the Field

To date, the LBPd’s repository contains a wide range of electronic and scanned content, including:

- Tickets.
- Restraining orders.
- Arrest reports.
- Timecards.
- Policies and procedures.
- Forms.
- And more.

With Laserfiche, LBPd officers have the ability to retrieve many of these document types directly from their patrol vehicles, whereas in the past they could only view them from computers in the police station. Laserfiche WebLink, a browser-based thin client that provides secure, read-only access to the repository, gives them immediate access to these documents when they’re in the field, saving time and ensuring that they follow the proper procedures and have the most current information on hand.

“One thing I’ve learned over thirteen years of working for the PD is that you have to make things easy for the officers,” says Stafford. “They need to worry about protecting us, not about finding the right paperwork.”

Targeting Gang Members

The PD’s gang injunction program has benefitted tremendously from remote access to the Laserfiche repository. Gang injunctions are court-issued restraining orders prohibiting gang members from participating in specific activities such as loitering, smoking marijuana or wearing gang colors. These injunctions allow officers to arrest named gang members for injunction violations rather than waiting for a more serious crime to occur.

In order to make an arrest based on a gang injunction, officers must first confirm that the gang member in question has previously been served a copy of all court documents related to the injunction. In the past, LBPB officers were forced to call around the PD to confirm proof of service. Tracking down the paperwork was frequently a time-consuming task that resulted in missed opportunities to make arrests.

Today, a tight, three-way integration between Laserfiche, Tiburon (the PD’s records management application) and Business Objects (LBPB’s business intelligence software) gives officers the ability to pull up specific Crystal Reports containing hyperlinks to images stored in the Laserfiche repository. Through Laserfiche WebLink, officers can instantly access the injunction-related information and images needed to make arrests.

“This integration allows us to deliver injunction information to officers in the field in as few clicks as possible,” says Stafford. “The impact has been huge.”

In fact, on November 8, 2010, the LBPB, along with Long Beach’s mayor and prosecutors, announced a massive gang injunction against more than 100 known gang members with ties to the Mexican Mafia. The injunction targets gang members from all over Los Angeles County who commit crimes in Long Beach—not just those based in Long Beach. Without Laserfiche, enforcing this injunction would be difficult, to say the least.

Working Up to Workflow

Although Stafford is happy with the progress LBPB has made with Laserfiche so far, he explains, “We’re going to push this system to automate business processes as well as eliminate our paper files.”

Laserfiche Workflow will be the engine driving the automation of business processes, and the uniform ordering process will be the first one to be transformed.

Currently, officers fill out a paper form when they need new boots or a new shirt. The form must be approved by the officer's sergeant and then his commander before it moves on to Personnel. After Personnel checks the officer's order history, the form moves to the Fiscal Department, which forwards it to the uniform service. After that, Fiscal must call the officer and inform him that he may place his order directly with the uniform service.

According to Stafford, "It's a frustrating, repetitive process that would be much simpler with e-forms and automatic e-mail routing."

Once the uniform ordering process has been automated, Stafford's team will tackle police report request process, which will enable employees to more efficiently manage citizens' and insurance companies' requests for police reports.

Business-Led Technology

With 1,450 employees in the LBPD, all of whom have access to Laserfiche, Stafford notes that the system's ability to balance central control with local flexibility is vital.

"We create different repositories for different divisions because they all have their own unique document types and preferred filing methods," explains Stafford. "Laserfiche gives us central control over system administration and security, while giving each of the divisions control over its own information."

He continues, "When we were evaluating ECM technology, we knew we wanted a system that would adapt to the needs of our business, not the other way around. Laserfiche is helping us solve crimes and save lives, and it's doing it in the way we want, not the way a vendor prescribes."

As he outlines the overall benefits of Laserfiche, including simplicity, user-friendliness and adaptability, Stafford points out that the PD is only one year into a five-year implementation. "We're getting there," he says, "but this is just the beginning."



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