

BIG RESULTS FROM SMALL SCREENS

There may never be a truly paperless court, but by responding to feedback from the public and its justice system partners, the Superior Court of Shasta County went from manually posting crucial

information to computerized scrolling screens and solved a logjam in its courthouse.

Like many other courts in the state, Shasta has experienced a sharp rise in the number of criminal cases in recent years. But the court still communicated its calendar to the public in the same way: with a computer printout posted on bulletin boards throughout the courthouse.

The printout was so small and crammed—a function of the database system—that it was common for a crush of people to surround it, all of them trying desperately to find the right courtroom. Those who could not get near the board went to the clerk's office seeking the same information, creating another bottleneck.

The problem affected more than just the public. Litigants and attorneys also complained of being late for court, because they were unable to get prompt, accurate information. Court delays and added expenses magnified the problem.

As a response, the court used its CwC grant to directly address its public's needs and act on one element of its strategic plan—to improve how it conveys critical information.

With an assist from information technology staff at the Superior Court of Yolo County, which had implemented a similar system, Shasta installed flat-panel video screens and linked them to the court calendar database. Each screen scrolls through a portion of the alphabet, displaying the day's calendar by case name and showing the court department where the case is being heard. The scrolling display repeats within a minute or so, much like the arrival and departure screens in an airport. The following were the key steps Shasta took:

- ▶ Identifying the need to provide a comprehensive listing of all matters to be heard, sorted alphabetically by party with the associated time and department location.
- ▶ Determining that Yolo's kiosk system, designed to solve a similar problem, would also work in Shasta.
- ▶ Using, with some modification, a copy of Yolo's programming code to get started.

- ▶ Having a cabinet built for the four display screens and computer that runs the calendar program.
- ▶ Placing the new system in its foyer, a highly visible location.

Court users and court staff alike have praised the new system. It has relieved the congestion in the court clerk's office. And it has been so successful that the court has already expanded its use to display the calendar for many case types, not just criminal matters.

The Shasta court staff hopes to further refine the system by installing a video screen outside each courtroom, which would display the day's case calendar for that courtroom alone.

One of the last steps of the CwC approach is to act on the public's feedback. The Shasta court shows that addressing the needs of constituents does not necessarily mean that a major overhaul in court operations is necessary—sometimes the solution lies in one concrete action with lasting impact.

In the Superior Court of Shasta County, the public now has access to the most current version of the court's daily case calendar by using video screens linked to the court's database in highly visible locations throughout the courthouse.

