

Goal VI

branchwide infrastructure for service excellence

Superior Courts of California,
COUNTIES OF BUTTE AND GLENN

COLLABORATIVE INFORMATION SERVICES (IS) PROGRAM

Sharing Resources Improves Service and Reduces Costs

Butte and Glenn are neighboring counties in the Sacramento Valley. The superior courts of both counties already utilized the same court case

management systems, office applications, and jury software. But they had separate information services (IS), and each county faced different challenges.

In Butte County, the court was growing, and its IS department faced increasing demand for technology and resources. This led the court to adopt a help-desk model for IS support. The court in Glenn County, by contrast, was small. It had no on-site IS staff or support from the county. Court staff often had long waits for service from an outside vendor, which had no incentive to offer cost-saving advice.

Given their collaboration in other areas, it made sense for the two courts to develop a solution that would extend IS support to Glenn and benefit Butte as well.

Butte identified the technological and human resources it could make available, the skills of its IS staff, the feasibility of a collaboration, and the potential objectives it could meet. Glenn detailed its IS needs, its existing equipment and applications, and its desired goals for the collaboration.

In late 2001, the two courts drafted and entered into a memorandum of understanding, which included a service-level agreement on response time, levels of service, related deliverables, and financial terms.

Both courts benefited from the process. Planning for the collaboration forced Butte to examine its own IS procedures and ensure that it was using industry best practices. Implementing the collaboration made resources and comprehensive support available to Glenn that it previously couldn't afford.

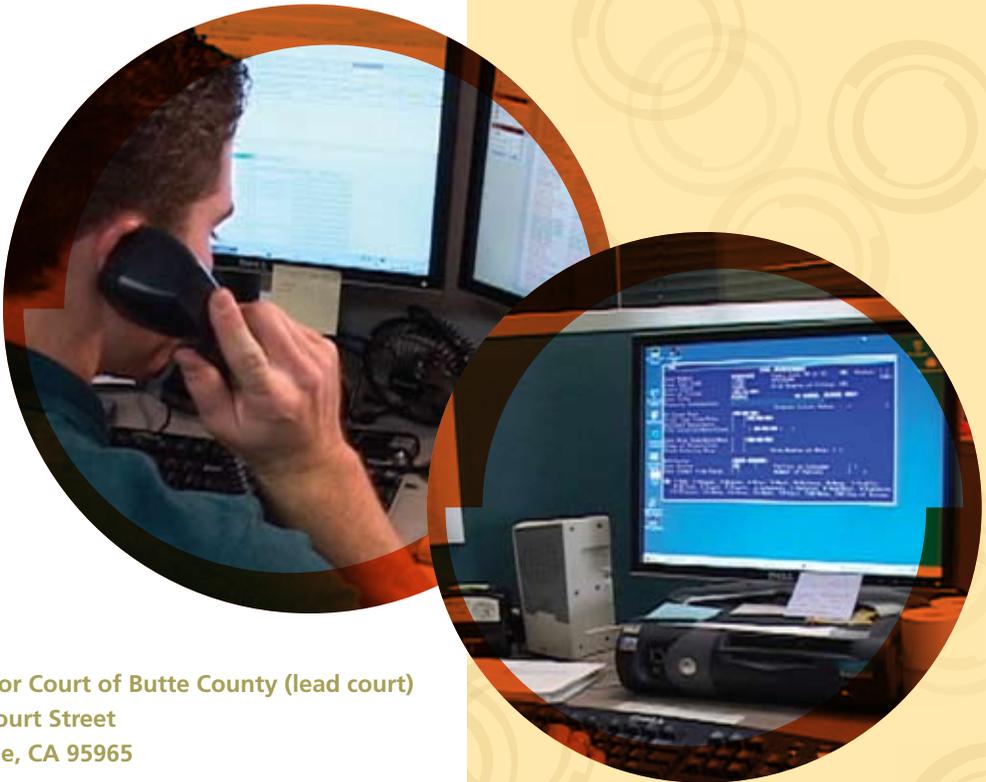
The program began in September 2003. The two courts are now connected by a dedicated T1 line and make use of trusted domains (which allow mutual access). The Butte court also provides the Glenn court's Internet service and hosts Glenn's accounting system and Web site. Butte IS staff can generally resolve 80 percent of Glenn's IS problems remotely, through dedicated communications, but an IS analyst makes weekly visits to Glenn for on-site needs and to maintain face-to-face relationships.

The program has allowed Glenn to stabilize its infrastructure, standardize its systems, and get consistent, timely response to its IS problems.

Impacts

- ▶ There has been a decrease in court user complaints in Glenn County about the stability and reliability of IS systems, and a documented drop in system crashes and failures.
- ▶ Staff productivity and public satisfaction have both increased in Glenn County because of improved system performance—entry and retrieval of case information for customers are more efficient.
- ▶ Butte has hired an additional senior IS analyst, which provides increased service to both courts.
- ▶ For court staff in Glenn County, less time is lost waiting for IS problems to be resolved.
- ▶ The two courts have been able to expand the possibilities for long-term strategic IS planning.

SHARE AND SHARE ALIKE *Because the two courts share infrastructure, improvements can be easily implemented by both courts at no additional cost. When the Superior Court of Butte County developed a Web-based product that allowed the public to access case and calendar information via the Internet, Glenn was able to add that same capability to its Web site.*



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