

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

Reusable services enable subsequent mainframe-integration solutions



At more than 20,000 square miles, California's San Bernardino County is the biggest county in the continental U.S. and supports an economy ranking among the top 50 in the world. One of the fastest-growing metropolitan areas in the country, the county has more than 2 million residents and employs more than 18,000 workers.

Inefficient Manual Processes

About 20 of those employees—and various siloed IT resources—were getting bogged down in the processing of the court's 200,000 to 300,000 traffic tickets a year; their systems needed to be updated. Each time the local law enforcement agency 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 the courthouse to pay their fines, a clerk would retrieve the data from the green screen and process the payment. The problem was that there weren't enough clerks to staff the payment windows, because too many of them were busy doing data entry.

Alan Crouse, chief technology officer for the Superior Court, said that this labor-intensive and 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 the data entry was not initially an option because communication between an external source and the courthouse mainframe system was impossible.

Getting the Most from Existing Systems

The state of California is building a new court case-management system that will be rolled out and mandated for use statewide in four years. But the court wanted a solution that would provide better performance in the interim, while taking advantage of the data and functions they had already invested in. The problem was that those existing systems had no interface capabilities.

As a satisfied Attachmate® EXTRA® user since 2003, the court decided to see if Attachmate® Verastream® Host Integrator could be used to automate some key processes. Verastream Host Integrator encapsulates mainframe data and logic via the screen interface to enable participation in today's service-oriented architectures.

QUICK VIEW

Problem

Agents were spending too much time on manually processing traffic citations.

Solution

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

Results

- Increased throughput by a factor of four.
- Gave courthouse clerks time to interact with the public and do higher-level work.
- Improved customer service.
- Leveraged investment in existing systems.
- Established a rapid application-development platform for ongoing projects.

Attachmate Consulting Gets it Right

When Attachmate consultants came on site to do a feasibility study, 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 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."

About six months later, San Bernardino County had their new solution up and running. Now an application called AutoCite, built upon Verastream and its multi-threaded architecture, receives scanned citation and XML files from an external agency—or directly from police-force 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 e-mail notifications for

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Superior Court of
California
County of San Bernardino

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 multiple-user access for data correction. This capability means that staff has 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. And now clerks are freed from heads-down tasks so they can keep more payment windows open and do higher-level work.

The Verastream Advantage

Even the ticket-payers admit to having 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 attributes is its ability to “watch” the screen with no imposed timeouts, Crouse said. “With its full programming environment, it lets the host be event-driven, and that's made all the difference,” he added. “In fact, Verastream has increased our throughput by a factor of four.”

Verastream transforms host applications into SOA assets by exposing business processes as web services, XML, Java, or .NET components that can be reused to build composite applications. San Bernardino County had such success with their motor vehicle solution that they went on to reuse the same basic Verastream-generated services to web-enable their child-support processes.

Reuse, Don't Reinvent

Statewide child support staff, who handle about 100,000 cases a year, have been manually keying in data and mailing paper documents. The court decided it was time to modernize that system with e-filing capability. Now child support records, like the traffic citation records, will be sent as XML data files (along with image forms), read by the Verastream application, and automatically entered into the host system.

Crouse reported that the new child-support process is expected to eliminate keying errors and free up even more staff time when it goes into production early next year. “Because the Verastream development platform was in place, the Attachmate consultants were in rapid-fire mode on this solution,” he said. “And like the first solution they did for us, they got it right the first time, so we didn't have to lose time back-tracking.”

Verastream as Catalyst

And there have been two other outgrowths of the Verastream traffic-citation success in California:

1. A sister county, Riverside, is using the same Verastream model to implement a traffic-citation system of their own.
2. At San Bernardino, self-service courthouse kiosks—with a custom Verastream application as the back end—will soon be installed. The touch-screen kiosks are a next-generation progression from the court's original traffic-ticket solution.

With local governments striving to gain efficiencies, leverage staff, and automate as many processes as possible, IT organizations are quickly realizing the reusable benefits of Verastream Host Integrator for ongoing projects. It's the best way to keep up with consumer expectations and business requirements, while getting the most from existing investments. As testimony to that fact, Crouse concluded by saying, “we've been very happy with the work that's been done here.”

About Verastream

Verastream Host Integrator is part of the Attachmate Verastream family of products designed to speed the reuse of enterprise applications in service-oriented architectures. Verastream solutions provide a complete range of mainframe and web modernization tools—from basic rejuvenation to customized presentation and sophisticated high-performance integration. No code changes to existing applications are required.

About Attachmate

Attachmate helps businesses extend, manage, and secure their IT investments. We offer a broad range of solutions—from terminal emulation and legacy integration products to innovative systems and security management tools. With our technology, more than 65,000 customers worldwide are putting their IT assets to work in new and meaningful ways. Learn more at www.attachmate.com.



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