

White Paper

Accelerated County Government - Digital Efficiency in the Information Age

Introduction

One, and only one, resource is equally available to everyone in the world, no matter their location, age, position in life, economic strata, or capabilities. That resource is time. All other resources are variable in supply, including food, fuel, water, shelter, and finances. But time is unique. The same 24-hour day is available to corporate presidents, government officials, and those lost to the grip of poverty.

Time cannot be bought or expanded, but it is certainly spent. It is the manner of spending that makes all the difference. xpdientinc presents a new perspective on time and its successful management, for it is only by evaluating the past that the future can be structured successfully. xpdientinc products provide new and exciting tools to evaluate task completion vs. time spent performing the tasks. Comparing the two, and performing the comparison at the end of a given time period can focus future effort to make a task more efficient. Greater efficiency affords more opportunity in managing time successfully.

xpdtime™, xpdientinc's flagship product, is an enterprise application for organizational performance improvement. It monitors time and status and enables anyone to evaluate the health of an organization at any point in time, enabling prudent adjustment. xpdientinc feels strongly that county governments can use xpdtime™ to introduce digital efficiency to accelerate performance.

Unique Information Characteristics of County Government

Every organization has a distinct set of requirements and applications for the information it collects about itself and its constituency. County government has unique requirements. Critical factors that make county government distinctive: centralization, localization, variety in capabilities, multitasking, and dependence on databases; education and public safety constituencies, are described below.

Centralized

The vast majority of governments, counties included, gain enormous economies of administrative scale by centralizing staff and functions. All the knowledge and expertise necessary to operate a county is generally co-located enabling collaboration and occasional confrontation in carrying out governmental mandates. The vast majority of county

Existing databases

The vast majority of information managed by a county is controlled through existing databases. There are nearly as many database programs and formats as there are databases. Since many of the databases are built on competing and incompatible operating platforms, communication between the databases is nearly impossible.

xpdtime™ provides organizations with a complete system that monitors, evaluates and reports contract and job data, identifying discrepancies in actual vs. planned expenditures and schedules. An on-line signature and approval feature expedites the submittal process. Simultaneously, an electronic audit trail is generated consistently and automatically.

Paper-Based System VS Digital Efficiency

Paper was invented long before the electron was discovered, and we tend to gravitate to the trusted and true. But paper needs to be "handled" by hand. Digital information can be handled also by wire and machine...

Reduce records management

Filing takes time and resources. Good spelling and alphabetical or numerical skills and consistent attention to detail are required to maintain an active filing system. Lost records are incalculably expensive. An all-electronic HR management system eliminates such errors and inefficiencies by design, and promotes faster access to information, saving money.

Free staff to respond to needs

A basic function of County governments is to meet the needs of its citizens. Some needs are born in disaster, some by legislation. Whatever the need, it must be fulfilled by staff, people. If staff members are occupied with record-keeping or waste time correcting errors, they cannot fulfill this most basic of government mandates. An all-electronic timekeeping and status system makes such functions the smallest part of anyone's day, week, or month. That puts staff back in the field or on the counter. An improvement for those paying for the expected services.

Permanent digital record of actions

When the unexpected occurs, the first resource sought is a record of events. Only xpdtime™ combines the efficiencies already discussed with automatic generation of an audit trail. All transactions within the system are recorded in the background, providing an unalterable resource for tracking actions

level functions are organized this way. Prominent examples include centralization of purchasing and accounting activities, as well school system administration and public safety.

Educational systems are frequently controversial as public officials balance the desires of parents, the limitations of budgets, the scrutiny of State and Federal legislation with the real-world implementation of systems. Education systems need to support the existing capabilities of administrative or support staff or faculty.

In uneasy times, the efficient support of the public safety sector is critical. Infrastructure systems need to support and streamline administrative requirements, allowing safety personnel to concentrate on their primary roles and responsibilities within the community.

The focus of this paper is on human resource management, and the equipping of county staff to deal with the seemingly overwhelming task of monitoring, evaluating and assigning, not to mention paying, a county's workforce. xpdiemc has been in recent discussions concerning a single county's workforce numbering just over 50,000 employees. The county recognized the inadequacy of its tools in management of its task and sought alternatives. The standard COTS xpdiemc™ package meets most of the county's operating requirements for a new time and status management system, with allowance for customization of a database interface.

Localization

While many functions of county government benefit from centralization, a single staff cannot meet all the direct needs of all citizens, however many people comprise the staff. The county must establish regional service facilities with satellite staffs. Expedient communication with the central staff is critical to record keeping and proper administration of regional office functions.

Some county staff move about on a routine basis, increasing the need for secure communication with a central office.

Such individuals need identical capabilities wherever their jobs take them, and only a web-based system can guarantee functions of that nature. Remote access to job-essential data can be made possible only over the Internet in such a situation.

Variety in educational and training competencies As in any large organization, consistently changing mixes of individuals perform county functions. Add to that a group of contractors bringing new knowledge and skills to a variety of assignments, and the workforce serving a county is in constant change. Management of time expended each task task is therefore critical to ensure that the county receives goods and services at contracted values. Varied experience bases between individuals underlie

and times they occurred.

Accelerated Operations

Anyone who has ever used an eraser knows about duplication of effort. Imagine never needing an eraser again to fill out a timesheet or expense report. Or a pen to sign either one...

Reduction or elimination of duplication

Providing copies of personnel records to various offices in a department causes totally unnecessary duplication of paper forms not to mention time lost in moving, sorting, and filing the paper. Electronic forms do need to be reconciled, as paper ones occasionally do. xpdiemc™ forms are conclusively time and date stamped, definitely establishing change sequences.

When all the offices of a county department can access one source for all personnel and timekeeping needs, any need for paper-based forms is removed, and any time required to manage the paper can be redirected into serving the department's constituency.

One simple system for all County employees, regardless of numbers. Progress in technology is a fleeting phenomenon. What was more than adequate yesterday is completely outmoded tomorrow. Human resource management systems installed two years ago require unexpected technological hurdles in operation and communication to function this year. This shortfall becomes an increasing influence over time, as hardware and software capabilities shift consistently. Systems may have been installed at various times in the history of a department, and be essentially blind and deaf to later additions. And a system designed for 26,000 employees may not stretch to accommodate 48,567 a few years later. Installation of a simple, essentially open-ended system that manages these challenges for any size organization is the obvious solution. Every employee in every department can report time and activity through a single package. All the employee records are available with a few clicks of a mouse. Employees anywhere in any number can report status of projects and activity.

But, in times when information can be used for good or questionable purposes, it is reassuring that xpdiemc™ products hold information securely, with a range of password and user identification safeguards to meet any need.

Operating Experience

Does your situation mirror one of these?

Federal Government Agency Experience

The Employment and Training Administration, Office of Technology, of the U.S. Department of Labor has selected xpdiemc™ software to report hours and status information. This agency is using the system to track hours and monitor task assignments. With improved financial operations, xpdiemc™ is helping

potential service variations; therefore it is important to assign the most competent available individuals for tasks.

Multi-tasking

As in many private organizations, counties may migrate to multi-tasking requirements for workers at many different levels. The advantages to government are many and obvious. A cross-trained staff can serve the populace in varied capacities. For example, highway service workers can acquire and apply disaster relief skills if necessary. The ability to track availability of county employees based on skill sets or job classifications could prove invaluable in emergencies. As skill training enhances the capabilities of county workers, they can be classified into additional job functions.

Private Corporate Experience

The advantages expected by the government agency described above are mirrored in the corporate world. Current private sector customers collect, approve, and maintain time and status information remotely, and expect to use the software in government contracting. One organization anticipates that they can quickly triple their workforce without a corresponding increase in administrative costs.

xpdtime™ Implementation and Operational Efficiency
Some operating systems and software packages require weeks or months of training to develop proficiency. xpdtime™ can be learned in a few hours. Very little to no training required xpdtime™ is the simplest timesheet and status management program available. A very few minutes are required to learn the basics of time entry and timesheet submission. A bit more time will allow a trainee to submit expense reports, and a very few minutes more will train a manager to approve expenses. No matter the size of the government department, it can be trained easily and very inexpensively.

ASP Model

The Application Service Provider model enables any organization to realize the benefits of xpdtime™ without the investment in expensive new hardware and a long implementation. The entire package resides within xpdtime™'s servers and only an interface displays on a user's desktop through a suitable web browser. This configuration provides high physical security for sensitive county data. xpdtime™ can be installed at a government site behind the firewall.

xpdtime™ offers as a solution a single source of information across a county government. The database over which xpdtime™ is constructed is open and flexible in order to provide the maximum benefit to a customer. It is the openness that enables most forms of information, with customization, to be rolled over into xpdtime™. Once the information is successfully lodged into xpdtime™, it can be managed in the most expedient manner available.

Easy reporting to MS Office products and accounting

the Department fulfill its mission of preparing the 21st century American workplace.

Electronic signatures

Time waits for no one, but sometimes timesheet signatures must wait because someone is out of the office. The paper on which signatures are recorded can become lost or worse, altered after signing. An electronic signature eliminates such hindrances by design. Electronic timesheet approval supports remote expense reporting and approval. In such cases, an expense check can be waiting for an employee on his/her return from travel.

Electronic storage frees up floor space and never loses anything Government agencies tend to maintain paper-based files even with the databases mentioned previously. Such records tend to accumulate over time, even when slated for archival. A single server, equipped with xpdtime™, or connected to the ASP server at xpdtime™ headquarters can hold the contents of vast numbers of file cabinets. State-of-the-art redundant power supplies, battery backup systems, and other protection systems to maintain data integrity safeguard the ASP model. Your floor space frees up for other uses.

Since an electronic audit trail is generated for every transaction in xpdtime™, it is very simple to retrieve data for an audit or other reporting requirement. Standard and specialized report formats allow for review and evaluation of information stored within xpdtime™ many years previously. Project records, financial data, time and status information, and contract terms are permanently preserved.

xpdtime™, Education, and Public Safety

A primary function of most county governments is the local administration of a public education system and public safety.

Education

The education system is entrusted with the safety, welfare, health, and physical and mental development of all the students in the county. Such functions require a large staff, especially when the body of individuals employed by the school system is in consistent flux. Some positions are re-staffed annually, while many vary daily with the use of substitute teachers.

systems xpdttime™ does not live alone. It can report information and vital operating statistics independently for sure, but its real power lies in its interfaces with packages like MSEXcel, MSWord, and several accounting systems using easy import/export and synchronization options. Any report can be converted into one of these formats and distributed AND managed through the outside application. There is no need to alter established financial analysis processes for the entire organization to take advantage of the power of xpdttime™ . Since xpdttime™ can make end-of-month reports available within minutes of the close of activity, a real snapshot of productivity is instantly available, and can be distributed in rapid fashion.

Cost & Efficiency

All the opportunities for increased profitability and performance described in this paper are real. They alone offer a compelling rationale to implement xpdttime™ . In this section, however, we examine xpdttime™ foremost appeal, cost savings.

40% savings over paper based system

US Department of the Interior studies indicate that utilization of xpdttime™ class software can save 40% of the cost of a paper based time and expense reporting system. This means that 40% of the time and resources currently expended on these functions results in pure waste from rework and duplication. Better to install a system that accurately captures time and status data once, and then gains an advantage from the evaluation of the data. Insights gained from examining relationships between the various forms of information available through xpdttime™ reporting functions point to cost savings and increased efficiency in resource allocation.

Rework nearly eliminated

With an electronic system, time and expense information is entered into the system once, and preserved accurately and permanently. As indicated above, cost savings accrue from digital time reporting. The largest factor in rework is re-creation of a paper timesheet or timesheet report that has been completed incorrectly, by accident or design. There are no paper-based forms to reconcile. An inaccurate timesheet is costly enough, but correcting errors already processed into a system takes time, and time costs money. When timesheet and status information is entered electronically, it processes automatically after a manager approves the values. While a record of the transaction is retained, and the information is permanently available for review, no additional management of the report contents is required.

A simple but effective solution for a school system is to implement xpdttime™ for HR functions within the district. As positions change hands, the system can be updated intuitively, on a daily, weekly, monthly, or hourly basis. Regular and substitute teachers can easily report time, location for the day, student problems encountered and solved, and hours worked. Student records can easily be tied into the database structure of xpdttime™ , forming the simplest student management system possible. Overall communication between teachers and administrators, and teachers and parents is expedited with the exclusive module xpdMail. xpdMail generates preformatted letters in minutes, speeding disciplinary notices and school function announcements home through the mail, not the backpack. xpdttime™ also generates automatic email communications for a variety of customizable reasons.

Public Safety

A county government is charged with maintaining peace and order within the community. Communications are the order of the day. While all the benefits of xpdttime™ mentioned in this paper impact public safety, the Communications module can contribute to security in investigations and reporting of results. With xpdCommunicator, a secure communication channel is established between all users of xpdttime™ . The communications pathway is web-based, so no additional facility wiring is necessary, and messages can be encrypted for security. Evidence, notices and other information stay within the Public Safety community. The public is better protected with xpdttime™ on the job.