“Do Not Call" Correspondence Management System

Executive Summary

More than 34 million people live in the State of California representing 12.5 percent of the entire United States population. Under the auspices of the state Attorney General’s office, the California Department of Justice (DOJ) establishes and operates projects and programs to protect Californians from fraudulent, unfair, and illegal activities that victimize consumers or threaten public safety. DOJ was tasked with developing a Correspondence Management System (CMS) in response to the national legislation regarding the Telemarketers Do Not Call (DNC) program.

Do Not Call Program

The Telemarketers Do Not Call (DNC) program is a national registry maintained by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). Consumers can join the registry to reduce unwanted telemarketing calls to their home and cellular phone numbers. Consumers can register their telephone numbers at no cost for five years. Most telemarketers will be required to purchase the list, and will be barred from calling any phone number registered on the list within three months of the date the number was registered, unless the telemarketer has written permission to call that number.

Do Not Call Program Correspondence Management System (CMS)

The Correspondence Management System is a web-based correspondence system designed to fulfill the mandate of Senate Bill 771, which requires the Attorney General’s office to process complaints against telemarketers from registered subscribers. The Correspondence Management System provides the Public Inquiry Unit of the Attorney General’s Office with the ability to receive, analyze, track, and respond to all inquiries from the public including Do Not Call complaints. These inquiries may result in a response to the citizen or the initiation of a formal case.

This robust web-based system provides a letter/correspondence function, a document imaging function, a publications request function and a management reporting function. The project resulted in the Public Inquiry Unit having the ability to process and track not only DNC complaints, but all complaints received, whether initiated by fax, phone, mail, or email. The new system also contributed to a significant reduction in manual processing and overall handling expense.

The Correspondence Management System manages over 15,000 complaints monthly. DOJ team members in the Public Inquiry Unit can perform ad-hoc queries to quickly retrieve supporting documentation and gain efficiencies through a workflow process that includes saving document images, as well as responses, to electronically maintain a full case history on file. The system has enabled DOJ to handle 4 times the volume of correspondence with no increase in staff. The unit has realized significant cost savings by dramatically reducing paper storage (45,000 sheets/month). DOJ now has the ability to maintain publication inventories, receive scheduled reports, and provide external interfacing organizations (like the Consumer Law Section) with access to complaint information - all with the ease of a single web-based application.
A. Description of Project

The California Department of Justice (DOJ) establishes and operates projects and programs to protect the more than 34 million people who live in the state from fraudulent, unfair, and illegal activities that victimize consumers or threaten public safety. In the course of operating such programs, DOJ was tasked with developing a Correspondence Management System (CMS) in response to legislation regarding the Telemarketers Do Not Call (DNC) program, which is maintained by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC).

The Do Not Call Program Correspondence Management System (CMS)

The Public Inquiry Unit (PIU) of the Attorney General’s Office currently handles more than 15,000 complaints and inquiries per month. The Correspondence Management System provides the PIU with the ability to receive, analyze, track, and respond to all inquiries from the public including Do Not Call complaints. These inquiries may result in a response to the citizen or the initiation of a formal case. This robust web-based system provides a letter and correspondence function, a document imaging function, a publications request function and a management reporting function. The project resulted in the Public Inquiry Unit having the ability to process and track not only DNC complaints, but all complaints received, whether initiated by fax, phone, mail, or email, and contributed to a reduction in manual processing and overall handling expense.

The DOJ utilized leading-edge product development methods and tools to build the product and established an architectural foundation for reusable components that DOJ can leverage on future projects. The system was conceptualized to explore and validate this architecture and framework for the Hawkins Data Center. Development consisted of a multi-phase project lifecycle incorporating time-boxing and iterative prototyping and development techniques. The time-boxing technique assures that each phase of the lifecycle is executed and completed within the time allotted for that phase. In a project of this nature, the technique helps the project team stays focused on the specific business needs of the project, and promotes proper time management in each phase of the project. Using an iterative development process allows review of results earlier in the project, as well as providing a framework through which the project team can verify and validate the end product sooner.

In addition to the world-class product delivered, DOJ staff members are able to leverage their enhanced knowledge of software development, Java, J2EE, Struts, Oracle 9iAS, reusable components, and iterative development lifecycle processes for future project endeavors.

The system has been operational since early 2004.
B. Significance to the Improvement of the Operation of Government

The Correspondence Management System provides the benefit of automation to DOJ and has many benefits including increased efficiency, enhanced cost control, and improved internal and external communications. CMS provides 6 key operational improvements:

Improved Communications
The Correspondence Management System has enabled the Public Inquiry Unit to better serve its internal and external clients. The case management features are vital to the PIU function of responding to complaints in a timely and appropriate manner which increases public trust. The system also serves as a very valuable tool for other units within DOJ, such as those tasked with enforcement, which now have accurate, reliable records of all activity within a case or all complaints against a particular telemarketer. The effort spent in building reports or chasing information used to consume several resources’ time who are no longer required to do this administrative work allowing them to focus on higher-value activities. Instead of having information available in days, the turnaround is immediate.

Increased Efficiency
All documents and actions associated with a case are available in one place and can be pulled up electronically for reference at any time. Complainant information is connected to complaint(s) and all supporting documentation and interaction is linked to the system and accessible from one screen. Employees have access to the information they need to conduct investigations and management has access to the reports they need to measure performance. By having all the information in one place (standard letters, signature files, addresses, company names, and much more), the analyst and clerical functions can be completed in much less time.

Reduced Paper Storage and Usage
The document imaging function allows for all previously stored paper documents to be scanned, copied and saved into the electronic file connected to the complainant info. There is no need to maintain hard-copy case files and there is no paper to misplace.

Reduced Manual Processing
The integrated case management features of this system make tracking and reporting far simpler and less time-consuming than the previous manual system. Because the CMS allows PIU employees to save and track all complaint information in one place, there is no need for multiple manual systems and processes to create a response. Previous manual processes for looking-up forwarding addresses and passing notes between analysts and clerks is now eliminated through complete online processing.

Control Costs
The Correspondence Management System has helped DOJ achieve significant cost savings in paper purchase and storage as well as staffing costs. With the CMS, the Public Inquiry Unit is able to handle 4 times the volume of correspondence without increasing staff levels. Significant cost savings have been realized by dramatically reducing paper storage (45,000 sheets/monthly).
Growth Infrastructure
DOJ has built a framework for reuse which will advance their operations strategy by facilitating future application development. Not only will they be able to build applications with more accuracy and efficiency at a reduced cost, but they will also be able to more easily maintain them moving forward. Instead of starting from scratch every time, there is an incremental build approach solidifying their foundation for reuse in processes and applications. With reusable components and framework-based architectures, DOJ has a system in place that will grow and support future initiatives. The reuse of application functionality was demonstrated during this initiative and successfully cut time and costs in delivering this solution with increased functionality over initial specifications. Scope changes were much more easily acceptable due to the application architecture and design.
C. Benefits Realized by Service Recipients, Taxpayers, Agency or State

The Correspondence Management System provides the PIU with an automated means to receive, analyze, track and respond to all inquiries from the public, including Do Not Call complaints. The system provides easy access capabilities, saves time and money, and is faster and easier to use than previously employed manual methods.

Earlier this year, the Attorney General offered Californians an easy way to pre-register for the National Do Not Call list. Now, more than 6 million Californians have joined the National Do Not Call Registry. Telemarketers have up to three months from the date of registration to remove a consumer’s telephone number from their lists.

California consumers were encouraged to file complaints with the FTC if telemarketing calls were received on phone numbers placed on the National Do Not Call Registry before September 1, 2003. If consumers are still receiving these calls today and want to file a complaint, the Correspondence Management System enables a variety of ways for them to register that complaint, including fax, phone, mail, email, or via the web at the Attorney General’s website.

The Correspondence Management System makes it easier for consumers to submit complaints and also makes it easier and faster for the Public Inquiry Unit to respond to them. There are automated letter response tools built into the system that make it much faster to respond to complaints and inquiries and to also know exactly what responses have been sent and are electronically traced to a specific case.

The system provides automation for a previously manual case management workflow process for handling all correspondence needs. Consumers benefit from CMS by having an easy, automated mechanism to communicate complaints to DOJ. The Public Inquiry Unit at DOJ benefits by having an automated tool to use when responding to and tracking complaints.
D. Return on Investment

The current state budget situation is such that hiring new staff is difficult to justify. With CMS, the Public Inquiry Unit is handling 4 times the volume of correspondence with no increase in staff. Given the average hiring and training costs, the automated CMS has provided a cost avoidance of several hundred thousand dollars.

The Correspondence Management System enables the PIU to electronically record and maintain its records by leveraging imaging technology. According to the California Records and Information Management Program, the cost avoidance achieved by source document imaging is $.06 per page. Current estimates from the PIU indicate that 45,000 pages of images are made per month, for an annual cost avoidance of $32,400 from this efficiency alone. Further efficiencies from this system are realized in the workflow which generates form letters and tracks cases.

The availability of software as an asset to the enterprise is also a new value for DOJ with which they intend to accelerate other application development efforts. The new applications will be built under the same architecture and standards as the CMS in order to increase the intellectual capital available and to reduce future investment requirements.